

INCREASING MUSLIM POPULATION IN INDIA: POLITICS VERSUS REALITIES

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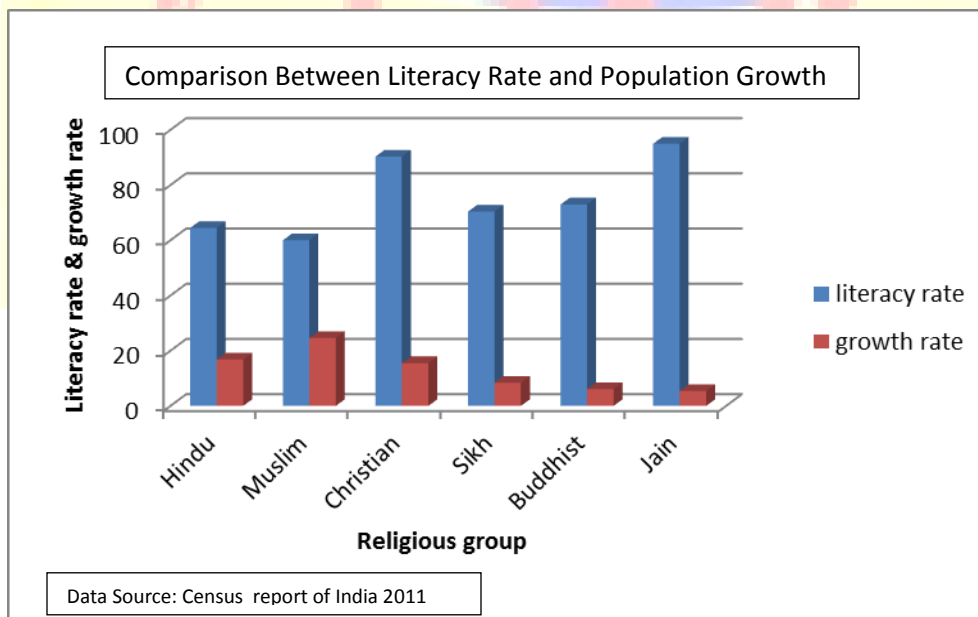
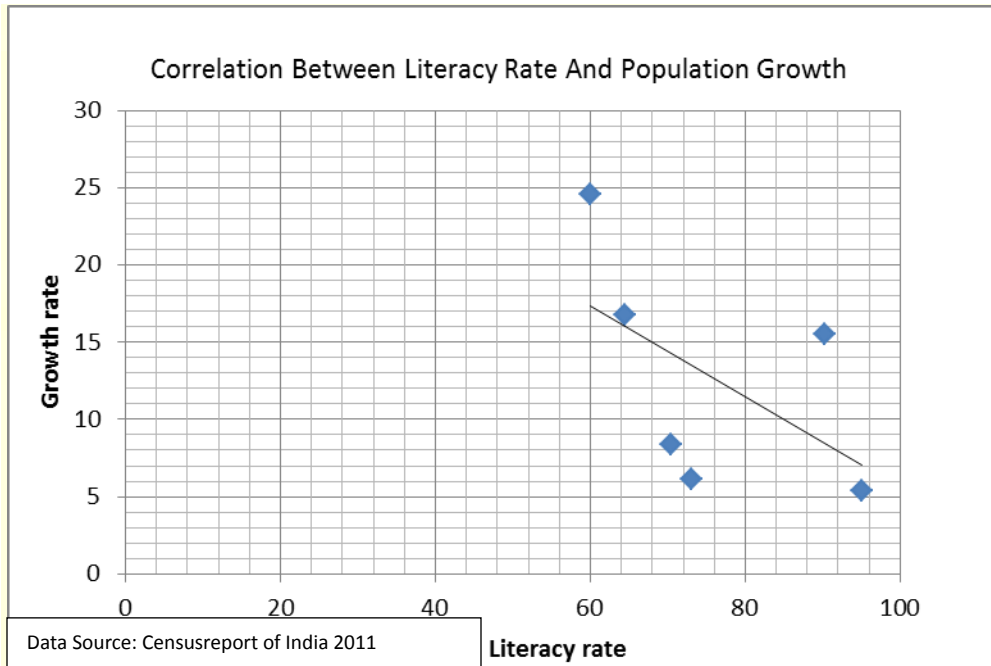
Very recently Central Government of India released the religious census report although the last census report was published almost four years ago. From the report we came to know that Hindus constituted 79.8 per cent of the population, compared to 80.5 per cent in 2001. On the other hand the percentage of Muslim population was increased 13.43% to 14.23% during 2001 to 2011. Expectedly, some media and conservative political parties are shouting that in coming future Muslims will be the major religious groups in India and they will create another Islamic state etc. But the story is incomplete because very consciously some other facts of the religious census report have been overlooked or ignored. Many often wonder whether the release of census data coincides with some political activity, like elections. The answer seems to be in the affirmative.

Causes of relatively high growth rate of the Muslims

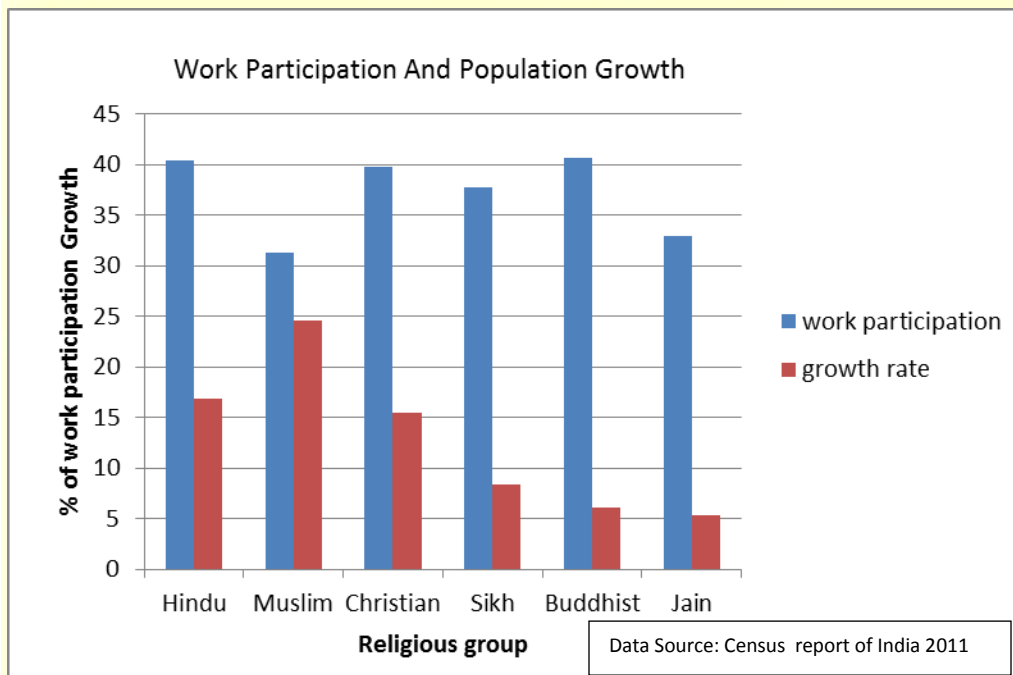
India is now the third largest Muslim populated country in the world (after Indonesia and Pakistan). The country is projected to have 311 million Muslims in 2050 (11 per cent of the global total), making it the country with the largest Muslim population in the world. In last decade the Muslim population has increased from 13.4 per cent of the population to 14.2 per cent, which is 0.8 percentage points higher. Keeping aside political debates, if we consider the situation in respect of social, economic and geographical realities some vital causes of increasing population of the particular community are identified.

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First, there is a negative relation between education and population growth. In India the overall literacy rate is more than 74% where Muslim's literacy rate is almost 67%. The situation of the Muslim women is so miserable. Their literacy rate is just 51%. Illiterate people are neither conscious of the problems of high birth rate nor are they free from religious bound. Sometimes they are reluctant to take modern medical facilities to control birth rate.



Second, poor people having higher growth rate than the rich. According to 2001 report work participation rate of the Hindus was 40.4% followed by the Christians (39.7%), Sikhs (37.7%), Jains (32.9%) and Muslims (31.3%). Most of the Muslims are engaged in primary activities like agriculture. Majority of them are marginal workers (e.g. agricultural labours) having no lands. Only 8-10% people are engaged in service and a negligible percentage is found in quaternary and quinary sector. In rural area people still consider their child (particularly male child) helping hand and future source of income.



Third, regional disparity is one of the vital causes of increasing Muslim population. Muslim dominated districts, blocks are the most backward regions in respect of education, civic amenities and medical facilities. Besides the high birth rate malnutrition and morbidity are also very high among the Muslims. Child mortality rate and maternal death are significantly faster than the other religious groups. Over the time all the political parties consider Muslims as 'Vote Bank' instead of human resource.

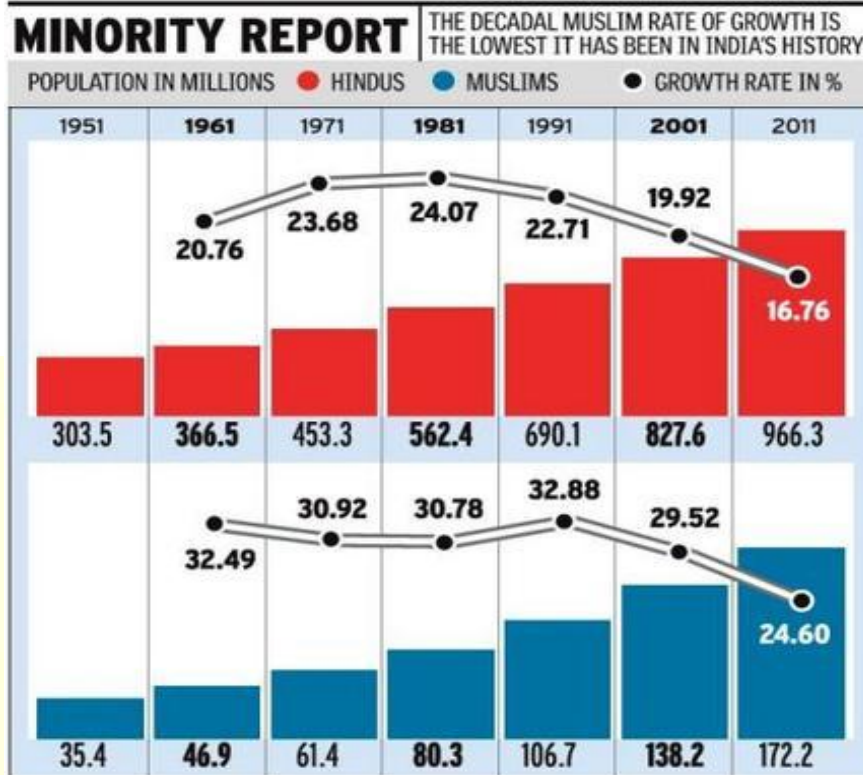
Forth, Indian Muslims prefer to live in a 'pocket'. For example, in Kolkata Muslims are mainly concentrated in some locality like Rajabazar, Park Circus, Khidirpur, Garden Reach, Tiljala etc. In spite of Kolkata's secular identity a prominent cultural segregation is observed. The main cause for the development of such cluster settlement is the question of safety and social security. In the nearly 70 years since Independence, religious violence has claimed thousands of lives and the victims are mainly Muslims and other minorities. 1964 Kolkata riots, 1983 Nellie massacre, 1992 Bombay riots and 2002 Gujarat violence are few examples of such incidents. A number of Muslims still believe that masculine power can save them because their past experience says that government never acts impartially at the time of violence. So, uneducated and insecure masses are unwilling to check fertility.

A light in horizon...

From the above discussion one can think that it is just an excuse to keep back the reality. The religious census report not only shows the growth rate but also other demographic aspects. Unfortunately these have not yet been highlighted. But in last few decades the situation is being improved.

Decreasing Muslim's birth rate

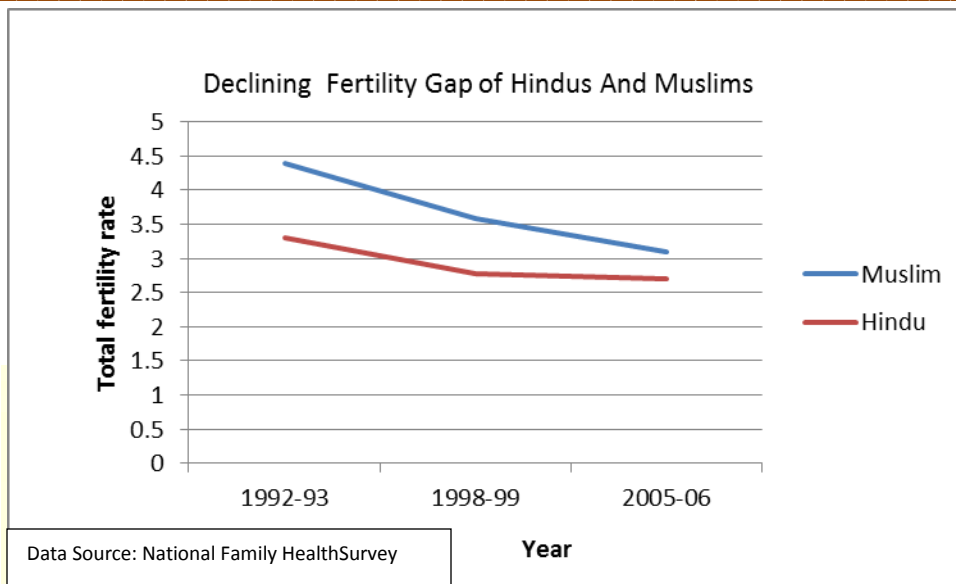
New Census data show that India's Muslim population is growing slower than it had in the previous decades, and its growth rate has slowed more sharply than that of the Hindu population. The decadal Muslim rate of growth is the lowest it has ever been in India's history, as it is for all religions. The rate of decline of the Muslims is almost 5% where it is 3% in case of the Hindus. It is expected that in near future the situation will be improved more.



(source : The Hindu, 25 August 2015)

Declining fertility

Muslims are expected to grow faster than Hindus for a couple of more decades because they have the youngest median age and relatively high fertility among the major religious groups in India. But now the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) is falling faster in Muslims than in Hindus. In the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) 1 (1992-93), fertility numbers for Muslims and Hindus were 4.4 and 3.3, a gap of 1.1. In NFHS 2 (1998-99), the numbers for Muslims and Hindus fell to 3.59 and 2.78, and the gap, therefore, to 0.8. And in NFHS 3 (2005-06), the numbers were 3.1 and 2.7; the gap 0.4.



Better sex ratio

Population Sex Ratio in India as per Census 2011 is 940 females per 1000 males. The sex ratio among Muslims now stands at 951 females for every 1,000 males, substantially better than 936 in 2001, while among Hindus, it is 939 females for every 1,000 males. So, the Indian Muslims have better sex ratio than National average.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the overall population growth is still very high. Many demographers plea to implement China's one child population policy immediately in the country. But we must remember that the situation is not same for India and China. In China's constitution rights of job have been recognized but it is not in our constitution. Former Union government established a committee to find out the "social, economic and educational status of the Muslims"; it published a report, popularly known as the Sachar report, which has dispelled misunderstandings about Muslim population growth, as well as the status of social, economic and educational conditions according to major socio-religious categories. Until their educational and socio-economic development success of population planning is far away.

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Courtesy

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