

Preface

Fertility in relation to religion is, as it has been for several decades, an important social issue. Apparent differentials in fertility by religion are the core of the dispute. It has attracted demographers, economists, geographers, sociologists, biologists and of course medical scientists. Much later politicians have joined these academicians and professional to 'achieve non-political goal'. Particularly, 'Saffron Demographers' have hyped the issue out of proportion as if it is the only difficulty faced by 'Indian Society' – in her way.

The present study is a modest attempt to resolve the dispute and to arrive at the end to the debate to somewhat. The research work is designed in such a way that we get to answer the following questions:

1. Is there any difference in fertility among the major religious groups i.e. Buddhists, Christians, Hindus and Muslims in Darjeeling district?
2. If there are differentials, then ^{to} what extent ^{those} vary among the religious groups under study?
3. What are possible reasons for such a phenomenon of fertility differentials by religion?

The thesis is divided into seven chapters of different lengths, where contents vary according to the need of the section. Chapter-I, an introductory chapter, is devoted to spelling out the research framework where introduction to the problem, study area, review of existing literature (works already done in the filed), objectives of the study, research questions, data sources, sampling and survey process and finally methodology of the research have been

accommodated. While second chapter is devoted to describing demographic profile of the study area, third chapter contains general fertility character of the study area. Chapter-IV and Chapter-V form the core of present research, where the former one is spared to find out fertility differentials in relation to religions in the district and the latter is an attempt to explain the causes (determinants) of such differences. There has been an attempt to find out how the fertility among the religious groups in the rural areas varies from the fertility among those in the urban areas of the district. Finally, chapter-vi deals with major results and findings of the work, and suggests some measure to bridge the gap identified. An index has been included so that the readers feel comfortable to refer, if at all it serves, to their purpose. While bibliography will help the readers to have an idea of further readings, the appendices will obviously help them to have a glance to minute details of the 'Schedule' (Questionnaire) used or 'Master Table' containing unprocessed data collected from the filed.

I have no hesitation to admit that the work could have been improved to a much greater height by the researcher with greater expertise. Unless there were time constraint due to my engagement as a teacher, more importantly, an incessant political upheaval and a milieu of uncertainty in the hills (part of field of this research lies in the hilly tract of Darjeeling district) the study could be of higher quality. In spite of sincere attempts some of the hurdles were found to be irresolvable e.g. religion being a sensitive issue particularly in the charged environment of mutual distrust in the period of post-Godhra pogrom, respondents in a number of cases refused to cooperate. I must not forget to

accept my lack of dexterity. Otherwise, the quality of maps would have been much better. Nevertheless, I would be happy if the research results help anyone to clear the ambience of obscurity in the filed - fertility and religion. The researcher will remain indebted to those who graciously spare some of their invaluable times to suggest the way the work can be improved further.

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