

## Religion in North East States of India: A Review

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**Abstract-** Religion is an important component of culture. It acts as the main driving force in formulating cultural landscape. Successive waves of migration in different time period has made a unique cultural mosaic in North East region of India. In this paper an effort has been made to illustrate the religion wise population data of North East India for 2001 and 2011. It also explains state level sex ratio for different religious communities in 2001 and 2011.

**Keywords:** Religion, culture, cultural landscape, cultural mosaic, North East India

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### I. INTRODUCTION

Religious canvas of the populace of India is an important aspect in socio-cultural and demographic studies. The census authority of the country has given proper importance to it since the first census in 1872. Since 1961 there has been some uniformity in the collection and generation of the religious data. Six major religions of Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Buddhist, Jain, and Sikh with other religions and persuasions are considered.

North East India comprises of eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. It is characterized by multi-ethnic, multi-culture and multi-religious communities. Indeed, the North East region has been seen as a gateway of commerce and culture that linked India with South East Asia. Successive waves of migration from East and West subsequently have resulted in cultural mosaic of the region.

This paper illustrates change in religious composition (2001-2011), present religious composition in rural and urban areas and sex ratio among religious communities in North East states.

### II. MATERIAL AND METHOD

The study is based on secondary source. Census of India, 2011 and 2011 data has been used for the analysis. Statistical techniques are applied in MS Excel format.

### III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Decadal Change in Religious Composition of North East States (2001-2011)

Census 2001 and 2011 reveal dramatic changes in religious composition in North East states. Hindu population has been declined in all the North East states with an exception in Nagaland (1.05%). All the North East states witness growth in Muslim population except in Manipur. Maximum change has been observed in Assam (3.3%). Percentage of Christian population has been increased in all the states except in Nagaland. Nagaland has shown decline in Christian population (-2.04). Highest increase has been found in Arunachal Pradesh (11.54%). Sikh and Jain are minority population in the entire North East states. A meager change has been observed in both the communities. Interestingly, Buddhist population have found to decline in Arunachal Pradesh (-1.26%) and Sikkim (-0.72%). Other religions and persuasions have shown overall declining trend (see TABLE I).

TABLE I. Change in religious composition of North East states (2001-2011)

Religions	Assam % Change (2001- 2011)	Arunachal Pradesh % Change (2001-2011)	Meghalaya % Change (2001-2011)	Manipur % Change (2001- 2011)	Mizoram % Change (2001- 2011)	Nagaland % Change (2001- 2011)	Tripura % Change (2001- 2011)	Sikkim % Change (2001- 2011)
Hindu	-3.42	-5.56	-1.74	-4.62	-0.8	1.05	-2.22	-3.17
Muslim	+3.3	+0.07	+0.12	-0.41	+0.21	+0.71	+0.65	+0.2
Christian	+0.04	+11.54	+4.34	+7.26	+0.19	-2.04	+1.15	+3.23
Sikh	-0.018	+0.07	-0.03	-0.03	-0.01	0.04	-0.01	+0.09
Buddhist	-0.01	-1.26	+0.13	+0.16	+0.58	+0.27	+0.32	-0.72
Jain	-0.01	+0.04	-0.01	-0.01	+0.01	+0.02	+0.01	+0.02
Other Religions and Persuasions	+0.01	-4.53	-2.82	-2.67	-0.2	-0.15	0	+0.28

Source: Census of India 2001, 2011; Computed by the authors

*B. District-wise Religion Composition in North East States, 2011*

Religion wise population composition of the North East states depict interesting picture. As per the census of India, 2011, Assam is the most populace state of the North East (31,205,576). In Assam, Hindus are the dominated community. Muslims have a significant proportion only in Assam and are concentrated in districts namely, Darrang, Bongaigaon, Hailakandi, Karimganj, Nagaon, Morigaon, Barpeta, Goalpara and Dhubri. Dima Hasao and Karbi Anglang districts have good percentage of Christians. Minority Sikhs and Jains are mainly concentrated in urban areas (Fig.1).

In Arunachal Pradesh, Papum Pare, Changlang and Lohit districts are major share holders of population. Hindus, Christians and other religions and persuasions are major religious groups. Christianity began to be spread here by missionaries in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century. Tirap, Kurung Kumey, East Kameng, Papum Pare and Lower Subansiri districts have dominated by Christians. A significant proportion of people are practicing indigenous religion ‘Donyi-Polo’ (sun-moon). People in Upper Subansiri, West Siang, East Siang, Upper Siang, Lower Subansiri and Dibang Valley districts are mainly following this (Fig.2). Minority Muslims and Sikhs are concentrated in urban areas.

East Khasi and West Garo Hill are most populace districts in Meghalaya. The state has a Christian majority (Fig.3). Conversion to Christianity began in the 19<sup>th</sup> century during the British period. Minority Sikhs and Jains are concentrated in urban areas only. Meghalaya has a significant percentage of Hindus living in urban areas.

In Manipur, Imphal West, Imphal East and Senapati districts have larger share of population. Hindus and Christians have almost equal share of population as major communities. Senapati, Tamenglong, Churachandpur, Ukhrul and Chandel districts have dominated Christians. Hindus are dominated in Bishnupur, Thoubal, Imphal West and Imphal East districts (Fig.4). Sikhs and Jains are minority here and concentrated in urban areas mainly.

In Mizoram, Aizawl has the largest concentration of people due to the existence of capital city Aizawl. Christians are the dominated religious group in all the districts (Fig.5) whereas; other religious communities of Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs are mostly concentrated in urban areas.

In Nagaland Dimapur, Kohima and Mon districts have larger percentage share of population. Christians are dominated in all the districts (Fig.6). Hindus, Muslims and Jains are concentrated in urban areas only.

In Tripura, West Tripura district is most populace due to presence of the capital city, Agartala. Hindus are the dominated community (Fig.7). Minority Jains are concentrated in urban areas mainly.

In Sikkim, East district is most populace due to presence of capital city Gangtok. South and West districts also have good proportion of population. Except in North district (least populace), Sikkim is dominated by the Hindus. Buddhists are the other principal religious group of Sikkim (Fig.8).

Prevalence of Christianity in states like Meghalaya, Mizoram and Nagaland is due to the conversion of

indigenous people from their traditional religion during mid-19<sup>th</sup> to mid 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Arunachal Pradesh has a mixed dominance of Christians, Hindus and Other religions. Assam, Manipur and Tripura have their own history of Hindu dominance. Migration of Bengali Hindus from neighbouring states and country are found in Assam and Tripura. Migration has changed the demographic composition of Sikkim also. Hindu is the dominant religion and Nepali community holds majority of population in the state.

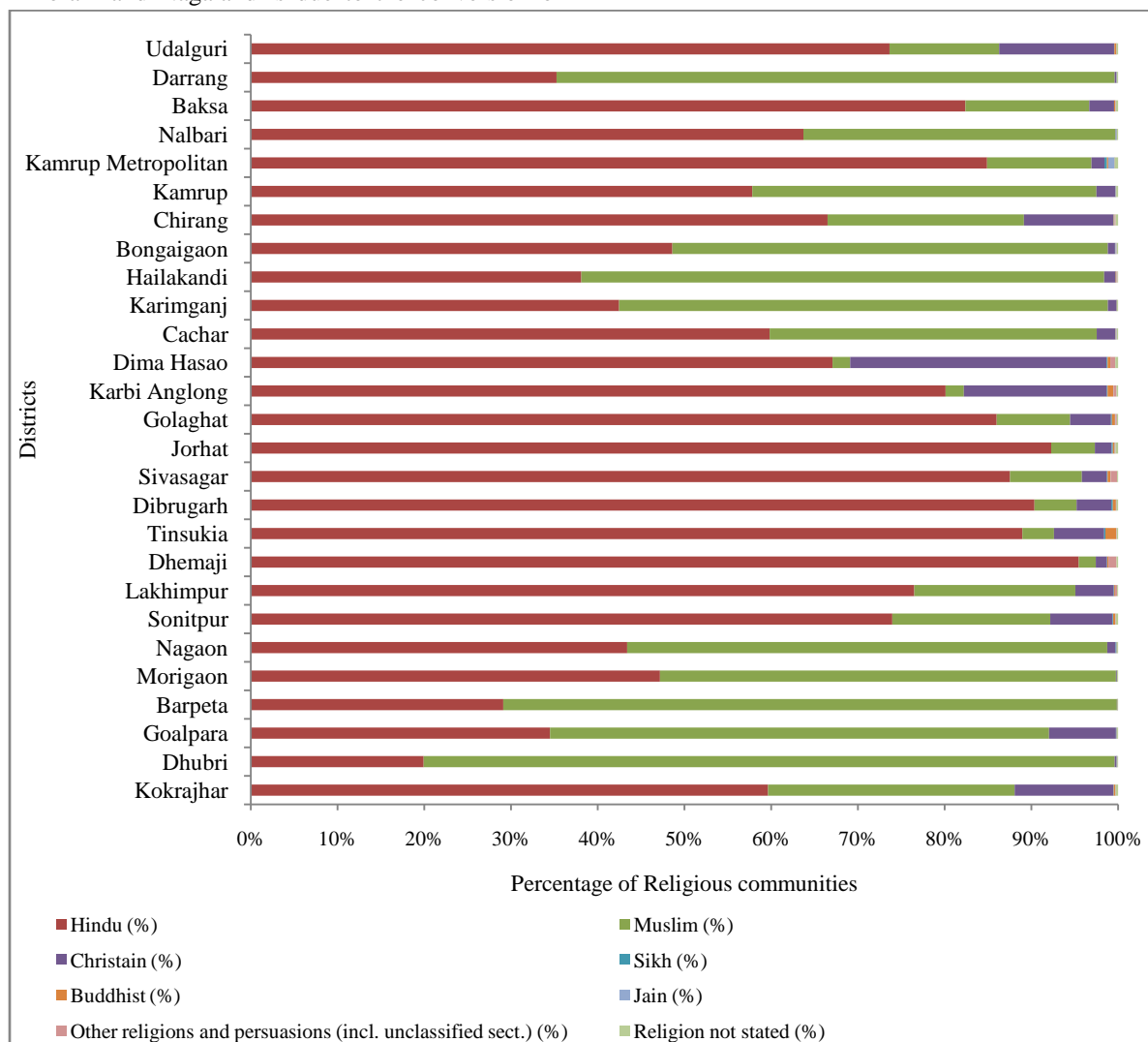


Fig.1: District wise religious composition in Assam, 2011

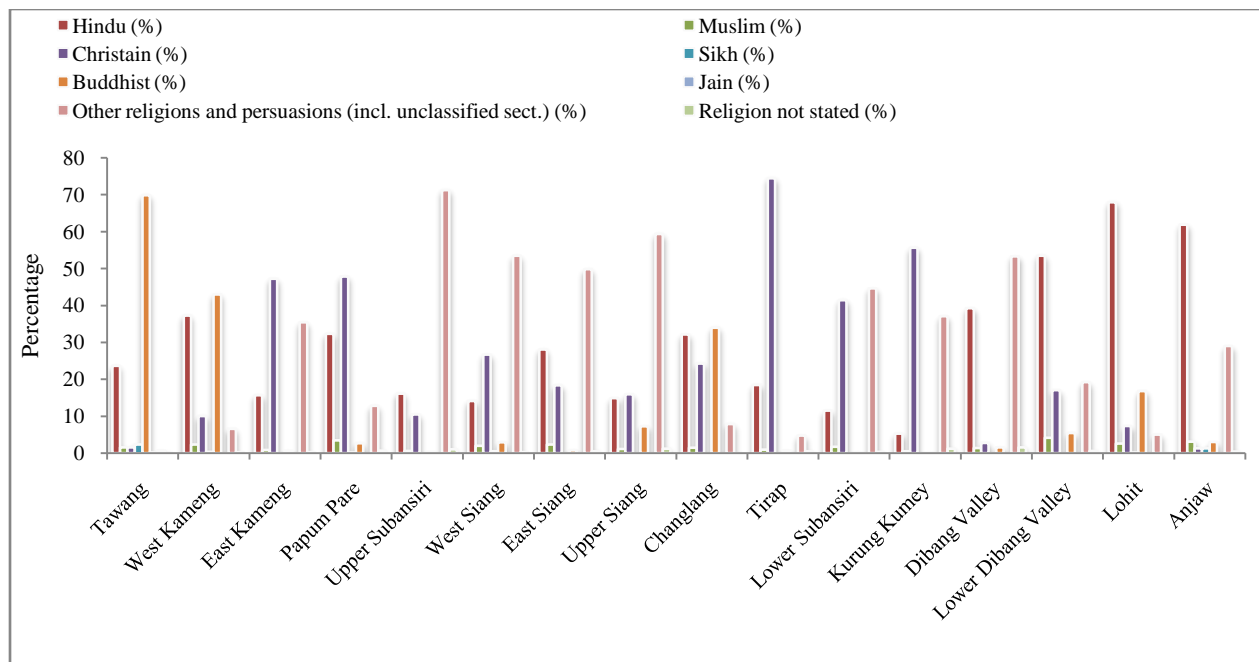


Fig.2: District wise religious composition in Arunachal Pradesh, 2011

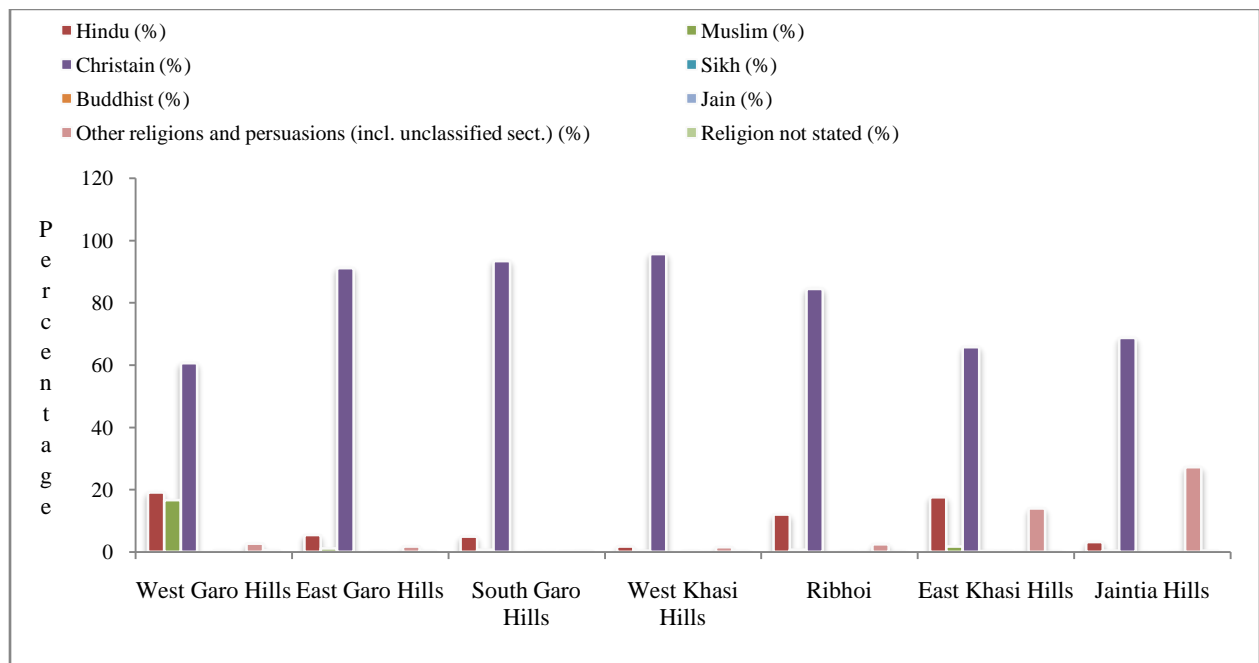


Fig. 3: District wise religious composition in Meghalaya, 2011

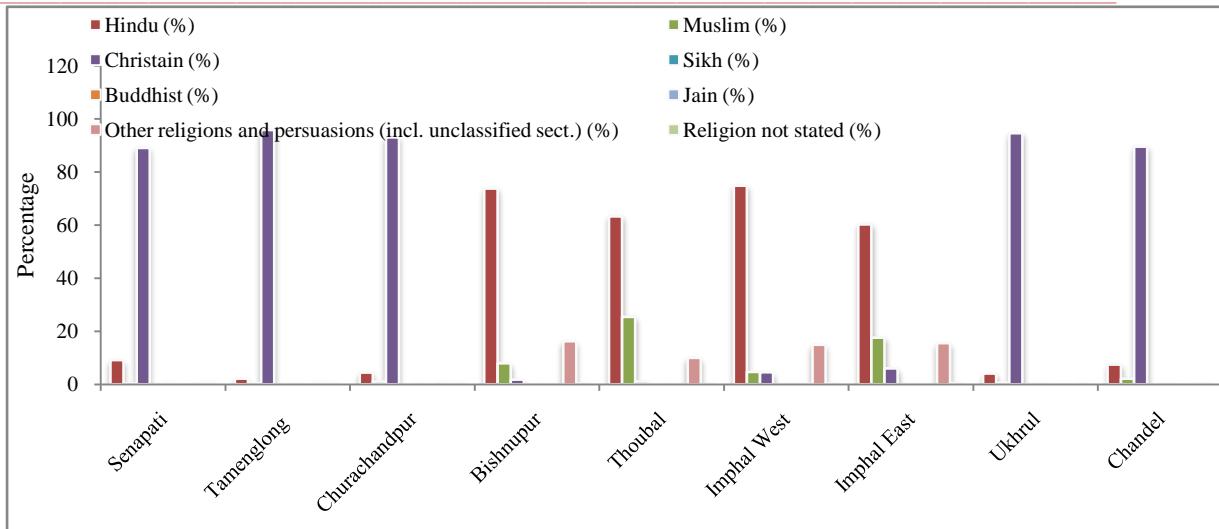


Fig.4: District wise religious composition in Manipur, 2011

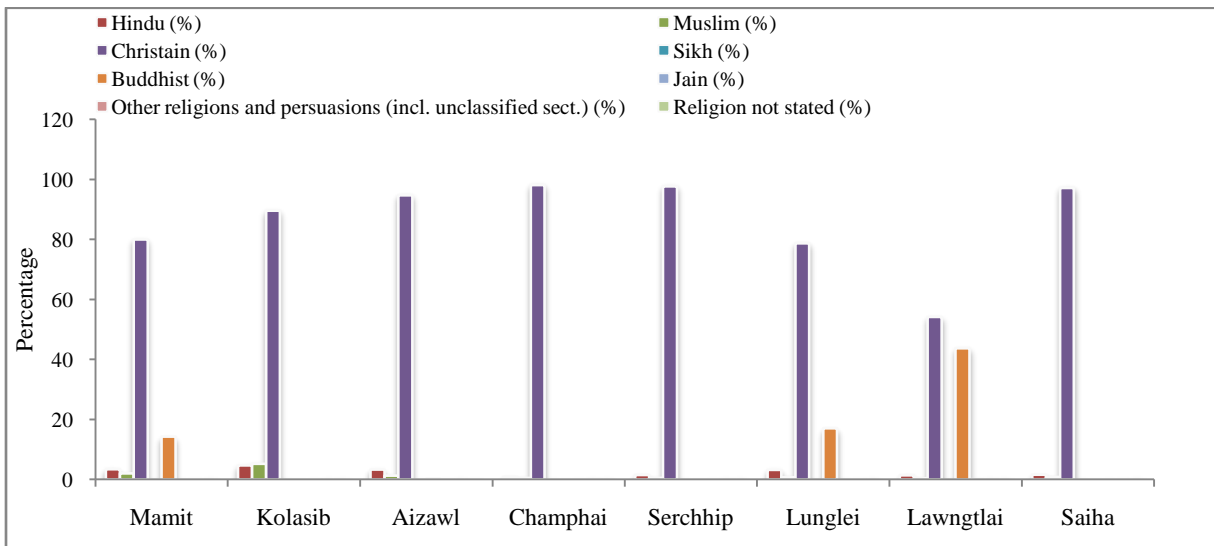


Fig.5: District wise religious composition in Mizoram, 2011

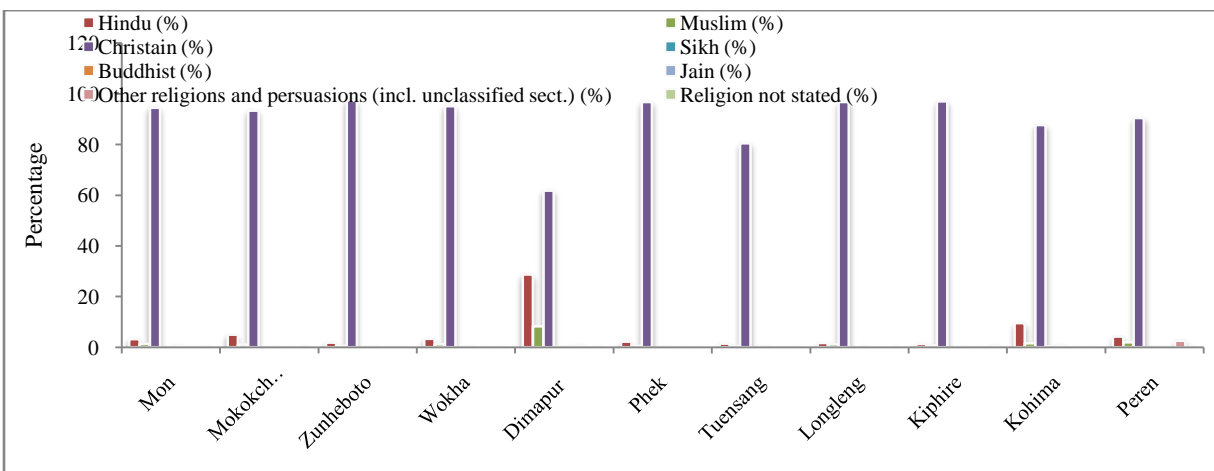


Fig.6: District wise religious composition in Nagaland, 2011

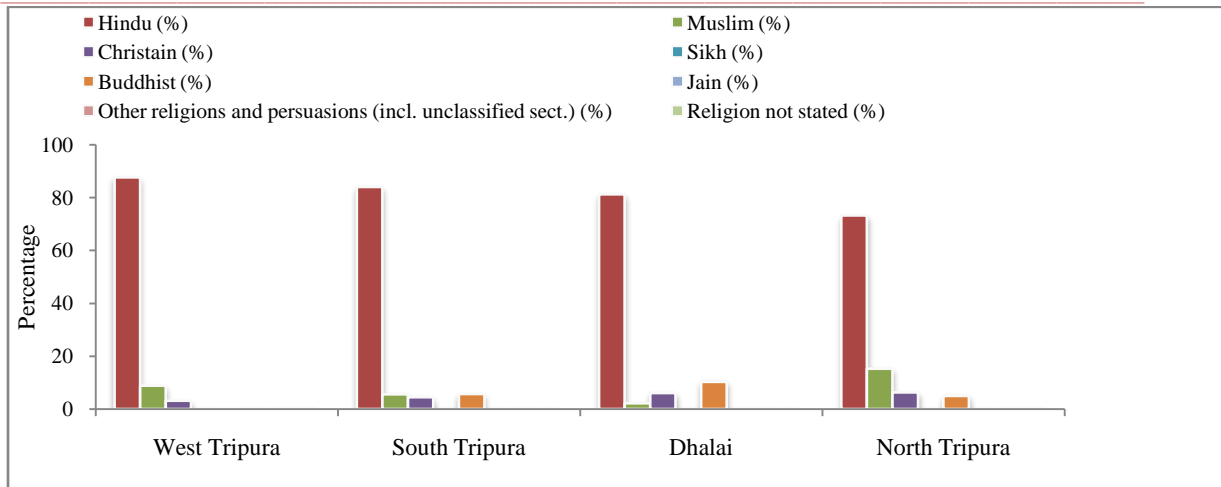


Fig.7: District wise religious composition in Tripura, 2011

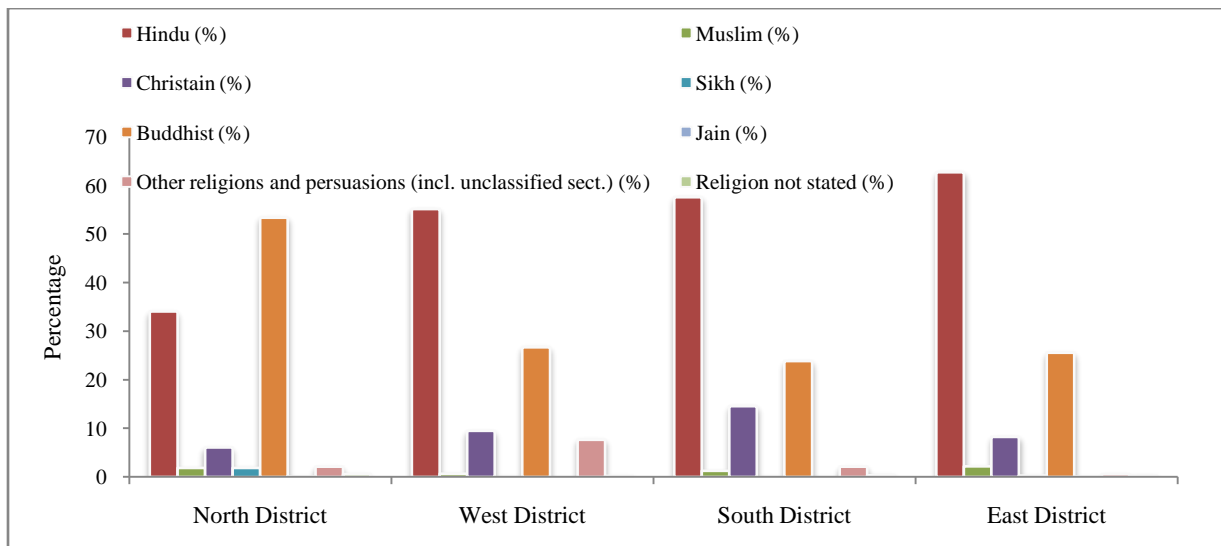


Fig.8: District wise religious composition in Sikkim, 2011

*C. Religious Composition in Rural and Urban Areas of North East States*

It has been observed that North East states are dominated by the rural population. Dominant religious communities are therefore concentrated in rural areas mainly whereas; in urban areas multi-cultural and multi-religious communities are sharing space (see TABLE II). People do migrate to the urban areas in search of job opportunities and/or to live a decent life. Minor religious communities are therefore, concentrated in urban areas mainly. Except in Mizoram and Nagaland, Hindus are dominated in rural areas. Muslims are concentrated in rural

areas of Assam, Meghalaya, Manipur and Tripura. Christians are dominated in rural areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Nagaland and Sikkim. Sikhs are dominated in urban areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram and rural areas of Sikkim, Tripura and Nagaland. Buddhists are concentrated in rural areas of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Meghalaya, Manipur, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. Jains are concentrated in urban areas of Assam, Manipur, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim.

TABLE II. Distribution of religious communities on residence basis in North East states, 2011

Religions	Assam			Arunachal Pradesh			Meghalaya			Manipur			Mizoram			Nagaland			Tripura			Sikkim			
	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	T	R	U	
All Religions	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Hindu	61.47	81.85	18.15	29.04	63.88	36.12	11.53	55.62	44.38	41.39	70.79	29.21	2.75	23.87	76.13	8.75	36.37	63.63	83.4	70.77	29.23	57.76	73.24	26.76	
Muslim	34.22	92.49	7.51	1.95	46.17	53.83	4.4	88.22	11.78	8.4	65.22	34.78	1.35	44.15	55.85	2.47	46.99	53.01	8.6	85.31	14.69	1.62	37.07	62.93	
Christian	3.74	94.58	5.42	30.26	83.39	16.61	74.59	82.12	17.88	41.33	90.53	9.47	87.16	43.85	56.15	87.93	75.35	24.65	4.35	95.18	4.82	9.91	75.47	24.53	
Sikh	0.07	39.87	60.13	0.24	48.28	51.72	0.1	20.13	79.87	0.053	48.13	51.87	0.026	30.77	69.23	0.096	59.05	40.95	0.029	68.5	31.5	0.31	89.51	10.49	
Buddhist	0.18	86.8	13.2	11.77	88.28	11.72	0.33	66.37	33.63	0.25	64.75	35.25	8.51	97.54	2.46	0.34	66.25	33.75	3.41	93	7	27.39	77.85	22.15	
Jain	0.08	11.01	88.99	0.056	72.76	27.24	0.021	43.54	56.46	0.059	21.75	78.25	0.034	69.15	30.85	0.134	15.86	84.14	0.023	48.95	51.05	0.051	44.27	55.73	
Other Religions & persuasions	0.09	94.19	5.81	26.2	81.92	18.08	8.71	90.08	9.92	8.19	59.83	40.17	0.074	53.71	46.29	0.16	93.25	6.75	0.041	80.85	19.15	2.67	96.72	3.28	
Religion not stated	0.16	84.24	15.76	0.48	76.23	23.77	0.32	90.09	9.91	0.38	68.47	31.53	0.094	38.99	61.01	0.12	75.35	24.65	0.14	62.57	37.43	0.3	89.33	10.67	

Source: Census of India, 2011; Computed by the authors  
 (Note: T=Total, R=Rural, U=Urban)

*D. Sex Ratio of Different Religious Communities of North East States*

Sex ratio is the number of females per thousand males. As per census, 2011, at the national level sex ratio is 943 (In 2001, it was 933). Hindus and Sikhs are below the national average (939 and 903 respectively). Highest sex ratio has been found among Christians (1023). The Hindus, constituting the largest share of the population have a sex ratio of 939 and Muslims as the second largest community have 951.

Among the North East states, Sikkim, Nagaland and Arunachal Pradesh have sex ratios lower than the national averages in 2001 and 2011. Sikkim has the lowest sex ratio in 2001 and 2011. Meghalaya and Manipur have high sex ratios in 2001 and 2011. Sex ratios among Hindus, Muslims and Christians have increased in all the North East states during 2001-2011 (see TABLE III).

TABLE III. Sex ratio of North East states, 2001 and 2011

States	All Religions		Hindus		Muslims		Christians		Sikhs		Buddhists		Jains		Other Religions & Persuasions	
	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001	2011	2001
Assam	958	935	958	932	955	938	985	962	750	667	958	939	916	866	980	950
Arunachal Pradesh	938	893	785	749	739	625	1035	1003	174	264	1010	970	1078	662	1014	1001
Meghalaya	989	972	863	827	923	891	1011	1004	857	718	918	871	833	906	1018	996
Mizoram	976	935	506	341	553	271	1007	986	324	299	947	929	808	738	1010	985
Manipur	985	978	982	974	992	973	980	977	584	515	939	979	963	842	1020	1009
Nagaland	931	900	650	582	716	614	973	941	234	488	924	782	934	852	984	939
Tripura	960	948	959	949	964	945	962	941	368	101	973	956	898	916	914	759
Sikkim	890	875	856	852	510	439	998	960	173	108	960	944	735	664	958	983
<b>INDIA</b>	<b>943</b>	<b>933</b>	<b>939</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>951</b>	<b>936</b>	<b>1023</b>	<b>1009</b>	<b>903</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>953</b>	<b>954</b>	<b>940</b>	<b>1009</b>	<b>992</b>

Source: Census of India-2001, 2011; Computed by the authors

IV. CONCLUSION

In concluding remarks it can be stated that census data on religion, 2011, has showed a colourful glimpse of religious communities in the North East states. Spatial distribution pattern shows concentration of certain religions in some particular localities owing to various reasons viz., successive

migration waves in different period and religious transformation started by the missionaries during mid 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century. Sex ratios have increased in all the North East states during 2001-2011.

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