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Religious Communities in India: A Development Profile

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Religions and Development Research Programme

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Foreword

Development has for long been viewed as an attractive and inevitable way forward by most countries of the Third World. As it was initially theorised, development and modernisation were multifaceted processes that were to help the “underdeveloped” economies to take-off and eventually become like “developed” nations of the West. Processes like industrialisation, urbanisation and secularisation were to inevitably go together if economic growth had to happen and the “traditional” societies to get out of their communitarian consciousness, which presumably helped in sustaining the vicious circles of poverty and deprivation. Tradition and traditional belief systems, emanating from past history or religious ideologies, were invariably assumed “irrational” and thus needed to be changed or privatised. Developed democratic regimes were founded on the idea of a rational individual citizen and a secular public sphere. Such evolutionist theories of social change have slowly lost their appeal over the time. It is now widely recognised that religion and cultural traditions do not simply disappear from public life. They are also not merely sources of conservation and stability. At times they could also become forces of disruption and change. The symbolic resources of religion, for example, are available not only to those in power, but also to the weak, who sometimes deploy them in their struggles for a secure and dignified life, which in turn could subvert the traditional or establish structures of authority. Communitarian identities could be a source of security and sustenance for individuals. This change in attitude of the social sciences towards religion could also be seen in shifting trends in empirical research on the subject. Over the last two or three decades we have seen a steady shift towards treating religion as a “normal” sociological fact, without any teleological presupposition about its pasts or futures. This shift has also been reinforced by the emerging social and political trends in countries like India where issues relating to citizenship are raised by identity movements of historically deprived categories, such as the Dalits and the tribals, or the religious minorities, such as the Muslims, for a more inclusive and just development. There has also been perceptible shift in state policy. With grass-rooting of democracy and a gradual shift in the social profile of political elite in countries like India, the old secular-communal dichotomous way of thinking seems to be increasingly becoming meaningless. Social policies dealing with issues of marginalities and exclusions have begun to be framed using “social group” variables at the core. At global level also, much of the recent research and policy dialogue has centred on questions of citizenship and entitlements in relation to cultural and group identities. With growing movements of people, nation-states are everywhere becoming ethnically and culturally diverse and plural

where religious and communitarian identities are difficult to dispense with. While questions of development and citizenship in relation to culture and religious belief or communities have become important issue in the public and political spheres, social science research on the subject is still at a nascent stage. It was in this broader perspective that the research programme on 'Religions and Development' was conceived. The research programme is funded by DFID and coordinated from the University of Birmingham. As partners in the consortium, we, at the Indian Institute of Dalit Studies, have been working on various aspects regarding the subject in India. The working paper series disseminates some of these works.

This working paper "Religious Communities in India: A Development Profile" discusses various religious groups across India and observe the level of development that each group has reached by comparing and contrasting the differences in the level and nature of development across different religious groups. Further, it explains why these differences exist and what are the possible factors that might be influencing group specific levels of well-being. Besides, observing group demographics and composition, it examines the economic characteristics of groups, such as poverty, employment and workforce participation rate and land ownership patterns. This paper views that a modern common curriculum across the country would lay the foundations for developing a strong sense of identity, rooted in citizenship based on equality of access, rights and opportunity. This approach would definitely be necessary if the majority of the nation's population, namely the youth are looking to forge newer identities based on education and professional skills in the fast growing global market/economic environment.

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Religious Communities in India: A Development Profile

Amit Thorat*

1. INTRODUCTION

The objective of this paper is to study various religious groups across India and observe the level of development that each group has attained. The intention is to compare and contrast the differences in the level and nature of development across different religious groups. Subsequently, an attempt has been made to explain the reasons as to why these differences exist and what might be the probable factors influencing group-specific levels of well-being. An attempt has also been made to examine how religion could be instrumental, if at all, in deciding the level of well-being, or as an economist would say, the standard of living of the people. In order to measure well-being, a set of economic, social and health variables have been chosen as indicators and corresponding data has been compared across religions.

The paper begins with an observation and comparison of group demographics and composition such as aggregate populations, male–female ratios, rural–urban break-ups, and literacy levels, among other indicators, followed by an analysis of the economic characteristics of groups, including poverty levels, employment rates, workforce participation rates, and land ownership patterns. Finally, the health status of women and children across religious groups, based on a wide range of health indicators, is also discussed.

2. DEMOGRAPHIC AND GROUP CHARACTERISTICS

2.1. Population

According to the population break-up for rural and urban areas, and male and female ratios across religious communities in India, based on the 2001 Population Census data, Hindus clearly constitute the dominant community, accounting for over 80 per cent of the rural and 75 per cent of the urban

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population, therefore, comprising 80.46 per cent of the overall population of India. The Muslims constitute the next dominant group, accounting for 13 per cent of the total population, including 11 per cent of the rural and 17 per cent of the urban population. The population of Sikhs at 1.87 per cent and of Christians at 2.3 per cent is equal in both the rural and urban areas. The population of Buddhists, at 0.77 per cent, is slightly higher in the urban than in rural areas, and the same is the case for Jains (Table 1).

Table 1: Population by Religious Groups, 2001 (%), All India

Religious Community	Urban			Rural			All India		
	Person %	Male %	Female %	Person %	Male %	Female %	Person %	Male %	Female %
Hindus	75.60	75.88	75.30	82.33	82.40	82.25	80.46	80.55	80.35
Muslims	17.26	17.20	17.33	11.96	11.92	12.00	13.43	13.41	13.46
Christians	2.86	2.68	3.06	2.14	2.08	2.20	2.34	2.25	2.44
Sikhs	1.79	1.80	1.77	1.90	1.95	1.85	1.87	1.91	1.83
Buddhists	1.07	1.05	1.10	0.66	0.65	0.66	0.77	0.77	0.78
Jains	1.12	1.10	1.15	0.14	0.14	0.14	0.41	0.41	0.41
Others	0.22	0.22	0.23	0.81	0.79	0.83	0.65	0.63	0.67
Religion not stated	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07	0.07

Source: Census 2001, Population Tables.

Across the top five religious groups, the distribution of the male and female population corresponds more or less to the overall population distribution, across both rural and urban areas. Table 2 provides the estimated number of males and females for within each religious group. This shows that in absolute number the religious minorities constitutes a large population.

Table 2: Populations Count across Religious groups by Sex, 2004-05 (in lakhs)

Religious Community	Rural		Urban		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hindus	3147.7	2988.1	1014.9	914.0	4162.5	3902.1
Muslims	422.1	412.4	212.4	195.3	634.5	607.7
Christians	71.6	74.4	28.6	30.8	100.2	105.1
Sikhs	74.7	67.8	22.0	19.7	96.7	87.5
Jains	3.3	3.3	10.9	10.0	14.2	13.3
Buddhists	20.9	18.6	11.4	11.6	32.3	30.2
Others	12.1	12.7	1.0	1.2	13.2	13.9
Total	3752.7	3577.7	1301.9	1183.3	5054.6	4761.0

Source: Population estimates based on NSSO 61st Round on Consumption Expenditure

2.2. Literacy

Table 3 presents the literacy rates among various religious communities in India separately for rural–urban areas and also across their gender. A discussion of the trends in literacy as revealed by this data set follows below.

Table 3: Literacy Rates among Religious Communities, All India, 2001 (%)

Religious Community	Rural			Urban			Total		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
Hindus	49.17	59.58	38.15	71.15	76.97	64.63	54.92	64.22	44.92
Muslims	42.08	49.75	34.03	58.77	64.18	52.81	48.05	54.99	40.63
Christians	63.66	67.66	59.67	80.70	82.80	78.65	69.45	72.76	66.17
Sikhs	55.62	60.63	50.02	74.20	77.10	70.92	60.56	65.03	55.56
Buddhists	56.73	66.72	46.30	70.84	77.92	63.34	62.16	71.05	52.83
Jains	77.41	82.99	71.45	86.19	87.83	84.45	84.09	86.67	81.35
Others	35.78	47.37	24.14	64.83	72.16	57.24	38.57	49.78	27.27
Religion not stated	47.65	57.18	37.23	63.74	69.28	57.33	52.09	60.58	42.66
All Religions	48.74	58.58	38.33	69.49	75.04	63.32	54.51	63.24	45.15

Source: Census of India, 2001

Table 4: Literacy for Population 7 Years and Above, 2004-05

Religious Community	Literacy Rate (%)	
	<i>Rural</i>	<i>Urban</i>
Hindus	61.60	84.04
Muslims	60.51	73.18
Christians	80.14	93.13
Sikhs	67.29	87.24
Jains	83.26	97.83
Buddhists	74.77	85.45
Zoroastrians	57.52	94.45
Others	58.79	88.52

Source: NSS, 61st Round on Consumption Expenditure.

The literacy rates, which are based on the Census of India, 2001, indicate the highest literacy levels of 84 per cent for Jains, who constitute a very small and

extremely prosperous business community in India. They are followed by Christians, at nearly 70 per cent, who have benefited immensely from Western missionary schools and colleges and other educational institutions. The Sikhs and the Buddhists are placed next, at 60 per cent and 62 per cent, respectively. The Sikhs generally constitute a prosperous community, who have been able to provide education to their children, if so desired, but since they are largely involved in farming and dairy work in rural areas and in businesses in urban areas, many of them may choose to simply concentrate on work rather than on acquiring higher education. The Buddhists, on the other hand (except the tribal converts in the North-east), have traditionally been excluded from education and the economic ownership of assets of any form. Thus, in post-Independence India, education has been their only real source of emancipation and progress. Literacy rate among the majority community of Hindus is at 55 per cent, while it is lowest among Muslims at 48 per cent.

A similar pattern can be observed across the rural landscape. In fact, with nearly 75 per cent of the country's population being rural, this obviously affects the overall average figures, which closely resemble the rural figures. The urban story is somewhat different. Here, the Jains again exhibit the highest literacy rates, and are followed by the Christians. However, it is the prosperous Sikhs in the urban areas who marginally outscore the traditionally deprived Buddhists. Even the Hindus outscore them by 1 per cent. As regards the estimates of literacy based on the NSSO's Consumption Expenditure Survey (61st Round, 2004-05), though these two data sets are not strictly comparable, it can be observed that the pattern of literacy rates is the same across both the data sets, that is, the relative ranking of the religious groups is the same. Also, the rates have changed over the intervening five years. If the NSS data for 2004-05 is compared with 2001 Census data, it can be observed that literacy rates have risen for the Buddhists and the Muslims by 12 per cent, for the Christians by around 10 per cent, and for the Hindus by 7 per cent, while the figure has remained nearly the same for the Jains. Again, it needs to be remembered here that the rates are not strictly comparable, as the census is a house-to-house survey while the NSS is a sample-based one.

2.3. Household Size

Table 5 describes the average household size of the different religious communities, which varies over rural and urban areas.

Table 5: Average Household Size of Different Religious Communities

Religious Community	Rural Household Size	Urban Household Size
Buddhists	5	5
Christians	4	4
Hindus	5	4
Jains	4	5
Muslims	5	5
Others	5	4
Sikhs	5	5
Zoroastrians	8	3

Source: NSSO, 61st Round on Consumption Expenditure

An examination of the average household size of families across religious communities indicates that there is not much of a difference in the average household size across rural and urban regions. The exception here is the tiny minority community of Zoroastrians in the rural areas, who have historically married within their own community, and probably live in large joint families, thus exhibiting a large average of eight members per family. Additionally, very few such families would be found in the rural areas, thus increasing the likelihood of the existence of only a few large families. Of the remaining religious groups in rural areas, the Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus, Buddhists and the others share an average household size of five members, while the Christians and the Jains, who have the highest literacy levels, show the lowest average household size. In urban regions, unlike rural areas, the Zoroastrians have the lowest average family size of three members. Christians and Hindus have average of four members. The rest of the communities show an average size of five members in the urban areas.

3. EDUCATION

3.1. School Attendance

The primary focus as far as education is concerned is on the school attendance (especially in public schools) of boys and girls in the age group of six to fourteen

years. According to NSSO data for 2004-05, Jains school attendance is highest among males as well as females, at nearly 55 per cent and 57 per cent, respectively. They are followed by Christians and Buddhists. It is interesting to note that these three minority religious communities are performing better than the majority ones in terms of school attendance. This is most definitely an indication of a progressive mindset and reflects the perception that education is a sure means of achieving prosperity for these communities in the context of their minority status and low bargaining power. Next come the Sikhs and the Hindus. The lowest enrolment rates are seen among the Muslims and the Zoroastrians. The low enrolment rate among the Zoroastrians is surprising, as this community is known for being highly educated. However, since theirs is a closed community, the low enrolment figures could indicate that a majority of their children probably acquire education at home through private education. Similarly, the Muslims too could be choosing to impart *madarsa* education¹ to their children, which primarily includes the teaching of languages (Persian, Urdu, etc.) and religious studies (the Qoran). The female enrolment rates are seen to follow the same religious pattern as that for their male counterparts but are lower across all the groups, except in the case of the Jains, who enjoy a 3 per cent higher enrolment rate than their male counterparts. For the rest, the difference in enrolment rates between the males and the females ranges from 3 to 7 per cent.

Table 6: Percentage of School Attendance of Males and Females Aged 6-14 Years across Various Religious Communities

Religious Community	Males		Females	
	Not Attending	Attending	Not Attending	Attending
Jains	45.32	54.68	42.80	57.20
Christians	47.78	52.22	52.86	47.14
Buddhists	50.18	49.82	53.57	46.43
Sikhs	52.17	47.83	55.66	44.34
Hindus	53.24	46.76	60.26	39.74
Others	56.90	43.10	60.70	39.30
Muslims	57.73	42.27	62.48	37.52
Zoroastrians	58.45	41.55	65.69	34.31

Source: NSSO, 61st Round on Employment and Unemployment

3.2. Enrollment in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education

A look at the attendance in education across primary, secondary and tertiary levels for population below 30 years show a highest population (78 per cent) Zoroastrians males attending their schools (Table 7). Next are Buddhists, Muslims and Hindus.

Table 7: Currently Attending School for all Below 30 Years, 2004-05 -Males

Religious Community	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Buddhists	50.18	13.94	3.81
Christians	47.78	13.76	3.57
Hindus	53.24	9.96	2.73
Jains	45.32	12.18	8.37
Muslims	57.73	6.81	1.64
Others	56.9	6.53	2.26
Sikhs	52.17	10.14	2.21
Zoroastrians	58.45	19.86	N.A

Source: NSSO, 61st Round Employment and Unemployment

However, as one moves towards the secondary² and tertiary³ levels, it is found that the attendance rates fall sharply for the religious groups that show high primary level enrolment, namely the Muslims, Others and Hindus. The exception here is the Zoroastrians, who continue to show the highest rates of enrolment. At the tertiary level, Jains are on the top with over 8 per cent of their population (below 30 years) currently attending education. This is followed by Buddhists at 3.8 per cent. At lowest 1.6 per cent of male Muslims are enrolled for tertiary education.

Table 8: Currently Attending School for all Below 30 Years, 2004-05 -Females

Religious Community	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
Buddhists	15.81	11.59	3.56
Christians	17.01	11.81	4.13
Hindus	19.62	7.05	1.98
Jains	21.03	16.72	4.04
Muslims	19.88	5.46	1.09
Others	18.14	6.06	1.28
Sikhs	19.06	9.09	3.10
Zoroastrians	N.A	8.27	10.24

Source: NSSO, 61st Employment/Unemployment Round

Unlike the figures for the males, the percentage of females attending education is abysmally low. This is true for all religious groups (Table 8). The rates are quite similar for overall, Jains and Christians are much ahead in terms of educational attainment of their female population in comparison to Muslims and Hindus.

3.3. Level of Education across Religious Groups

This section assesses the level of education across religious groups for the population falling in the seven years and above age bracket. As regards the level of education amongst the males in rural areas, illiteracy rates are the highest for the Others (31 per cent) and the Muslims (30 per cent), followed closely by the Sikhs (27 per cent) and the Hindus (26 per cent). The Zoroastrians, Christians and Buddhists fall in the middle range of 17 per cent to 15 per cent on this count. The lowest illiteracy rates are observed among the Jains (11 per cent) (Table 9). As one moves up the education levels, it can be noticed that the highest share of population across all groups is concentrated in the 'literate without formal education' category, ranging from a minimum of 25 per cent to a maximum of 43 per cent. At the primary level, the highest shares are seen yet again for the Zoroastrians (27 per cent) and the Jains (24 per cent), while the lowest are seen among the Muslims and Others (both being 6 per cent). However, as regards the share of the population with graduate level education and above, the highest share is seen among the Zoroastrians (27 per cent), which is nearly three times the nearest share, that is, among the Jains (9 per cent). They are followed by the Hindus and Christians (both at 3 per cent), the Sikhs and Buddhists (both at 2 per cent), and the Muslims with the lowest shares (1.5 per cent). Table 10 details the education pattern for women across social groups. The first striking and obvious observation is that the share of illiterates among women is much higher than that among men across all religious groups.

Table 9: Educational Levels of Rural Males across their Religious Groups (Age 7 Years and Above), 2004-05

Religious Community	Illiterate	Literate without Formal Schooling	Literate but below Primary Level	Primary Level	Middle Level	Secondary Level and Above	Graduate and Above
Hindus	26.66	36.75	18.91	9.23	4.81	0.52	3.12
Muslims	30.12	43.19	16.34	6.13	2.49	0.24	1.49
Christians	15.26	36.26	25.08	11.85	5.72	2.28	3.54
Sikhs	27.10	35.43	14.48	13.54	6.19	0.74	2.51
Jains	11.63	25.72	20.58	24.07	8.53	0.34	9.13
Buddhists	16.60	38.07	24.19	11.73	6.33	0.25	2.82
Zoroastrians	17.28	27.57	0.00	27.57	0.00	0.00	27.57
Others	31.96	36.00	20.52	6.01	3.95	0.18	1.38

Source: NSSO 61st Round on Employment and Unemployment

Table 10: Educational Levels of Rural Females across their Religious Groups(Age 7 Years and Above), 2004-05

Religious Community	Illiterate	Literate without Formal Schooling	Literate but below Primary Level	Primary Level	Middle Level	Secondary Level and Above	Graduate and Above
Hindus	50.67	29.18	11.89	4.84	2.24	0.13	1.04
Muslims	48.92	35.90	10.38	3.31	1.05	0.06	0.38
Christians	24.29	34.25	20.52	10.90	4.83	1.82	3.39
Sikhs	38.79	33.53	9.80	11.20	4.70	0.27	1.71
Jains	22.12	28.14	16.64	16.27	8.06	0.00	8.77
Buddhists	35.05	33.24	21.47	5.05	4.67	0.00	0.53
Zoroastrians	59.08	40.92	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
Others	50.29	31.00	12.35	4.11	1.25	0.07	0.94

Source: NSSO 61st Round on Employment and Unemployment

3.4. Gender Ratio

An examination of the number of girls per boy (girls/boys) in the age group 6-18 years enrolled across the primary, secondary and tertiary levels of education indicates that the Hindus have a more favourable ratio than the Muslims only at the primary level, and are only behind the Jains and the Buddhists. However,

their enrolment levels are lower than those of the Muslims for the remaining two levels. The Muslims not only register better figures than the Hindus at secondary level of education but at the tertiary level as well, they exhibit the second highest ratio among all groups, after the Buddhists. Except for the Christians and the Sikhs, who show some consistency in the ratios across the three education classes, none of the other groups displays any steady pattern.

Table 11: Gender Ratio (Age group 6 to 18 Years) Enrolled in Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education

Religious Community	Primary	Secondary and Higher Secondary new	Tertiary
Buddhists	0.91	0.85	1.83
Christians	0.84	0.88	0.86
Hindus	0.85	0.68	0.98
Jains	1.27	1.39	0.47
Muslims	0.82	0.78	1.35
Sikhs	0.84	0.88	0.86
Others	0.70	1.10	0.35
Zoroastrians	NA	0.46	NA

Source: NSSO 61st Round on Employment and Unemployment.

4. INCIDENCE OF POVERTY ACROSS RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES

Table 12 registers the incidence of impoverishment across religious communities, with the rural and urban poverty figures being assessed separately, as these are based on two different poverty lines as per the calculations of the Planning Commission of India for the year 2004-05. The incidences of poverty in rural areas are observed to be high for some of the minority groups, and low for others. The highest incidences are seen among the Buddhists, followed by the Others, Zoroastrians and Muslims. The lowest levels are seen among the Christians, Sikhs and Jains. The major groups of the Hindus and Muslims show middle level incidences of rural poverty. The urban picture shows a different pattern from the rural one. In the urban areas, the Muslims register the highest incidence of poverty, followed by the Buddhists. Interestingly, the Hindus show higher levels of urban poverty incidence than most other groups and are placed third, in contrast to their fifth position in the rural areas. Urban Zoroastrians register the third lowest levels of poverty and

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seem to show lower incidences than their rural counterparts. The lowest incidences of poverty are again seen among the Jains, Sikhs and Christians. On the whole, across both urban and rural areas, it can be observed that the Jains and Sikhs, both of which groups are primarily engaged in individual enterprises (even rural Sikh farmers undertake additional income-earning activities such as rearing milch cattle), show the lowest incidences of poverty along with the Christians.

Table 12: Poverty Incidence across Religious Communities

Religious Community	Poverty Incidence (Rural)	Poverty Incidence (Urban)
Buddhists	40.59	28.62
Christians	16.21	12.47
Hindus	28.90	23.35
Jains	2.59	2.57
Muslims	29.26	41.38
Others	36.02	22.91
Sikhs	5.00	6.08
Total	28.29	25.62
Zoroastrians	35.42	10.74

Source: NSSO 61st Round on , Consumption Expenditure, 2004-05.

Table 13: Share of Religious Poor in All-India Poor (Rural/Urban)

Religious Community	Rural	Urban
Buddhists	0.77 (0.66)	0.89 (1.07)
Christians	1.14 (2.14)	2.81 (2.86)
Hindus	85.52 (82.33)	79.99 (75.6)
Jains	0.01 (0.14)	1.10 (1.12)
Muslims	11.78 (11.96)	12.93 (17.26)
Others	0.43 (0.81)	0.09 (0.22)
Sikhs	0.34 (1.9)	2.12 (1.79)
Zoroastrians	0.01 (NA)	0.07 (NA)

Note: Figures in brackets indicate percentage share in total population

Source: NSSO 61st Round on Consumption Expenditure, 2004/05.

Table 13 shows the break-up of the total poor in the country, indicating the contribution of each religious group to the poor population of the country and the respective proportions of each group. The Table 13 provides the break-up of the all-India poor population across various religious groups, arranged in decreasing order, while the same is provided for the overall population of India in the table on the right. It can be seen that the share of Hindu and Christian is largest among the poor in rural areas. In urban areas the order is slightly different with Sikhs and Jains at 4th and 5th places respectively. This pattern of the distribution of poor across rural and urban areas largely corroborates with the distribution pattern of their population. The other communities register similar figures.

4.1. Odds of Being Poor

In this section, the odds of being poor are assigned to people in consonance with the religious group they belong to. A logistic regression exercise is undertaken to ascertain the odds. The dependent variable was created as a dummy variable called 'poverty', which took a value '1' if the person was poor and a value '2' if the person was found to be not poor. A independent variables were associated with the religious background of the persons, namely Hindu, Muslim, Christian, Sikh, Buddhist, Jain or Zoroastrian.

Table 14 Odds Ratio (Variables in the Equation)

Religious Community	Rural		Urban	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp (B)
Hindus	-0.326	0.722	0.025	1.025
Muslims	-0.308	0.735	0.865	2.375
Christians	-1.068	0.344	-0.735	0.480
Sikhs	-2.369	0.094	-1.523	0.218
Jains	-3.027	0.048	-2.398	0.091
Buddhists	0.194	1.214	0.300	1.350
Zoroastrians	-0.026	0.974	-0.904	0.405
Constant	-0.575	0.563	-1.214	0.297

Note: All volumes are significant at 1 % label of significance

Source: Calculated from NSSO,61st Round on Consumption Expenditure, 2004-05.

It can be observed that the Buddhists have the highest odds of being poor, followed by the Zoroastrians, Muslims and Hindus, in that order. The lowest odds of being poor are seen for the Sikhs and the Jains.

The highest odds of being poor in the urban areas are seen among the Muslims, followed by Buddhists, and then Hindus. The lowest odds are seen among the Jains and Sikhs. The Christians and Zoroastrians register low but medium level odds. Thus, across both rural and urban areas, the Buddhists and Muslims show the highest odds of being poor, while the Sikhs and Jains show the lowest odds.

4.2. Mean Per-Capita Consumption Expenditure

The mean per capita expenditure across religious groups for both rural and urban areas is given in Table 15. The rural expenditure patterns indicate that only three groups, namely the Jains, Sikhs and Christians, register above all-India average expenditures. The reasons for this in the case of the Jains are the predominance of self-employed non-farm entrepreneurs, while in the case of the Sikhs, their relative success at farming and off-farm diversification can be largely assumed to have contributed to their improved position. The bottom three groups comprise the Zoroastrians, Others and Buddhists. Surprisingly, poor performance of the Zoroastrians in this category could be due to the fact that a very small proportion of them inhabit in the rural areas, and probably do so unsuccessfully in economic terms.

Table 15: Mean Per-Capita Consumption Expenditure Rural/Urban (Rs)

Religious Community	Mean MPCE-Rural	Mean MPCE-Urban
Buddhists	506.26	880.59
Christians	806.27	1352.63
Hindus	547.70	1083.17
Jains	978.36	1901.36
Muslims	545.81	776.50
Others	504.09	1179.45
Sikhs	864.72	1498.81
Zoroastrians	474.07	2883.57
<i>All-India Average</i>	558.81	1052.34

Source: NSSO 61st Round on Consumption Expenditure

Unlike the rural picture, the urban situation shows the Zoroastrians performing the best amongst all groups, as is usually expected of them due to their high levels of education and private economic enterprise. Also, all the groups show above average expenditures except the Buddhists and Muslims. After the Zoroastrians, the Jains, Sikhs, Christians and Others register above average expenditures.

5. UNEMPLOYMENT RATES

The unemployment rates (all age groups) across all religious groups can be seen to be very low in both rural and urban regions. The rates are the highest at 3.9 per cent for urban Christians, and 3.1 per cent for urban Buddhists. The lowest rates, on the other hand, are seen for the rural Jains and the Zoroastrians. On the whole, the urban unemployment rates are slightly higher for all groups except the Sikhs and the Jains. These rates are based on the 'Usual Principle status' of individuals, which defines a person as working, if he or she had been gainfully employed for a major part of the year (usually more than 180 days) preceding date of the the survey (time criteria).

Table 16: Unemployment Rates among Religious Communities, (All Ages), 2004-05

Religious Community	Rural	Urban	Total
Hindus	0.90(0.7)	1.94	1.15
Muslims	1.04(0.8)	1.58	1.22
Christians	2.72(2.1)	3.92	3.07
Sikhs	2.23 (1.6)	1.91	2.17
Jains	0.00	1.20	1.00
Buddhists	1.07	3.17	1.77
Zoroastrians	0.00	2.19	2.14
Others	0.29	4.64	1.06
Total	0.98	1.94	1.23

Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05

The unemployment rates depicted in Table 17 would decline further if the 'Usual status' criteria were to be used, which, in addition to the 'Usual Principle status' of a person, also includes his or her 'Usual subsidiary activity status'. Persons designated as unemployed for the major part of the year on the basis

of the 'Usual principle status' criteria, also do some form of work for a shorter duration (but for more than 30 days) or on a part-time basis, along with their principle activity (in this case, usually less than 180 days). Such persons are taken as working or employed by 'Usual Status' criteria, thus further reducing the incidence of unemployment.

Table 17: Unemployment Rates among Religious Communities (15-24 Years), 2004-05

Religious Community	Unemployed		
	Rural	Urban	Total
Hindus	1.58	3.06	1.97
Muslims	1.68	2.56	2.00
Christians	4.30	3.71	4.12
Sikhs	4.49	2.43	4.02
Jains	0.00	0.00	0.00
Buddhists	1.42	5.72	2.91
Zoroastrians	0.00	0.00	0.00
Others	0.27	15.13	3.23
Total	1.70	3.01	2.07

Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05

Amongst the young population (age group 15-24 years) across the various religious groups, the unemployment rates are seen to be higher than those for the total population as seen in Table 17. The only exceptions are the categories of the rural 'Others' and the urban Jains and Zoroastrians, and the Zoroastrians overall. The highest rates of unemployment are again seen among the rural Sikhs and Christians. In the urban areas, the highest rates are seen among the 'Others', at 15 per cent, followed by the Buddhists at 5 per cent. Christians and Hindus follow next with figures of 3.7 per cent and 3 per cent, respectively.

5.1. Workforce Participation Rate—All Ages

Table 18 provides the percentage of population from various religious groups participating in work. At the all-India level, the workforce participation rate (WPR) indicates that among the Zoroastrians, nearly 45 per cent of the community is part of the labor force. They are followed by the Christians. The Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs, Jains and Others show similar rates, ranging from

34 per cent to 37 per cent. The lowest WPRs are seen among the Muslims at 32 per cent. The difference between the lowest and highest rates is around 12 per cent. This overall pattern is exactly replicated across the urban areas. However, in the rural areas, the pattern changes considerably. The Buddhists show the highest WPRs here, pushing the Zoroastrians down by one position. The Hindus, Sikhs and Christians register a fall in their rates whereas Others and the Jains improve their position and move up. The rural rates are understandably higher than the urban ones due to the nature of the rural occupations and the remunerations that rural residents are expected to earn, forcing more people to work in one form or the other.

Table 18: Workforce Participation Rate (All Ages), 2004-05

Religious Community	Rural	Urban	Total
Buddhists	51.29	37.33	37.33
Christians	43.66	39.62	39.62
Hindus	41.24	37.34	37.34
Jains	45.37	34.38	34.38
Muslims	31.23	32.72	32.72
Others	47.72	34.24	34.24
Sikhs	33.43	35.16	35.16
Total	40.07	36.57	36.57
Zoroastrians	50.00	44.42	44.42

Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05.

5.2. Workforce Participation Rate among Youth

As regards the work participation rates for the youth (15-24 years), it can be observed that at the all-India level, the rates rise quite significantly for all the groups, except for the Sikhs, Jains and Muslims. However, the youth participation pattern is somewhat different from the overall pattern observed above. At the all-India level, the Zoroastrians maintain their top position, but thereafter, the Christians, who occupied the second position, are replaced by the Buddhists, and the Hindus are replaced by the Others. On the whole, amongst the youth except for the Buddhists, Others and Muslims, all the other groups lose their overall erstwhile standings. The lowest rates are now seen for the Muslims and also surprisingly for the Jain youth (Table 19).

Table 19: Workforce Participation Rate—15 to 24 Years

Religious Community	Rural	Urban	Total
Buddhists	61.22	43.01	54.89
Christians	52.29	39.85	48.40
Hindus	48.40	41.53	46.58
Jains	52.45	32.33	37.25
Muslims	37.74	38.13	37.88
Others	56.60	40.51	53.39
Sikhs	38.97	36.22	38.34
Zoroastrians	0.00	77.03	71.79
Total	47.10	40.74	45.32

Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05.

The urban pattern of workforce participation is similar to the overall pattern, except for changes in the relative positions. Zoroastrians and Buddhists show the highest WRP rates and others, Christian and Hindus show almost similar Workforce Participation Rate in Urban area. At the bottom, the Sikhs and Muslims have swapped positions, while the Jains maintain their position at the bottom rung. Unlike the relative reshuffle at the urban level, the rural standings change dramatically, with the Zoroastrians moving from the top to the bottom position. This could be due to the very small sample of Zoroastrians living in rural areas, and probably with no sample persons falling in this age group. The Jains, who occupied the bottom position at the overall and urban levels, now display the third highest rates. The Hindus occupy the same position as at the overall level, while the Sikhs maintain their overall relative position and the Muslims again register the lowest rates.

Table 20: Workforce Participation Rate among Youth by their Gender, 2004-05

Religious Community	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Hindus	68.66	40.30	54.92	20.43
Muslims	70.51	22.11	68.86	16.09
Christians	61.73	41.63	39.05	29.73
Sikhs	70.54	40.72	52.97	16.65
Jains	53.95	12.93	51.99	7.55
Buddhists	69.73	48.41	50.23	12.63
Zoroastrians	0.00	100.00	0.00	52.96
Others	79.37	55.45	61.51	25.88

Source: NSSO, Employment and Unemployment Survey, 61st Round, 2004-05

A break-up across gender in WPRs reveals that across all religious groups, the rate is higher for males as compared to females (Table 21). Secondly, the WPR is higher for rural males and females than for their urban counterparts. The highest rates are seen for the Others, Muslims, Sikhs and Buddhists amongst the rural males, and for the Others, Buddhists, Sikhs and Hindus amongst the rural females. In urban areas, the WPR patterns are somewhat different. Here, the highest rates among males are registered by the Muslims, Others, Hindus and Sikhs, while the highest rates among females registered by the Zoroastrians, Christians, Others and Hindus.

6. RELIGIOUS COMMUNITIES BY THEIR TYPE OF HOUSEHOLD-RURAL

NSSO categories rural households into four categories based on their main source of income. These include self-employed in non-agriculture, agricultural labour, other labour, self-employed in agriculture, and others. In rural areas, most people are either self-employed in agriculture or engaged in own cultivation or employed as wage labour on the farms of others. The category 'Agriculture' (Agri) gives the workers employed directly in/by agriculture as self-employed and agricultural wage labour. It can be observed that more than 75 per cent of the population in the case of Buddhists and Others is engaged in agriculture in rural areas.

Table 21: Distribution of Religious Communities by their Type of Household-Rural, 2004-05

Religious Community	SENA	AL	OL	SEA	OTH	Agri	Manual Labour
Others	9.09	19.78	8.22	56.55	6.35	76.34	28.01
Buddhists	7.13	56.51	8.54	19.02	8.80	75.53	65.05
Hindus	15.00	25.67	10.17	40.93	8.23	66.59	35.84
Zoroastrians	NA	NA	35.42	64.58	NA	64.58	NA
Sikhs	15.70	22.05	13.92	37.51	10.81	59.56	35.98
Christians	12.19	19.16	16.77	38.49	13.39	57.65	35.93
Muslims	29.23	19.37	10.86	29.69	10.85	49.06	30.23
Jains	43.66	17.61	5.79	26.92	6.02	44.53	23.39
Total	16.54	24.89	10.44	39.46	8.68	64.35	35.33

Source: Generated by using NSSO, Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2004-05.

Amongst these two categories, in the case of ‘Others’, despite the fact that it is a small group, 56 per cent are owner cultivators, while in the case of the Buddhists, only 19 per cent are owner cultivators. A majority of 56 per cent among them are agricultural labourers. This indicates that ownership of land among Buddhists is the lowest amongst all the groups. The next batch of group includes the Hindus, Zoroastrians, Sikhs and Christians, who fall in the range of 60 to 65 per cent. These four groups also show the highest incidence of owner cultivation, thereby indicating land ownership. Amongst these groups, the Hindus and Sikhs together show the second highest incidences of agricultural labour after the Buddhists. The Jains and Muslims show the lowest levels of involvement in agriculture but the highest involvement in the category of self-employed in non-agricultural occupations followed by the Sikhs and Hindus.

6.1. Religious Communities by Their Household Type-Urban

The urban household types include the self-employed (SE), the regular wage/salary earners (RW/SE), casual labourers (CL) and others. Amongst these, the RW/SE can be safely assumed to be the most secure in terms of job security

and regular income. After them come the self-employed, who may earn more than the RW/SE, but face higher market risks. The casual laborers would easily be the most vulnerable on account of both low wages and insecurity of jobs. Amongst the Buddhists, nearly half the urban population falls in the RW/SE category. This is primarily due to the policy of job reservation for the Scheduled Castes (SCs) in India, most of whom are Buddhist by religion.

Next come the Christians, who again have a high level of education, followed by the Hindus, the higher castes amongst whom have traditionally been educated, and finally the Zoroastrians, who also have high education levels. The lowest incidences of education levels are observed for the others, Sikh, Muslims, and Jains. These last four groups are synonymous with being self-employed and are engaged in private enterprise. Thus under the SE category, the Jains, Sikhs, Muslims and Others show the highest incidences of self-employment, respectively. They are followed by Hindus, Christians and Buddhists at the lowest level of self-employment. The highest incidence of casual labour is observed among the Buddhists, with nearly a quarter of their urban population being engaged in it.

Table 22: Distribution of Religious Communities by Their Household Type-Urban, 2004-05

Religious Community	SE	RW/SE	CL	OTH	
Hindus	40.12	42.64	11.48	5.75	100.00
Muslims	56.94	24.31	13.14	5.62	100.00
Christians	27.20	49.41	13.63	9.76	100.00
Sikhs	57.62	31.33	4.94	6.11	100.00
Jains	77.90	17.35	0.39	4.37	100.00
Buddhists	18.57	51.99	24.90	4.54	100.00
Zoroastrians	26.07	40.36	0.83	32.73	100.00
Others	55.67	35.64	2.79	5.90	100.00
Total	42.99	39.47	11.71	5.82	100.00

Source: Generated by Using NSSO, Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2004-05.

Thus, it can be seen that overall the Buddhists fare the worst in both urban and rural areas in terms of casual nature of their occupation. The Christians and the Muslims follow next.

7. PARTICIPATION OF WORKERS ACROSS INDUSTRY GROUPS— RURAL AREAS

The industrial classification of workers across religious groups is examined next. This is similar to the household type classification only across different industrial classifications based on the National Industrial Code (NIC). As expected, around 67 per cent of the total rural workers are employed in the agricultural industry. The remaining workers are largely employed across the categories of manufacturing, wholesale/repair and retail, construction, transportation, and the storage and communication industry. Religious Community-wise, a highest 77 per cent Buddhists are employed in the agricultural industry. They are followed by the Hindus, Zoroastrians, Sikhs and Christians. In the category of manufacturing, Muslims take the lead with 10.7 per cent of their workforce being engaged in this category of work, followed by the Hindus and Christians at 7 per cent and 6 per cent, respectively. The Jains are proportionately highest in wholesale/retail and repair industry as 4 per cent of them being engaged in this category. They are followed by Muslims at 13 per cent. The percentage share of Sikhs, Christians and Jains in construction industry is at around 8 per cent each but is highest in case of the Zoroastrians at 35 per cent. In the trade and transport sector, the Sikhs lead the way, followed by Muslims and Christians.

Table: 23 Workers across Their Industry of Occupation-Rural, 2004-05 (%)

Industry of Occupation	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Jains	Buddhists	Zoroastrians	Others
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	68.97	52.85	61.69	63.07	45.23	77.61	64.58	80.63
Manufacturing	7.25	10.73	6.69	6.11	1.16	4.84	NA	2.56
Wholesale, Retail and Repair	5.86	13.90	5.70	6.90	43.99	3.83	NA	2.26
Construction	6.49	8.12	8.59	8.09	2.62	4.54	35.42	4.87
Transportation, Storage and Communication	3.20	6.42	4.29	7.25	0.64	2.89	NA	1.66
Education	1.88	1.58	3.97	1.63	1.73	2.79	NA	0.74
Public Administration, Defence and Social Service	1.47	1.37	2.34	2.72		1.60	NA	2.79
Community Service	1.51	1.44	0.88	1.25	1.88	0.45	NA	0.22
Hotels and Restaurants	0.79	1.18	0.66	0.51		0.12	NA	0.84
Mining and Quarrying	0.75	0.52	1.01	0.17		0.02	NA	2.95
Health and Social Work	0.45	0.38	0.84	0.33	1.61	0.21	NA	0.19
Fishing	0.39	0.57	1.25				NA	0.15
Real Estate, Renting and Business	0.29	0.42	0.89	0.22		0.20	NA	0.04
Financial Intermediation	0.29	0.08	0.63	0.53	1.13	0.54	NA	
Electricity, Gas and Water	0.26	0.09	0.34	1.03		0.20	NA	0.06
Household with Employees	0.14	0.37	0.24	0.19		0.17	NA	0.07
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Generated by Using NSSO, Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2004-05.

7.1. Participation of Workers across Industry Group—Urban Areas

In the urban landscape, workers belonging to various religious populations are distributed far more evenly across different industries of occupation than in the rural areas. The top three industries with double-digit shares of workers at the all-India level are the wholesale, retail and repair (WS/R & R), manufacturing, and transportation, storage and communication industries. Amongst the Jains, 63 per cent of their workforce is employed in the WS/R & R industry. In case of the Muslims, Sikhs and Hindus, the corresponding ratios are 30 per cent, 29 per cent and 21 per cent respectively. Manufacturing work comes next, engaging for first and foremost the Muslims, followed by the Hindus, Christians and Jains. As regards transportation, it is apparently popular among the Zoroastrians, Others, Sikhs and Christians, all of whom show roughly equal participation in it. However, it is the Buddhists who account for the largest share of their population in this industry at 21 per cent. In construction industry a substantial 17 per cent of Buddhists are employed (mostly wage labour), followed by the Christians, Muslims and Hindus. As far as industries such as education, public administration, and defence & social security are concerned, it is observed that the latter is widely chosen by Others at 33 per cent of them employed in these two sub-groups. This is followed by the Christians, Buddhists and Hindus. Education, on the other hand, seems to be the choice of the minor groups led by the Christians, followed by the Hindus, Sikhs, Buddhists and Jains.

8. AVERAGE LAND OWNERSHIP ACROSS RELIGIOUS GROUPS—RURAL AREAS

This section examines the basic asset base of the rural population across their religious groups. It has been found that the incidence of landlessness is highest amongst the Buddhists at 40 per cent. This is because the Buddhists are dominantly ex-untouchables and of low caste status, due to which traditionally they have had no rights to own land under the Hindu fold. The Buddhists are followed by the Zoroastrians, Sikhs and Jains. The Jains and the Zoroastrians are known to be traditionally involved in business and private enterprises. The figures in Table 25 suggest that the Zoroastrians are either landless or large landowners. The rural Sikhs also undertake farming but also supplement their incomes by diversifying into off-farm activities. Landlessness amongst the Muslims is seen to be higher than that among the Hindus, while it is lowest amongst the Christians.

Table: 24 Workers across their Industry of Occupation—Urban, 2004-05 (%)

Industry of Occupation	Hindus	Muslims	Christians	Sikhs	Jains	Buddhists	Zoroastrians	Others
Wholesale, Retails and Repair	21.85	30.52	11.76	29.58	63.66	11.61	1.27	14.33
Manufacturing	20.62	26.01	16.08	14.55	15.76	12.61	14.96	5.72
Transportation, Storage and Communication	11.04	13.40	13.57	13.30	2.99	21.59	15.78	13.55
Construction	8.86	9.61	11.28	6.21	1.18	17.97	NA	3.96
Public Administration, Defence and Social Service	8.86	3.37	11.22	7.05	1.17	8.65	2.78	33.57
Agriculture, Hunting and Forestry	6.78	4.84	6.80	10.14	0.40	2.42	NA	21.53
Education	4.24	1.72	8.84	3.92	3.31	3.61	2.65	1.02
Hotels and Restaurants	3.23	2.77	2.63	1.01	0.46	0.44	19.08	1.55
Real Estate, Renting and Business	3.24	1.52	3.33	4.42	3.48	4.14	41.68	0.08
Community Work	2.57	2.20	3.19	2.70	0.22	7.81	1.81	1.88
Financial Intermediation	2.65	0.62	2.03	1.36	6.38	1.93	NA	1.95
Health and Social Work	1.86	1.12	3.29	2.16	0.30	3.13	NA	0.41
Mining and Quarrying	1.50	0.52	1.03	1.44	0.10	0.72	NA	0.14
Pvt. Houses with Employees	1.22	1.16	1.25	0.23	0.03	2.14	NA	0.20
Electricity, Water and Gas	1.18	0.44	1.63	1.93	0.56	1.23	NA	NA
Fishing	0.30	0.18	2.08	NA	NA	NA	NA	0.12
Extra Territorial Organisations	0.00	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Generated by Using NSSO, Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2004-05.

Table 25: Landholding Pattern across Religious Groups (Rural), 2004-05

Religious Community	Landless	Marginal	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large	Total
Hindus	16.55	32.83	20.79	14.76	9.79	5.28	100.00
Muslims	19.32	46.62	19.17	9.00	4.41	1.48	100.00
Christians	8.76	46.28	19.42	13.42	9.70	2.42	100.00
Sikhs	23.93	33.83	7.86	9.91	13.99	10.48	100.00
Jains	23.68	16.73	6.57	23.05	10.68	19.29	100.00
Buddhists	40.97	22.69	13.45	15.52	3.13	4.23	100.00
Zoroastrians	35.42	-	-	-	-	64.58	100.00
Others	4.63	17.82	37.35	24.06	11.59	4.54	100.00
Total	16.96	34.57	20.32	14.02	9.23	4.90	100.00

Source: Generated by using NSSO, Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2004-05.

Marginal and small holdings constitute the largest two categories across India. This is clearly reflected across the population groups of Hindus, Muslims and Christians. In addition to the Zoroastrians, as mentioned above, among the Sikhs, the second largest land owning category after the marginal one is the large one, followed by the very large, the medium and then the small categories. Among the Jains, the largest land-owned category is the medium one, followed by the very large, the marginal, the large and finally the small categories.

8.1. Share of Different Religious Groups across Land Classes

The religious break-up of the population falling in each of the land categories is analysed here. Among the first three categories of the landless, marginal and small landholders, Hindus and the Muslims remain at top two. The Christians and Sikhs are the next two populous groups that follow the Hindus and the Muslims in terms of the landless and marginal landowners, albeit not necessarily in that order. The Sikhs constitute a small portion of the category of small landowners, and are replaced by the group 'Others'. Thereafter, the Christians exchange places with the Muslims across the medium and the large categories of landownership, followed by the Sikhs. Interestingly, in the case of the category of very large landowners, the participation of the Sikhs ascends to the second position just below the Hindus, and above the Christians and Muslims. Mirroring their small shares in the overall population, the contribution

of the Buddhists, Others, Jains and Zoroastrians to all categories of landownership is negligible.

Table 26: Share of Religious Groups across Landholding Classes (Rural), 2004-05

Religious Community	Landless	Marginal	Small	Medium	Large	Very Large
Buddhists	1.36	0.91	1.28	1.47	0.72	0.74
Christians	2.05	5.64	8.71	9.63	11.12	5.62
Hindus	79.88	73.58	74.33	75.24	74.87	80.95
Jains	0.20	0.05	0.03	0.06	0.13	0.21
Muslims	11.68	16.36	12.98	9.05	6.51	4.29
Others	0.30	0.71	1.47	2.26	2.17	2.44
Sikhs	4.51	2.75	1.20	2.29	4.48	5.73
Zoroastrians	0.01					0.03
All	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00

Source: Generated by Using NSSO, Consumption Expenditure Survey, 2004-05.

9. HEALTH AND IMMUNISATION STATUS OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN ACROSS RELIGIOUS GROUPS

This section focuses on the health and nutritional status of the most vulnerable, namely the women and the children across religious communities in India. It commences with an examination of the health of pregnant women in terms of their immunization, place of delivery, and assistance received during delivery, among other factors. This is followed by an assessment of the health of children in terms of their mortality, morbidity, immunization and treatment. Finally, the nutritional level or the lack of it across religious groups has been studied in detail.

9.1. Health of Pregnant Women—Immunisation against Tetanus

It is very important to accord protection to women against tetanus, as it can directly affect the health of children born to them. Table 27 provides an indication of the extent of immunisation care received by workers before and during their pregnancy as well as the overall incidence of immunisation. Jain and Sikh women have with the highest immunisation levels of 92 per cent and 85 per cent respectively. They are followed by Hindu, Buddhist, Christian and Muslim women, with the percentages of immunisation for these religious groups

ranging from 73 per cent to 76 per cent. The lowest incidence of immunisation is seen for the category 'Others' at 50 per cent.

Table 27: Components of Antenatal Care, 2004-05

Religious Community	Received Two or More TT Injections	Received One TT Injection during the Pregnancy and at Least One in the Three Years Prior to the Pregnancy
Hindus	76.9	1.4
Muslims	73.4	1.8
Christians	74.4	1.9
Sikhs	85.5	0.7
Buddhists/Neo-Buddhists	75.6	5.8
Jains	92.2	0.6
Others	50.2	1.6

Note: Among women with a live birth in the five years preceding the survey, percentage who received two or more tetanus toxoid (TT) injections during the pregnancy, received one TT injection during pregnancy, and at least one in the three years preceding the survey

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

9.2. Place of Most Recent Delivery

The place of delivery of a child also indicates the level of care and hygiene accorded to the mother at the time of delivery. The best and safe place for a delivery would be a public/private health facility. As regards the incidence of deliveries at a health facility, it has been found that the Jains again lead with a figure of 93 per cent such deliveries, with only 6 per cent of the deliveries being performed in homes. The Jains are followed by the Buddhists and Sikhs, who account for a figure of 58 per cent for deliveries at health facilities. However, a major difference between these two religious groups is that the Sikhs prefer private health facilities while the Buddhists opt for the public ones. The reason for this seems to be the obvious difference in the economic well-being and standing of the two communities. Next are the Christians exhibiting an incidence of with 53 per cent for deliveries being performed at health facilities. An interesting observation here is that almost all the remaining deliveries occur at home. The lowest rates of deliveries at health facilities are seen for the Hindus at 39 per cent and the Muslims at 33 per cent. In the case of

Hindus, 50 per cent of the deliveries occur in homes, while the corresponding figure for Muslims is 56 per cent.

Table 28: Place of Delivery, 2005-06

Religious Community	Public Sector	NGO/ Trust	Private Sector	Own Home	Parents' Home	Other Home	Others	Total	Percentage Delivered in a Health Facility
Hindus	18.4	0.5	20.3	50.9	9.3	0.4	0.3	100	39.1
Muslims	15.4	0.3	17.3	56.7	9.6	0.5	0.2	100	33
Christians	23.6	0.9	28.9	42	3.8	0.7	0.2	100	53.4
Sikhs	15.1	1.2	42	32.3	9.2	0.1	0.1	100	58.3
Buddhists Neo-Buddhists	37.2	0.2	21.3	23.4	17.2	0.6	0.1	100	58.8
Jains	30.9	2.6	59.6	4.1	2.8	0	0	100	93.1
Others	7.9	0.4	2.1	79.2	7.8	2	0.6	100	10.4

Note: Percent distribution of live births in the five years preceding the survey by place of delivery, and percentage delivered in a health facility, according to religious groups, India, 2005-06

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey—3 (NFHS—3), 2005-06.

9.3. Assistance during Delivery

Another indication of awareness about birth-related health practices is the nature of assistance sought during child delivery. Table 29 indicates that in case of deliveries conducted by skilled providers (that is, doctors, Auxiliary Nurse Midwife (ANMs)/nurses/midwives/Lady Health Visitor (LHVs), other health personnel) again the Jains and the Sikhs lead, with 94 per cent and 75 per cent such deliveries, respectively. They are followed by the Buddhists and Christians at around 60 per cent, while the Hindus and Muslims show the lowest incidence of deliveries by skilled personnel at 47 per cent and 38 per cent, respectively. Thus, on the whole, it seems that the minority religious groups seem to show greater awareness and more insistence on the use of health practices (they were earlier also seen to exhibit higher enrolment and education levels). Consequently, it is seen that amongst the Hindus, Muslims and Others, the incidence of deliveries by *Dais* (TBA) is the highest. The Others lead with as high a figure as 67 per cent of such deliveries, followed by Muslims at 47 per cent and finally Hindus at 34 per cent.

Table 29: Assistance during Delivery, 2005-06

Religious Community	Doctor	ANM/ Nurse/ Midwife/ LHV	Other Health Personnel	Dai (TBA)	Friends/ Relatives	Other	No one	Don't Know/ Missing	Total	Percentage Delivered by a Skilled Provider	Perc Deliv Cae Se
Hindus	35.6	10.7	1.1	34.9	16.9	0.1	0.5	0.1	100	47.5	1
Muslims	30.2	7.3	1.2	47	13.8	0.1	0.3	0.1	100	38.8	1
Christians	48.1	11.5	0.5	21.6	16.7	0	1.3	0.1	100	60.2	1
Sikhs	50.2	23.6	1.6	24.1	0.5	0	0	0	100	75.4	
Buddhists	52.4	12.4	0.1	16.2	18.8	0	0.1	0.1	100	64.9	1
Jains	89.8	4.5	0	5.5	0	0	0	0.2	100	94.3	3
Others	8.3	6.2	0.1	67.3	15.4	0	2.2	0.5	100	14.6	

Note: Percentage distribution of live births in the five years preceding the survey by person providing assistance during delivery, and percentage delivered by caesarean section, according to religious groups, India, 2005-06

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey—3 (NFHS—3), 2005-06.

9.4. Child Mortality

As regards mortality of infants (aged below 1 year) and children (up to 5 years of age), it has been seen that the Jains report no such deaths for both the categories. For infants under one year of age, the highest mortality rates of 84 per cent are seen among the Others. The Hindus show the next highest rates at nearly 60 per cent. The Muslims and Buddhists show identical rates at 52 per cent, followed by the Sikhs at 45 per cent. The lowest rates of child mortality are seen among the Christians at 41 per cent only next to Jains. On the whole, the rates of infant mortality are very high, starting at around 40 per cent and thereafter climbing higher across all the religious groups.

Even more alarmingly, the child mortality rates are still higher than the infant mortality rates. This implies that more deaths occur after the first year of childbirth. Again, according to the NFHS report, the Others show the highest child mortality rates at 130 per cent, though this is not possible, and seems to be a calculation or typological error. Like the infant mortality rates, the Hindus again show the second highest child mortality rates at 76 per cent, followed by the Muslims and Buddhists at nearly 70 per cent. The Sikhs and Christians show the lowest child mortality rates at 52 per cent each. Thus, on the whole, the same relative patterns of the various religious groups are seen across both the mortality categories.

Table 30: Child Mortality across Religious Communities

Religious Community	Infant Mortality (1q0)	Under-five Mortality (5q0)
Hindus	58.5	76.0
Muslims	52.4	70.0
Christians	41.7	52.8
Sikhs	45.6	52.1
Buddhists	52.8	69.0
Others	84.6	130.7

Note: All estimates are for the five years preceding the survey. Totals include Jains, cases with missing information on education, religion, and caste/tribe, and cases in which the respondent does not know the caste/tribe, which are not shown separately. () Based on 250-499 unweighted children surviving to the beginning of the age interval.* Rate not shown; based on fewer than 250 unweighted children surviving to the beginning of the age interval.

Source: Published figures from National Family Health Survey—3 (NFHS—3), 2005-06.

9.5. Child Morbidity and Access to Healthcare

Acute Respiratory Illness (ARI)

Information about the percentage of children under the age of five years, who had symptoms of acute respiratory infection (ARI) in the two weeks preceding the survey and percentage with symptoms of ARI and who received specific treatments is given in Table 31. As far as the incidence of Acute Respiratory Illness (ARI) and its treatment across religious groups is concerned, surprisingly the Jains and Muslims show the highest incidence of ARI, at an identical figure of 8.6 per cent for both religious groups. They are followed by the Sikhs at 6.7 per cent and Hindus at 5.2 per cent. The lowest incidence of ARI is seen among the Christians, Buddhists and Others at around 3.4, 3.1 and 3.1 per cent respectively. In terms of treatment sought and obtained, there is no available record for the Jains. In case of the Muslims, who also show high incidence of ARI, 70 per cent of the affected persons sought treatment from a health facility, which is an encouraging trend. However, the Sikhs, who show the second highest incidence of ARI, exhibit the highest level of awareness about the disease and accessibility to healthcare, as 94 per cent of the affected persons in this religious group sought treatment from a health facility. The Hindus and Buddhists follow next with nearly identical rates of 68 per cent each. (The rates among the Buddhists are, however, based on a smaller unweighted sample). The Christians and Others who show the lowest incidence of ARI symptoms, and also the lowest rates of treatment sought, at around 48 per cent.

Table: 31 Prevalence and Treatment of Symptoms of ARI, 2004-05

Religious Community	Children under Age of Five Percentage with Symptoms of ARI	Children under Age of Five with Symptoms of ARI	
		Percentage for Whom Treatment was Sought from a Health Facility or Provider	Percentage Who Received Antibiotics
Hindus	5.2	68.3	13.9
Muslims	8.6	70.6	9
Christians	3.4	48.8	12.6
Sikhs	6.7	94.5	9.8
Buddhists	3.1	67.4	2.9
Jains	8.6	*	*
Others	3.1	49.6	23.1

Note: Total includes children with missing information on mother's education, religion, caste/tribe, mother's current tobacco use, and cooking fuel and children living in households using 'other' cooking fuel, who are not shown separately. Based

on 25-49 unweighted cases.* Percentage not shown; based on fewer than 25 unweighted cases.

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

Although the Muslims exhibit the highest incidence of ARI infection and also a high percentage of people seeking treatment, surprisingly the percentage of those among Muslims who received antibiotics is only 9 per cent as compared to corresponding figures of 13.9 per cent for Hindus and 12 per cent for Christians (who also show one of the lowest rates of incidence of ARI). However, it is the Buddhists and Others who show the lowest incidence of receiving antibiotics.

Prevalence and Treatment of Diarrhoea

An analysis of the occurrence of diarrhoea amongst children under the age of five years indicates that the incidence of the disease is highest among Others (16 per cent) followed by the Buddhists (13 per cent), Sikhs (10 per cent) and Hindus (10 per cent). The lowest rates of incidence of diarrhoea are seen among the Muslims and Christians at around 8 per cent each. As regards the treatment, it has been seen that Others, despite recording the highest incidence of occurrence of the disease, show the lowest rates of taking their children to a health provider. The Buddhists, who show the second highest rates of occurrence of for diarrhoea, exhibit a healthy treatment rate of 70 per cent. The highest such rates are seen for the Sikhs at 75 per cent, followed by the Hindus and Muslims at around 60 per cent each, while the Christians show the lowest rate of seeking treatment at 50 per cent.

Table 32: Prevalence and Treatment of Diarrhoea

Religious Community	Any Diarrhoea	Percentage of Children with Diarrhoea Taken to a Health Provider	Oral Rehydration Therapy (ORT) Either ORS or Gruel	Increased Fluids	Other Treatments	
					Antibiotic Drugs	Home Remedy/ Herbal/ Other
Christians	8.1	50	54.1	13.9	20.1	11.7
Muslims	8.2	61.8	37.6	12.8	13.9	8.7
Hindus	10	59.3	38.3	9.6	15.7	6.8
Sikhs	10.4	75.2	39.7	2.9	17.2	19.6
Buddhists	13.6	70.9	28.2	13.8	14.3	18.8
Others	16.2	45	46.9	4.7	7.7	10.8

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey—3 (NFHS—3), 2005-06.

Prevalence and Treatment—Fever

The available data for children under the age of five indicates that the highest rate of incidence of fever is seen among the Muslims at 20 per cent. The Jains, Sikhs and Others display relatively lower levels of incidence of fever, ranging from 14 to 16 per cent. The Hindus and Christians show identical incidences of 13 per cent, while the Buddhists have the lowest incidence at 9 per cent. As regards the incidence of seeking treatment for fever, the Sikhs lead all the religious groups, at 84 per cent, followed closely by the Buddhists at 83 per cent. They, in turn, are followed by Muslims and Hindus, at around 70 per cent each. The lowest rates of treatment sought for fever are seen among Others. In terms of the administration of anti-malarial drugs, the Buddhists lead other groups with a figure of 19 per cent, followed by Sikhs and Hindus at 9 per cent each and Christians at 8 per cent. Thus, on the whole, Sikhs and Buddhists seem to be more aware of the disease and conscious of the need for seeking professional help to treat it.

Figure - 1

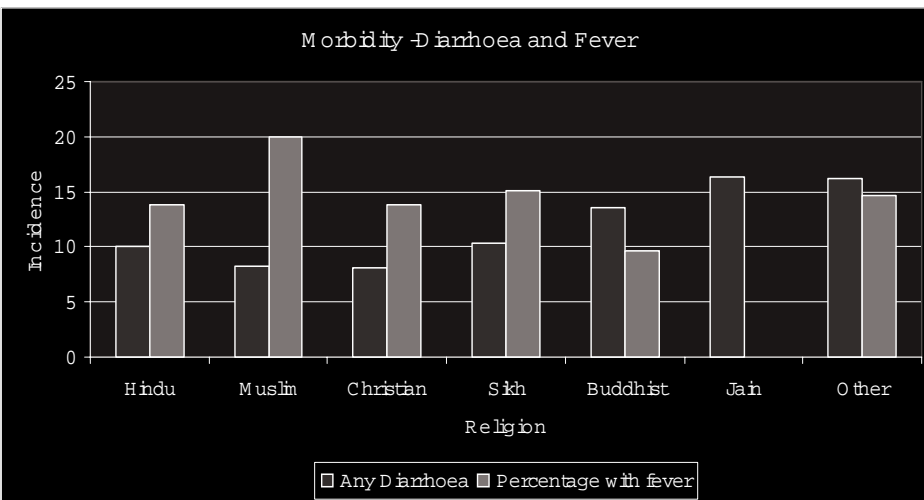


Table 33: Prevalence and Treatment of Fever, 2004-05

Religious Community	Percentage with Fever	Percentage for Whom Treatment was Sought from a Health Facility or Provider	Percentage Who Took Anti-malarial Drugs
Muslims	20	71.7	4.9
Jains	16.3	*	*
Sikhs	15.1	84.3	9.3
Others	14.6	41.2	7.2
Hindus	13.8	70.4	9.2
Christians	13.8	67.5	8
Buddhists	9.6	83.5	19.8

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

Table 34: Child Immunisation across Religious Communities, 2004-05

Religious Community	BCG	DPT			Polio 1				Measles	All Basic Vaccinations	No Vaccinations	Percentage with a Vaccination Card Seen
		1	2	3	0	1	2	3				
Hindus	79.6	77.5	67.9	56.4	48.6	93.9	89.9	78.7	60	44.4	4.4	37.4
Muslims	69.7	66.9	58.3	47.8	45	90.3	84.5	76.6	49.6	36.3	7.3	36.4
Christians	82.1	81.6	76.3	65.1	52.9	90	87.3	77.6	68	56.3	9.4	44
Sikhs	90.4	88.6	86.2	76.9	65.5	91	89.1	81.1	80.2	67.3	6.6	46
Buddhists	98.5	94.1	75.6	58	81.3	95.2	87.3	74.1	96	50.9	0.7	39.1
Others	69.3	75.3	53.8	42.3	20.7	91.9	84.3	79.5	41.4	27.2	7.9	25.8

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

Figure - 2

9.6. Child Immunisation

Child immunisation is a primary health precaution, which is promoted and provided by the State. An analysis of the awareness levels about and access to this basic healthcare service among the different religious groups highlights the inter-community differences as also the level of development among each religious group. The percentage of BCG immunization is the lowest among Muslims and Others, at around 70 per cent each, and highest among the Buddhists, at 98 per cent. The Sikhs too boast of a rate of 90 per cent. The Christians and Hindus exhibit rates of around 80 per cent. As regards the rate for complete vaccination or administration of all the recommended doses for DPT, the Sikhs and Christians lead the fray with figures of 76 per cent and 65 per cent, respectively. They are followed by the Buddhists and Hindus at 58 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively. The lowest rates of administration of the DPT vaccine are seen among the Muslims and Others. The performance in case of polio vaccination is much better across all the groups. The lowest rates are seen for the Buddhists and Muslims, at 74 per cent and 76 per cent, respectively, while The highest rates of administration of polio vaccine, on the other hand, are exhibited by the Sikhs and Others, at 81 per cent and 80 per cent, respectively. The incidence of measles inoculation is highest amongst the Buddhists and Sikhs, followed by the Christians and Hindus, and the lowest amongst the Muslims and Others. The overall basic vaccination trends reveal the best performance in terms of administration of the vaccines among the Sikhs, at 67 per cent, followed by the Buddhists and Christians at around 50 per cent and 56 per cent, respectively, while the Hindus and Muslims come in last, exhibiting the lowest inoculation rates among all religious groups.

9.7. Vitamin Supplements

Vitamin A supplements is given to children during the preceding six-month period for children aged 12-35 months and 6-59 months, respectively under the child nutrition programme. In case of children aged 12-35 months, Others are seen to be doing much better than the other religious groups as 34 per cent of their children in the age group were given vitamin A supplement. This is followed by the Christians, Buddhists, Hindus and Muslims. Surprisingly, the Sikhs show the lowest incidence of administration of vitamin A supplements in this category. In the second category of children aged 6-59 months, the Christians show the best results, followed by Others, Hindus, Muslims, Buddhists

and Sikhs. Interestingly, the Sikhs have done the worst in both of these categories.

Table: 35 Access to Vitamin Supplements- (%) Given Vitamin A Supplements in the Last 6 Months

Religious Community	Children Aged 12-35 Months	Children Aged 6-59 Months % Given Vitamin A Supplements in the Last 6 Months
Others	34.6	21.5
Christians	30.2	22.2
Buddhists	27.7	16.9
Hindus	25.3	18.4
Muslims	24.2	17.6
Sikhs	18.0	13.7

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

10. NUTRITIONAL STATUS OF CHILDREN AND WOMEN ACROSS RELIGIOUS GROUPS

10.1. Nutrition

Two indices of nutritional deficiency are used to ascertain if a child is nutritionally deficient. The first is the height for age indicator, wherein the height and weight of the children are recorded and the nutritional status indicator is calculated as standard deviation units (Z scores) from the median value for the reference population. The height for age index is an indicator of linear growth retardation and cumulative growth deficits. Children whose height-for-age Z-score is below minus two standard deviations (-2 SD) from the median of the reference population are considered short for their age (stunted) and are chronically malnourished. Children whose height-for-age Z-score is below minus three standard deviations (-3 SD) from the median of the reference population are considered to be severely stunted. Stunting reflects failure to receive adequate nutrition over a long period of time and is also affected by recurrent and chronic illness. Height-for-age, therefore, represents the long-term effects of malnutrition in a population and does not vary according to recent dietary intake.

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The second indicator, that is, weight-for-age is a composite index of height-for-age and weight-for-height. It takes into account both acute and chronic malnutrition. Children whose weight-for-age is below minus two standard deviations from the median of the reference population are classified as underweight. Children whose weight-for-age is below minus three standard deviations (-3 SD) from the median of the reference population are considered to be severely underweight.

Table 36: Nutrition Levels across Religious Communities, 2004-05

Religious Community	Height-for-age			Weight-for-age			
	Percentage	Percentage	Mean	Percentage	Percentage	Percentage	Mean
	<i>Chronically Malnourished</i>	<i>Severely Malnourished</i>		<i>Chronically Malnourished</i>	<i>Severely Malnourished</i>		
Hindus	23.4	48	-1.9	16.1	43.2	0.3	-1.8
Muslims	26.2	50.3	-2	15.6	41.8	0.4	-1.8
Christians	17.9	39	-1.5	8.7	29.7	0.9	-1.4
Sikhs	13.4	29.8	-1.3	7.8	22	0.7	-1.1
Buddhists	23.2	56.1	-1.9	14.7	39.2	0.8	-1.7
Jains	5.9	31.2	-1.2	6.6	24	0	-1.3
Others	34	58.5	-2.2	35.4	62.7	0.1	-2.4

Source: Published Figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

As regards the height-for-age indicator across religious groups, the highest incidence of the chronically malnourished children is seen among Others at 34 per cent. As far as the major religious groups are concerned, the incidence is highest amongst the Muslims (26 per cent), followed by the Hindus and Buddhists (23 per cent). Lower rates of malnourishment are seen among the Christians and Sikhs, while the lowest rates are seen among the Jains at 6 per cent. As regards the incidence of severe malnutrition, the incidence is highest among Others. Buddhists is the next religious group with the high incidence of severe malnourished children. Again, the Christians, Sikhs and Jains show the lowest rates of incidence of severe malnourishment (Table 35).

The data for nutritional deficiency in terms of the weight-for-age index indicates that just as in case of the earlier index, the incidence of chronic malnourishment is the highest among Others, while amongst the major groups, it is again higher for the Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists. They are followed by the Christians, Sikhs and Jains with lower rates. The same relative pattern of positioning is seen for all religious groups for the severely malnourished category. On the

whole, the Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists perform the worst in terms of ensuring child nutrition while the Jains, Sikhs and Christians show comparatively better performance on this parameter.

10.2. Prevalence of Anaemia amongst Children

Another indicator of child health is the prevalence and level of anaemia amongst children of various religious communities. Anaemia is defined as the presence of low levels of haemoglobin in the blood. As haemoglobin carries oxygen from the lungs to the entire body, the lack of it in children can lead to impairment in cognitive performance, behavioural and motor development, co-ordination, language development and scholastic achievement as well as increased morbidity from infectious diseases. Table 36 shows the level of anaemia detected in the blood samples taken from children across various religious groups.

Table 37: Anaemia Status among Children (6-59 months) by Haemoglobin Level, 2005–6 (%)

Religious Community	Mild	Moderate	Severe	Any Anaemia
	(10.0-10.9 g/dl)	(7.0-9.9 g/dl)	(<7.0 g/dl)	(<11.0 g/dl)
Muslims	28.4	38.5	2.8	69.7
Others	26.4	48.7	3.9	78.9
Hindus	26.1	40.7	3	69.7
Christians	25.6	32.5	1.9	60
Sikhs	22.3	35.9	5.7	63.8
Jains	20.1	36.1	0	56.2
Buddhists	15.9	49.9	0.2	66

Note: Table is based on children who stayed in the household the night before the interview. Prevalence of anaemia, based on haemoglobin levels, is adjusted for altitude using formula in CDC (1998). Haemoglobin in g/dl = grams per deciliter. Table excludes Nagaland.

Source: Published figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06.

No clear patterns emerge with regard to the prevalence of anaemia among children belonging to various religious groups. The Hindus, Muslims and Others show the same levels of prevalence of mild and severe levels of anaemia. Across all the groups, a majority of the children are seen to be suffering from moderate

anaemia, followed by mild and severe levels of the disease. The highest incidence of severe anaemia is surprisingly seen among the Sikhs (5.7 per cent), followed by Others (3.9 per cent), and Muslims (2.8 per cent). As regards moderate levels of incidence of the disease, the Buddhists show the highest percentage shares, followed by Others, Hindus and Muslims. Therefore, on the whole, Others, Hindus and Muslims show large shares and high levels of prevalence of anaemia.

10.3. Iodisation of Children and Women

Iodine is an essential micronutrient and the lack of it in the diet can lead to Iodine Deficiency Disorder (IDD), which can cause miscarriages, stillbirths, brain disorders and retarded psychomotor development, speech and hearing impairments, and lower levels of energy amongst children. Studies suggest that around 200 million Indians face the risk of iodine deficiency (Vir, 2002⁴), while an additional 71 million suffer from goiter and other iodine deficiency disorder. Table 41 shows the break-up of the population across various religious groups in terms of the salt content in their food intake. Starting with the share of the population with adequate consumption, it has been found that Others with the lowest salt consumption of 52 per cent and the Jains with the highest consumption of 84 per cent. The Jains are followed by the Sikhs and Christians who do well with sizable population shares. The Hindus, Muslims and Buddhists show shares in the 50 per cent range.

Religious Community	Iodine Content of Salt			Number of Households	Total
	Inadequate (0 ppm)	Inadequate (<15 ppm)	Adequate (15+ ppm)		
Hindus	25.4	25.1	49.4	100	50.5
Muslims	18.1	27.1	45.2	100	50.2
Christians	17.5	19.8	62.7	100	57.3
Sikhs	13.6	12.7	73.8	100	26.3
Buddhists	24.1	17.1	58.9	100	41.2
Jains	8	8	84	100	16
Others	5.6	41.9	52.5	100	47.5

Table: 38 Use of Iodized Salt among in Households by Their Religious Communities, 2005-06

Note: Only 1 per cent of the households did not have any salt in the household. ppm = parts per million.

Source: Published figures from National Family Health Survey-3 (NFHS-3), 2005-06

In the inadequate consumption category, Others exhibit highest shares of around 40 per cent. Thereafter, around a quarter of the Hindus (25 per cent) and Muslims (27 per cent) show inadequate consumption of iodized salt. The same is true for the Christians, Buddhists and Sikhs at 19 per cent, 17 per cent and 12 per cent population shares, respectively. The position of Jains is, however, much better on iodine intake.

As regards the shares of population with no iodine intake, it has been found that a quarter of the Hindus and Buddhists are exposed to a high risk of IDD. Even the Muslims, Christians and Sikhs do not do too well with 18 per cent, 17 per cent and 13 per cent of the population consuming no iodine at all. The lowest shares are seen for the Jains and Others. Thus, on the whole, large shares of the population among the Hindus, Others and Muslims record either no or inadequate iodine consumption.

11. SUMMING UP

The detailed analysis undertaken above across economic, health and social indicators of well-being among various religious communities show substantial variations across these groups in terms of their levels and nature of development. While many of the differences in well-being can be explained in terms of cultural differences and beliefs, many others arise due to the differences in group strength in terms of numbers, level of education, group cohesiveness, economic endowment, and political awareness and clout of the respective groups. The Jains represent a case in point. Despite being one of the smallest groups, they are easily the most well-educated, prosperous and also quite politically influential in India. On the other hand, the Muslims, despite being the second largest religious community in India, lack significant education levels as well as general socio-economic standing. If we choose eight different measures of economic well-being and observe which groups perform the worst and which least, we find Others, Zoroastrians and the Muslim categories trailing much behind in most of the eight chosen indicators. They are followed by the Buddhists, Hindus and Sikhs. The Christians and the Jains exhibit the least number of times. The relative positions of the groups are further influenced by inter-group competition arising from differences in religious beliefs and animosity. Thus, the groups that are performing well continue to do so and those lagging behind find it difficult to change or improve their lot over time while jostling for religious, economic and political space. The importance of

religious beliefs on an individual's well-being cannot therefore be over-emphasised, especially in developing countries like India, where the old socio-cultural norms and community-based living are constantly at loggerheads with the new liberal melting pot of global capitalism. The way forward will be a tricky one trying to balance people's faith and exposing them to modern, liberal rationalism. A modern common education curriculum across the country would lay the foundations for developing a strong sense of identity, rooted in citizenship based on equality of access, rights and opportunity. This approach would definitely be necessary if the majority of the nation's population, namely the youth are looking to forge newer identities based on education and professional skills in the fast growing global market/economic environment.

Endnotes

1. "A *madrassa* is an institution of learning, where Islamic sciences including literary and philosophical ones are taught." (*Encyclopaedia of Islam*, Leiden E.J. Brill). The avowed aim of *madrassa* education is to inculcate the belief and practice of Islam among its followers and to guide them in following the Qoran and the traditions of Prophet Mohammad. The foundation of *madrassa* education, therefore, basically stands on the two pillars of the *Qoran* (collection of God's revelations to Prophet Mohammad) and *Sunna* (tradition of Prophet Mohammad).
2. Secondary includes the secondary, higher secondary, and diploma/certificate below graduation levels.
3. Tertiary includes graduates and above, and the diploma/certificate above graduation levels.
4. Current status of iodine deficiency disorders (IDD) and strategy for its control in India Sheila C. Vir, INDIAN JOURNAL OF PEDIATRICS, Volume 69, Number 7, 589-596, DOI: 10.1007/BF02722687

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