



RELIGIOUS DEMOGRAPHY OF INDIA: Myths and Realities

Lancy Lobo and Jayesh Shah (eds)

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About the Book

Much of public life in India is characterized by the forces of its religious demography. This volume aims at unravelling its complexity. Each of these essays reflect the truism that religion unites as well as divides peoples. Religious demography not only decided partition of India and Pakistan, but also continues to play a major role in India's democratic politics.

The subject has become more emotional especially in the context of electoral politics. A great anxiety about the Hindus being outnumbered has been kept alive in India, especially before the elections. The differential growth rates of religious communities have therefore become a sensitive issue. It is an established fact that there is an illicit dramatization of misrepresented statistics of the Census. Data on population has been especially 'used' to generate 'nationalism'. Newspapers, magazines, television and even caste journals have propounded myths, with catchy titles. This volume tries to probe into these myths and realities.

Demographers have, however, demonstrated that no major religious community in India has been declining in absolute numbers, except Parsis. The whole discourse is thus aimed at obliterating pluralism of identities, by provoking a fear of the other, and propagating a constant myth of a catastrophic decline in the majority population. In post-independence India the majoritarian assertion has generated its own antithesis in the form of minority religious assertiveness and a resulting confrontational politics that undermines the syncretic dimensions of the civil society. This volume attempts to dispel some of the myths propagated by those who seek political power under the religious cover.

This book will interest not only demographers but also sociologists, social anthropologists, political scientists, and all other observers of India's public life.

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