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SIKHS ARE LOOSING GROUND IN THEIR HOME STATE: A GEOGRAPHICAL ANALYSIS

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Abstract

Demography in India is strongly divided into various religious groups. Although, all the religions believe in social co-existence of mankind, yet all the religious groups are very strong in their religious identity and try to dominate others whenever they find any opportunity. Studies on religions are gaining importance with increasing intrusion of religion and caste structure in the political environment of India. The present study reveals that in Punjab the share of Muslim population has increased from 1.18 per cent in 1991 to 1.93 per cent in 2011 recording a growth rate of 63.56 per cent, while the share of Sikh population has declined by - 8.35 per cent during the same period. It is interesting to note that Punjab, known as the Home State of Sikhs, the share of Sikh population is declining while all other religious communities have witnessed improvement in their share. It has been found that in 25 per cent districts of the state, Sikhs are in minority and in 80 per cent districts, the share of Sikh population has declined in 2011 when compared with 2001. Therefore, this study is devoted to understand temporal trends in the share of major religious groups in Punjab with special focus on Sikh population. The study also highlights the spatial variations in the concentration and change in the share of Sikh population in Punjab.

Introduction

Webster's Dictionary defines religion as 'a personal set or institutionalized system of religious attitudes, beliefs, and practices'. Religion is a matter of personal faith and a philosophy of life of an individual. Religious and spiritual matters form an important context through which the majority of the world population lives their lives (Singh, 2015). Religion has been coterminous with human history. In nearly all societies-primitive, agrarian and industrial- it has been present in one form or other (Venugopal, 1998). Religious beliefs provide strength to an individual and lead towards spiritualism, where

an individual finds contentment with worldly materialistic needs and requirements. A religious person believes in universal brotherhood and welfare of all. Religion is said to produce a distinct attitude towards life and this orientation affects the further development of the society (Chandna, 2006).

Feeling or belief in universal brotherhood remains intact until a person is an individual human-being. But for his own existence, man has to depend on others. Therefore, he starts interacting with others, leading to the formation of a social group of harmonious people. Such social groups may have distinct religious belief and thus emerges a

society with distinct religious identity. Religion is social cement, binding individuals and social groups into a communal order (Turner, 1991). Collection of people in the form of a distinct religious group provides numerical strength to demonstrate at socio-economic, socio-religious and socio-political planes. Followers of other religions are often ranked on a scale constructed in the light of a particular religious ideology and are then rated as superiors, inferiors or even untouchables. Such divisive tendencies may acquire acute form and may result in a variety of social conflicts (Ahmad, 1999).

At times, polarization on the basis of religion becomes so strong that it led to the subdivision of India in 1947, resulting in the largest migration of people in Human history. Even at present, large number of Sikhs migrated to Punjab from other states of India after 1984 Delhi riots. In a short period from late 1989 to early 1990 an astounding number (over 58,000) Kashmiri Pandits' families fled their homeland and resettled largely in Jammu city, the winter capital of the state of Jammu and Kashmir and few other Indian cities (Singh, 2015). Such types of forced migrations affect the demographic characteristics of both areas of immigration and out-migration.

Religious groups are likely to influence the demographic choices of their followers when members feel a strong sense of attachment to the religious community (Mc Quillan, 2004). Affiliation to a particular religious group not only affects day to day behaviour and attitudes but it also affects reproductive behaviour (Singh, 1988). Brace et al. (2006) argue that, in order to understand the construction and meaning of society and space, it is vital to acknowledge that religious practices in terms of both institutional organization and of personal experience are central not only to the spiritual life of society,

but also to the constitution and reconstitution of that society. Religion gives the people an idea about their relative strength at national, state and constituency level, especially as a part of the electoral calculations (Krishan, 2015a). Thus, religion emerges as a motivating force towards building a distinct social group to watch its interests in the larger socio-political space. In the light of this, effort has been made in this study to analyze the religious structure in general and highlight the position of Sikhs on the religious landscape of Punjab in particular.

Objectives of the Study

Major objectives of the study are:

- to analyze the temporal changes in the share of Sikh population in India and Punjab in relation to major religious communities and;
- to highlight spatial variations in concentration and change in the share of Sikh population in Punjab.

Study Area

The state of Punjab is located between 29° 30' to 32° 32' north latitudes and 73° 55' to 76° 50' east longitudes in the northwestern part of India. Comprising 1.6 per cent of total area of India, the state accounts for 2.29 per cent of total population of the country. About 63 per cent of its population resides in rural areas against 37 per cent living in urban areas, whereas 76 per cent of its population is literate against the national average of 73 per cent. Religious composition of the state reveals that 57.69 per cent of its population is of Sikhs followed by Hindus (38.49 per cent), Muslims (1.93 per cent) and Christians (1.25 per cent) as per Census of India, 2011. For administration, the state has been divided into 20 districts. The state is also divided into three cultural regions known as Majha (Area located between Ravi and Beas rivers); Doaba (Area located between

Sutlej and Beas rivers) and Malwa (Area located between Sutlej and Ghaggar rivers).

Database and Methodology

The study is based on the religion-wise data collected from the Directorate of Census Chandigarh, particularly for the decades of 1991, 2001 and 2011. Since, more than 98 per cent of the total population in India falls under four religious communities of Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Sikhs, therefore, the analysis in this study is focused on these four religious groups only. Simple statistical technique of percentages has been applied to interpret the results. Tables and maps have been prepared to analyze and highlight the temporal and spatial variations of the data under study.

Results and Discussion

Position of Sikh Population in India

As per Census of India 2011, the share of Sikh population in the country is 1.72 per cent, followed by Christians 2.30 per cent, Muslims 14.23 per cent and Hindus 79.80 per cent. The share of Sikh population is not only lowest among all the major religions, but it is declining at a very fast rate. During last decade of 2001-2011, the share of Sikh population has declined by -8.02 per cent against -1.71 per cent and -0.82 per cent recorded by Christians and Hindus, respectively. However, the share of Muslim population has improved by 5.96 per cent during this period. Apart from declining share, the Sikh population has also recorded lowest growth rate of 8.42 per cent followed by

15.53 per cent by Christians, 16.76 per cent by Hindus and 24.65 per cent by Muslims during 2001-2011. On account of distribution of Sikh population, India accounts for 83 per cent of total Sikh population in the world. Within India, 93 per cent of total Sikh population is concentrated in seven northwestern states like Punjab (76.82 per cent), Haryana (5.97 per cent), Rajasthan (4.19 per cent), Delhi (2.74 per cent), Jammu and Kashmir (1.13 per cent), Uttarakhand (1.13 per cent), union territory of Chandigarh (0.66 per cent) and Himachal Pradesh (0.38 per cent).

Position of Sikh Population in Punjab

(i) Share of Sikh Population

The demographic scenario of Sikh population in its home state is not better than that at the national level. In Punjab, the share of Sikh population in the total population of the state has declined from 62.95 per cent in 1991 to 57.69 per cent in 2011, recording a decline of -8.35 per cent. On the other hand, Muslim population has witnessed 63.56 per cent improvement in its share followed by Christians (12.61 per cent) and Hindus (11.66 per cent) during the same period (Table 1). Further, taking the last decade (2001-11) into account, it has been observed that the share of Sikh population in Punjab has declined by -3.69 per cent. Contrarily, the share of Muslim population has improved by 22.93 per cent, followed by Hindus (4.20 per cent) and Christians, (4.17 per cent). On the whole, it has been observed that non-Sikh population

Table 1
Punjab: Major Religion-wise Percentage Share in Total Population (1991-2011)

Religion	Share in Percentage			Change (Per cent)
	1991	2001	2011	
Muslims	1.18	1.57	1.93	63.56
Christians	1.11	1.20	1.25	12.61
Hindus	34.47	36.94	38.49	11.66
Sikhs	62.95	59.90	57.69	-8.35
Non-Sikh	37.05	40.10	42.31	14.20

Source: Compiled by Authors

recorded 14.20 per cent improvement in its share during 1991-2011, against 8.35 per cent decline in the share of Sikh population, suggesting declining trends in the growth of Sikh population in Punjab. Such a decline in share of the Sikh population in Punjab is on account of lowest birth rate and increasing out-migration among Sikhs followed by in-migration of other communities. It can also be understood from the fact that Sikh population in Punjab has recorded 9.68 per cent growth rate, against 40.16 per cent increase in case of Muslims, Christians (18.93 per cent) and Hindus (18.67 per cent) during 2001-11. Declining growth rate of Sikh population is due to low fertility rate among Sikhs. Punjab seems to have achieved a significant fall in its total fertility rate (TFR) from 2.4 children per women in 2000 to 1.7 children per women in 2013 which is even lower than the replacement level of 2.1 (Chandna, 2015).

The Sikhs are perceived to be ubiquitous, dynamic, enterprising and ready to avail themselves of any opportunity anywhere (Krishan, 2015b). They are in the process of out-migration since British Rule in India and preferred destinations were the countries under British Empire. The emigration flow of Sikh population is continuously increasing since then and at present there is hardly any country in the world where Sikhs are not available. However, at present the emigration flow has been accelerated not only on account of pull

factors like lucrative wages and liberalized immigration policies of the countries under destination, but also due to equally strong push factors such as declining land holdings and job opportunities which have started operating at home. Krishan (2018) has pointed out that 25.0 per cent households in rural and 15.0 per cent in urban Punjab have at least one emigrant member abroad. The gap thus created is gradually being filled by population migrating from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. Thus, the share of Sikh population is gradually declining in the state.

(ii) Rural-Urban Differentials in Share of Sikh Population

There are sharp intra-religious groups variations in their demographic behavior on account of their areas of residence. Therefore, the pattern of growth of major religious communities is not uniform within the state considering rural-urban dimensions. Among all the religious communities, Muslim population has recorded highest increase in the share of its urban population (22.89 per cent) and rural population (20.15 per cent) in 2001-2011 in comparison to other religious groups (Table 2). These results suggest that Muslim population is growing at a faster rate in urban areas than in rural areas. Similarly, share of Hindu population living in urban areas has increased by 1.17 per cent, against negligible improvement (0.40 per cent) in its share of rural

Table 2
Punjab: Major Religion-wise Percentage Share in Rural and Urban Population (1991-2011)

Religion	Rural Urban	Share in Percentage		Change (Per cent)
		2001	2011	
Muslims	Rural	1.34	1.61	20.15
	Urban	2.01	2.47	22.89
Christians	Rural	1.31	1.40	6.87
	Urban	0.99	1.01	2.20
Hindus	Rural	25.25	25.35	0.40
	Urban	59.71	60.41	1.17
Sikhs	Rural	71.86	71.20	- 0.92
	Urban	36.61	35.16	- 3.96

Source: Compiled by Authors

population during 2001-2011. Thus, Hindus have also consolidated their position in urban areas in 2011 with respect to 2001. Conversely, the share of Christian population in rural areas has increased by 6.87 per cent against 2.20 per cent increase recorded in urban areas (Table 2).

It is interesting to note that among all the religious communities, Sikhs have recorded a negative growth rate in their share of population both in urban (-3.96 per cent) as well as in rural areas (-0.92 per cent) during the study period. Diversely, all other religious communities, registered positive change in their share, both in rural and urban areas. The study reveals that fall in the share of Sikh population is more pronounced in urban areas as compared to rural areas. On the other hand, Muslims and Hindus are gradually concentrating in urban areas. Disparity of development between rural and urban areas pushes the rural people towards urban areas (Chattoraj, 2015). Leaving aside, rural to urban flow of population, the growth of Muslim and Hindu population in urban areas is also due to in-migration of labour from the other states. Apart from industries, migratory labour has taken over all the jobs of construction work, rickshaw-pulling, vegetable-fruit selling, salesmanship, driving, loading-unloading, petty tea-stalls, juice-bars, fast-food shops, gardeners, cloth-ironing, white-washing, pan-biri-gutkha selling, etc. that go on throughout the year, hence they are permanently settling down in urban areas of Punjab. It is not surprising to find residential localities predominately occupied by migratory labour on the periphery of major urban centers. Political parties also help them in the process of settling down by making their ration cards and providing benefits under free atta-daal schemes etc. considering them as a potential vote bank. However, now migrant labourers themselves have started taking part in elections. Not only

participation, the cases of winning municipal elections by candidates from migrant labour force have been noticed from Ludhiana and Amritsar corporation elections. It has been reported that 26 years old Pinki Devi from Bihar won the Municipal Corporation (MC) election from ward-15 in Amritsar in 2017 (Singh, 2017).

In fact, migratory labour pattern in Punjab has altogether changed. With the introduction of Green Revolution technology, there has been a demand for labour which has been met by seasonal migratory labour from other states. With the mechanization of agriculture, the demand for agricultural labour has left only for rice plantation which is not a process of more than a month. Moreover, due to declining landholdings and increasing wages, the small farmers have stopped keeping migratory labour even for the upkeep of animals. Previously, almost every farming household in rural areas has been keeping such labourers to look after cattle. Now, this surplus migratory rural labour has started shifting to the urban areas and after working for two-three years, the person brings his family and settles down permanently. Migratory labour is also being provided with free accommodation by the industrial houses in industrial estates. Similarly, they are also getting free accommodation in residential areas, to look after the houses of the families that have shifted to the other countries, which they are still keeping with them and visit periodically. The females of this labour force are helping the males in their business of tea stalls/vegetables shops and those who have not their own business have started working as domestic help along with their daughters. Demand for domestic help is growing in urban areas and wages are also good. Not only the labour force, but white-collar workers such as, professionals, business managers, bankers, administrators, real estate

agents etc. who are from other states, are also settling down permanently in Punjab. More congenial environment available for socio-economic growth in Punjab as compared to their home states is the major consideration for permanent shift. Residential flats available on installments in various important cities of the state is another attraction for such people to settle down permanently.

However, rural to urban flow of Sikh population has declined. People in rural areas are enjoying all residential and educational facilities available in urban areas with additional advantage of open and pollution free environment and availability of fresh milk and agricultural produce. With the development of roads and improvement of educational and transportation facilities even in the remote villages, the urban areas are no more attraction for the rural people to migrate. Thus, Sikh population with its attachment with agricultural land prefers to stay in the villages and go for work in urban areas if required. In addition, due to declining job opportunities the trend of out-migration among the urban educated Sikh youth is also catching up in comparison to rural areas due to more affordability. Hence, the decline in the share of Sikh population is more pronounced in urban areas as compared to rural areas (Table 2). The study reveals that communities having low share in total

population are increasing at faster rate, while the community with largest share in total population is declining at a faster rate, suggesting that the share of minorities in Punjab is increasing at the cost of majority.

Spatial Patterns of Sikh Population

Since religion plays its own role in development of social, economic, cultural and political characteristics of an area, therefore, understanding the geographical distribution and concentration of Sikh population in the study area has a special significance.

(i) Concentration of Sikh population

Concentration of Sikh population in Punjab has been calculated as the share of Sikh population in total population at district level (Table 3; Fig.1). Highest concentration of Sikh population is found in Tarn Taran district (93.32 per cent) which is three times more than the lowest (31.50 per cent) recorded by Shaheed Bhagat Singh (SBS) Nagar district. It is interesting to note that 50 per cent of the districts have witnessed concentration of Sikh population less than the state average of 57.68 per cent. While, in another 50 per cent districts, the concentration of Sikh population is more than the state average (Table 3).

Very low (less than 35 per cent) concentration of Sikh population is found in

Table 3
Punjab: District-wise Percentage Share of Sikh Population (2011)

District	Per cent	District	Per cent
SBS Nagar	31.50	Sangrur	65.09
Jalandhar	32.45	Amritsar	68.93
Hoshiarpur	33.92	Muktsar	70.81
Gurdaspur	43.63	Bathinda	70.89
SAS Nagar	48.15	Fatehgarh Sahib	71.23
Rupnagar	52.73	Faridkot	76.08
Ludhiana	53.26	Mansa	77.74
Ferozepur	53.76	Barnala	78.54
Kapurthala	55.66	Moga	82.24
Patiala	55.91	Tarn Taran	93.32
State	57.68	-	-

Source: Compiled by Authors

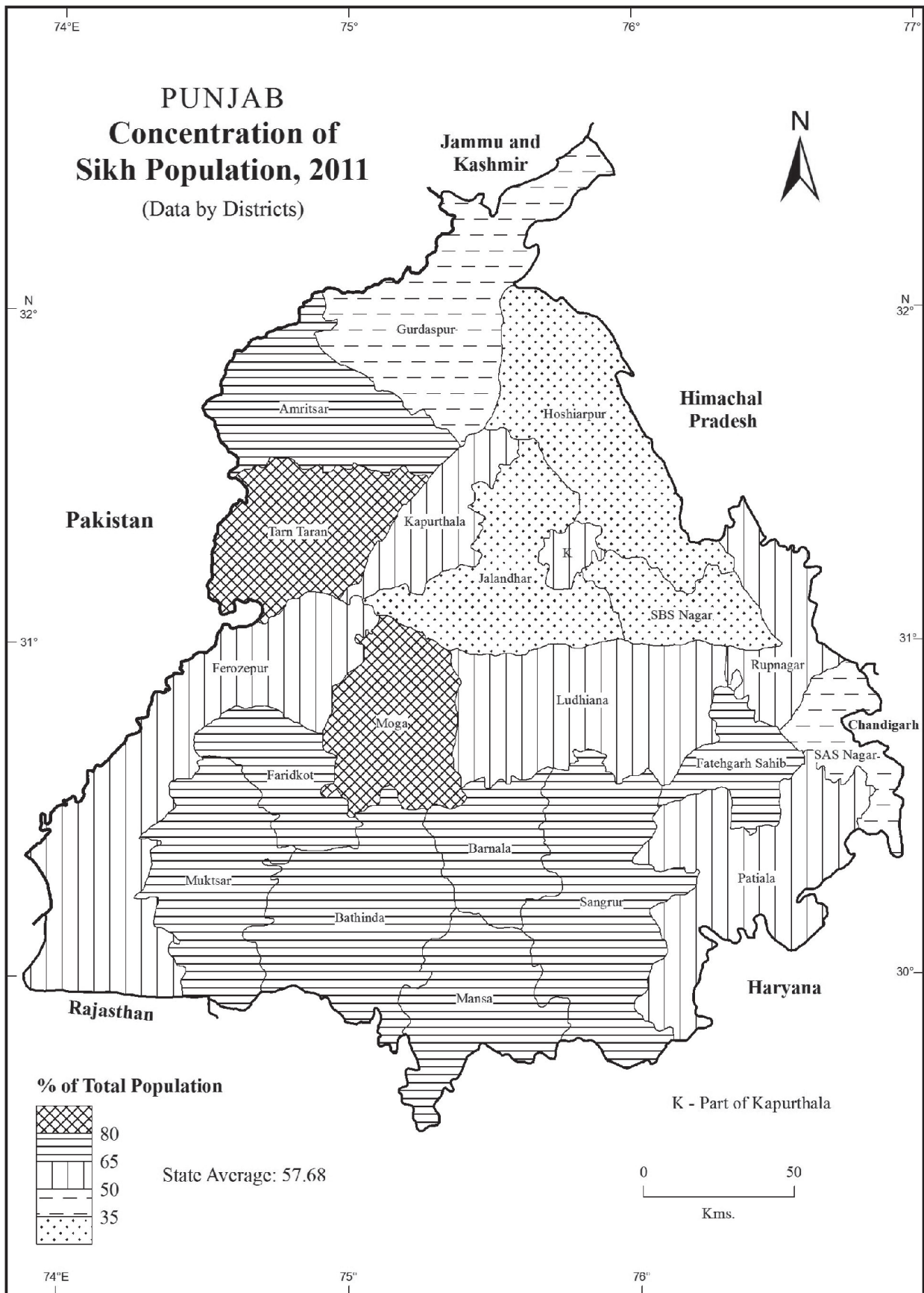


Fig. 1

SBS Nagar, Jalandhar and Hoshiarpur districts followed by low concentration ranging between 36-50 per cent witnessed by Gurdaspur and Sahibzada Ajit Singh (SAS) Nagar districts, respectively (Fig. 1). In fact, whole of the Kandi belt is devoid of Sikh population, predominated by Himachalis and migrant Gujjars who are permanently settling down in this region. Contrarily, Tarn Taran district has recorded highest concentration of Sikh population followed by Moga district. While, a continuous belt comprising districts of Muktsar, Bathinda, Faridkot, Mansa, Barnala, Sangrur and Fatehgarh Sahib located in southern parts of Malwa region and Amritsar district in northwestern part of the state have witnessed high level of concentration of Sikh population (Fig. 1). All these districts of high concentration of Sikh population have agricultural economy with which Sikhs are associated, while Amritsar district has additional advantages of its religious importance. Moderate level of concentration ranging between 51.0 to 65.0 per cent of Sikh population is found in Rupnagar, Ludhiana, Firozpur, Kapurthala and Patiala districts. Again except Kapurthala district, all other districts fall in the Malwa region. On the whole, high to moderate level of concentration of Sikh population is in Malwa region, very low in

Doaba region with the exception of Kapurthala district with moderate concentration. While, Majha region comprising three districts of Tarn Taran, Amritsar and Gurdaspur has witnessed very high, moderate and low concentration of Sikh population, respectively (Fig. 1).

Table 3 highlights that in SBS Nagar, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur and SAS Nagar districts, comprising 25 per cent of the total districts of the state, the Sikhs are in minority. It is expected that another three districts of Rupnagar, Ludhiana and Firozpur may join these districts by 2021 Census and thus in 40 per cent districts of Punjab, Sikhs will be in minority. By 2031, Sikhs are likely to be in minority in 50 per cent districts of the state, after falling of Kapurthala and Patiala in this category of districts.

(ii) Change in the Share of Sikh Population

It is surprising to note that only four districts of Barnala, Tarn Taran, Firozpur and Patiala have recorded positive change in the share of Sikh population during 2001-2011 (Table 4; Fig. 2). Among these districts, Barnala, Tarn Taran and Firozpur districts have respectively recorded high positive change, moderate positive change and low positive change. While, negligible positive change has been recorded by Patiala district as it has

Table 4
Punjab: District-wise Percentage Change in Share of Sikh Population (2001-11)

District	Percentage Points	District	Percentage Points
Barnala	9.07	Fatehgarh Sahib	-3.33
Tarn Taran	4.67	Moga	-3.56
Firozpur	2.41	Kapurthala	-3.80
Patiala	0.39	Ludhiana	-4.26
Mansa	-0.59	Hoshiarpur	-4.90
Gurdaspur	-0.80	Jalandhar	-4.99
Faridkot	-1.45	Sangrur	-5.09
Bathinda	-3.18	SBS Nagar	-5.92
Amritsar	-3.25	Rupnagar	-6.00
Muktsar	-3.30	SAS Nagar	-6.79
State	-2.22	-	-

Source: Compiled by Authors

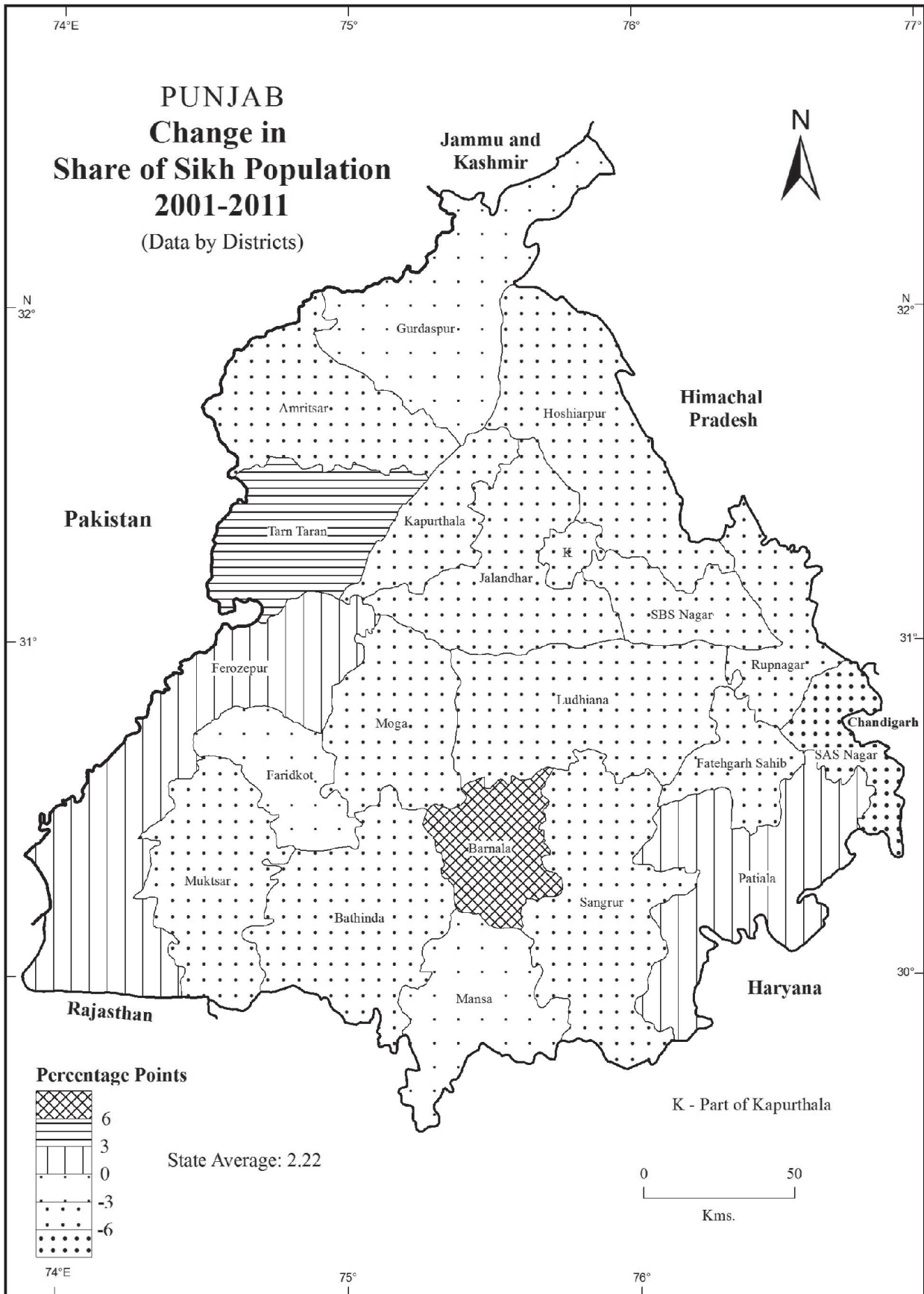


Fig. 2

crossed the bar just by 0.39 percentage points to be included in this category. Barnala district which is located in the inner parts of Malwa region has high concentration of Sikh population. The district has attracted in-migration of Sikhs from adjoining areas due to a spurt in industrial development, therefore, recorded very high positive change. Tarn Taran and Ferozepur are predominantly agricultural and comparatively backward districts, being located along the international border. Therefore, these districts are experiencing out-migration of non-Sikh population; hence, these districts have registered positive change in the share of Sikh population.

Table 4 reveals that 80 per cent districts of the state have recorded a negative change in the concentration of Sikh population ranging between -0.59 to -6.79 percentage points. Highest negative change of -6.79 percentage points has been registered by SAS Nagar district. Such a high negative change witnessed by SAS Nagar district is due to large scale in-migration of non-Sikh population because of the spurt in real estate activities associated with development of industrialization, educational facilities and emergence of airport at SAS Nagar (Mohali). Similarly, low negative change (-3.0 and less) is recorded by Mansa, Faridkot and Gurdaspur districts (Fig. 2). While, whole of the Doaba region comprising Jalandhar, Kapurthala, SBS Nagar and Hoshiarpur districts has witnessed moderate negative change ranging between -3.80 and -5.92 percentage points. (Table 4; Fig. 2). Likewise, Ludhiana, Rupnagar, Fatehgarh Sahib, Sangrur, Moga, Muktsar and Bathinda districts of Malwa region have also witnessed moderate negative change in the share of Sikh population ranging between -3.00 and -6.00 percentage points. Malwa region located south of Sutlej River is characterized with all the extremes of positive and negative change.

Barnala and Patiala districts have respectively recorded highest (9.07 percentage points) and lowest (0.39 percentage points) positive change. Similarly, highest and lowest negative change is registered by SAS Nagar (-6.79) and Mansa (-0.59) districts, respectively. Majha region comprising Tarn Taran, Amritsar and Gurdaspur districts have respectively recorded moderate positive, moderate negative and low negative change in the share of Sikh population during 2001-11 (Fig. 2).

On the whole, fall in the share of Sikh population in 80.0 per cent districts of the state in 2011 with respect to 2001 suggests out-migration of Sikh population on the one hand and in-migration of non-Sikh population on the other. Doaba region of the state is traditionally known as area of out-migration to other countries. And this trend is gradually being picked up by other parts of the state, so much so that Amritsar district known as hub of Sikh religion has also recorded moderate negative change in the share of Sikh population. The state on the whole has recorded -2.22 percentage points decline in share of Sikh population during the study period.

Conclusions

The share of Sikh population in India is not only lowest (1.72 per cent) among all the major religious communities, but it is also declining at a very fast rate. During last decade of 2001-2011, the share of Sikh population in India has declined by -8.02 per cent against -1.71 per cent and -0.82 per cent reduction in case of Christians and Hindus respectively, while the share of Muslim religion has improved by 5.96 per cent during this period. Not only at national level, even in Punjab, the share of Sikh population has declined by -3.69 per cent in 2001-11. Conversely, Muslim population has witnessed 22.93 per cent improvement in its share followed by Hindus

(4.20 per cent) and Christians (4.17 per cent) during the same period.

Taking into account district-wise share of the Sikh population in Punjab in 2011, the study exhibits that in SBS Nagar, Jalandhar, Hoshiarpur, Gurdaspur and SAS Nagar districts (20 per cent districts of the state), the Sikhs are in minority. The study further reveals that 80 per cent of districts of the state have witnessed a fall in the share of Sikh population in 2011 when compared with 2001. The state on the whole has registered 2.22 percentage points fall in the share of Sikh population in the last decade of 2001-11. It is on account of lowest growth rate of 9.68 per cent registered by Sikh population as compared to Muslims (40.16 per cent) followed by Christians (18.93 per cent) and Hindus (18.67 per cent) during the same period.

On the basis of district-wise decline in the share of Sikh population, the study anticipates that by 2031, the Sikhs will be in minority in 50 per cent districts of the state. Further, taking into account the existing trends of declining birth rate and increasing out-migration of Sikh population followed by continuous in-migration of other communities in the state, the study further envisages that it may not take more than 2-3 decades when the Sikhs will be in minority in Punjab. Finally, the study concludes that Sikhs are gradually but surely losing ground in their home state.

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