

WILL THE POLITICS OF CENSUS MISLEAD THE PEOPLE?

Fr Varghese Paul, SJ

“Write it down, Hindus will become a minority.” With this title in an article the supreme leader of Rastriya Swayam Sevak Sangh, Shri Sudarshan writes : “By 2060 A.D. the Hindus in India will become a minority.” These words of Sudarshan, published in a mass-circulated daily newspaper, ‘Divya Bhasker’ in Gujarat is worth pondering.

In the beginning of his article Sudarshan has stated that he spoke about the same things in a speech at Badamer in Rajasthan. But he was disappointed with the reactions of the many newspaper editorials.

If Sudarshan says, “he got only disappointment from the editorials”, then, Sudarshan and his whole RSSS family need to weigh his statement about the census on a balance of truth and justice. Sudarshan has said emphatically that during the last 50 years “on the one side, the Hindu population has decreased by 7.64% while on the other side, the population of Muslims and Christians have increased by 26.07% and 4.04% respectively.

The Minority Commission appointed a special committee to study the census of 2001 and prepare a scientific report about the minorities. The 4 member committee chaired by Prof. Ashish Bose published its report in Kochi in Kerala on Feb. 14, 2005. Though the chairman of the minority commission Mr Tarlok Singh described the committee’s report as “unscientific” it has yet raised a storm in our communal based politics like a stone thrown at a bee-hive.

The report of Prof. Ashish Bose says that the population growth of Hindus during the 1981-1991 decade was 25.1%. which got reduced to 20.1% in the decade of 1991-2001. But the Muslim population was 34.5 during 1981-1991, which during the 1991-2001 decade increased to 36%. Prof. Bose discovered this intolerant increase of the Muslim population and criticised the neglect of family planning by the Muslims as the cause for the increase.

After reading Prof. Bose’s report on this population-growth in some newspapers and Sudarshan’s article in the Gujarati daily “Divya Bhaskar”, I believed that the populations of Christians and Muslims have indeed grown much more than the Hindu’s in India. But this belief of mine was short lived as by chance I heard a person who challenged the newspaper reports about the population growth according to the census of 2001.

On March 6, 2005 Dr Ram Puniyani addressed at least three audiences at places like Gujarat Vidhyapith, Mehndi Nawab Gunj Hall, Paladi etc. at Ahmedabad. I have read often Dr Puniyani’s articles in a national weekly “Indian Currents” published from New Delhi. But it was the first time that I meet Dr Puniyani and listened to him.

I am well acquainted with the clear thinking, logical arguments and presentation of facts in simple but forceful style of Dr Puniyani. That day in a speech Dr Puniyani made the difference between Hindus and Hindutvawadis and called on the people to cultivate communal harmony

and amity and cautioned them against the Hindutvawadis.

Dr Puniyani explained that the Hindutawadis often make a concoction of truth and lies and also create myths to mislead the people to their point of view. In support of his statement Dr Puniyani pointed out that the Hindutvawadis make a hullabaloo about the population growth of the minorities; “but the naked truth is that during the last four decades the population of Muslims and Christians in India instead of increasing have decreased.”

If one looks superficially at the census of 1981-1991 and 1991-2001, then one may believe that Sudarshan’s statement is true that the Muslims population has increased to 36% during the decade of 1991-2001. But the fact is that the census of 1981-1991 does not include the Muslim majority state of Jammu-Kashmir as it was then affected by terrorism. Similarly, the census of Assam was also not taken in 1981-1991. But in the 1991-2001 census, the population of these two states are also included and hence the census shows a substantial increase in the Muslim population. But if we exclude the populations of these two states as in the 1981-1991 census, then the population growth of Muslims shows only 29.3% which is 5.2% less in comparison with the 1981-1991 census.

Prof. Ashish Bose has also shown in his report that the Christian population too has increased very much, from the 1991 census to the 2001 census and according to Prof. Bose, the main reason is conversion. The increase in the Christian population occurs mainly in the three states of the north-east, in Nagaland, the percentage of Christian population is 69.2%, in Meghalaya 70.3% and in Mizoram 30.7%.