

CHAPTER IV

MOTHER TONGUE AND RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION

A. MOTHER TONGUE

Nepal is a multi-linguistic, multi-religious and multi-ethnic country. The censuses of Nepal have collected information in regard to languages and religions of the people. However no attempt was made by the censuses from 1952/51 to collect information in regard to the ethnicity of the people.

According to the definition used in the census, the mother tongue is one which is spoken by a person in childhood. In the case of babies or persons who cannot speak, the mother tongue of the mother is considered as the mother tongue. Although data is available on mother tongue but it is not without problems. The classification of mother tongue was not uniform in the censuses. In 1952/54 information on 36 language has primarily been collected but was provided for 24 languages. In 1961 the census obtained information on 52 language but the tabulation was made for 36 languages only. In 1971, the census made tabulation for 17 languages leaving a residue of 487,060 persons in the 'others' category (CBS, 1977)¹. The 1981 census provided tabulation on 18 languages leaving a residue of 764,802 persons in the category of 'others/unstated'. This group accounted for 5.09 per cent of the population.

The changes in number and classification of mother tongues over the years may be attributed to the following: *Firstly*, ambiguity with regard to drawing a clear distinction between a language and a dialect. Sometimes

a dialect is considered as a language. This could lead to an over-enumeration of languages spoken in the country. The over-count of the number of languages may arise particularly in a situation where an enumerator does not know the difference between a language and a dialect and where also the response to a question in the mother tongue language is open – ended. The answer to the question on the mother tongue was open ended in the censuses of the 1952/54 and 1961, while this was precoded only for major languages in the Subsequent censuses of 1971 and 1981. This may also explain the finding of a higher number of languages in the censuses of 1952/54 and 1961 than those reported in the censuses of 1971 and 1981. *Secondly*, the different ways of the classification of languages used by the censuses are not comparable particularly with respect to the category 'others'. For example, in the censuses of 1952/54, 1961 and 1971, the category 'others' in the classification of languages included only those languages for which data was collected but tabulations were not made separately. While in the 1981 census the category 'others' included languages other than those of the 18 for which tabulations were made and also those who did not state their languages. *Thirdly*, there is the problem of overlapping among the languages particularly among those sharing common ancestral descent. For example, *Hindi* has been the rallying point of *Maithili*, *Bhojpuri* and *Abadhi*, the languages predominantly spoken in the Terai. And there may be a transfer of people across the languages. The transfer of people across the languages was considered a plausible explanation for

¹ Central Bureau of Statistics, 1977. *The Analysis of the Population Statistics of Nepal*, Kathmandu, pp 42-50

finding the decrease of Hindi-speaking population between 1952/54 and 1971 (CBS, 1977)². As a result it is difficult to isolate the actual intercensal changes in the composition of these overlapping languages from that of the spurious changes due to transfer of people across the languages. *Fourthly*, is the problem of response bias. Some respondents may have either voluntarily or involuntarily provided distorted responses to the question on mother tongue. This could arise out of the following circumstances: a) a mother tongue is defined as one which is spoken in childhood. According to this definition the mother tongue of a child born in a *Newar* family is *Newari*. However, the child may be introduced to 'Nepali' from his/her early age in the Nursery School where he/she may acquire *Nepali* as quickly as *Newari* or even faster than *Newari* because of the greater interaction with *Nepali* speaking children for longer hours in school. In this situation when the question on mother tongue is asked, the respondent is likely not only to be bewildered but he/she may even tend to identify the mother tongue of the child as *Nepali* instead of *Newari*. This is an example of involuntary response bias to the question on mother tongue. The response bias may also be voluntary. For example, *Nepali* is the official language and many people may feel pride in reporting themselves as knowing *Nepali*. Migrants moving from *non-Nepali* speaking areas to *Nepali* speaking areas may under constraints learn *Nepali* or report themselves as knowing *Nepali* to avoid possible tension and for better adjustment with the people of the local areas. Some of these *non-Nepali* speaking migrants may even report *Nepali* as their mother tongue. These limitations have to be borne in mind when interpreting the data on mother tongues.

Distribution of Population by Mother Tongues

The numerical and percentage distribution

of population by mother tongues in the censuses since 1952/54 is shown in Table 4.1, The table provides data on major languages only, i.e. those spoken by at least 1 per cent of the population. The censuses from 1952/54 to 1961 recorded 11 such languages and this number was reduced to 10 in 1981. These languages were spoken by at least 94 per cent of the population in any census year. However, *Nepali* has been and continues to be the most important language being the mother tongue of the majority of the population of the country. The proportion of *Nepali-speaking* people has been increasing numerically as well as in percentage terms over the years. *Nepali* was spoken by 49 per cent of the population in 1952/54 compared with 58 per cent in 1981. The increase of *Nepali* speakers in the population over the years can be expected in view of the importance of the *Nepali* language in the body-politic of the country. *Nepali* is the official language and the major *lingua franca* in educational institutions. Numerically, *Maithili* speakers occupied the second position during the entire intercensal period under study, i.e. 1952/54-81 although their proportion declined slowly but continuously over the years. *Maithili* was spoken by 12 per cent of the population in 1952/54 but the corresponding figure in 1981 was only 11 per cent. *Tamang* was the third important language being the mother tongue of 6 per cent of the total population in 1952/54. However, the position of *Tamang* was taken by *Bhojpuri* in 1961. *Tamang* speakers have continued to occupy the fourth position since 1961 although they have experienced a decline in terms of the percentages over the years and also numerical during the period between 1971 and 1981. The proportion of *Tamang* speakers declined from 6 per cent in 1952/54 to 3 per cent in 1981. *Bhojpuri-speaking* people both numerically and in terms of the percentage increased considerably over the years. The proportion of

² *Ibid.*

Bhojpuri speaking people in the total population increased from 6 per cent in 1952/54 to 8 per cent in 1981. *Bhojpuri* has continued to

hold its third rank among the languages being spoken in the country since 1961.

Table 4.1-Numerical and percentage distribution of population by mother tongues, Nepal, Census years 1952/54-1981

Mother tongue	1952/54		1961		1971		1981	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Nepali	4,013,567	48.74	4,796,528	50.96	6,060,758	52.45	8,767,361	58.36
Maithili	1,024,780*	12.44	1,130,401	12.01	1,327,242	11.49	1,668,309	11.11
Bhojpuri	477,281*	5.80	577,357	6.13	806,480	6.98	1,142,805	7.61
Tamang	494,745	6.01	518,812	5.51	555,056	4.80	522,416	3.48
Abadhi	328,408*	3.99	447,090	4.75	316,950	2.74	234,343	1.56
Tharu	359,594	4.37	406,907	4.32	495,881	4.29	545,685	3.63
Newari	383,184	4.65	377,727	4.01	454,979	3.94	448,746	2.99
Magar	273,780	3.32	254,675	2.71	288,383	2.50	212,681	1.42
Rai, Kirati	236,049	2.87	239,749	2.55	232,264	2.01	221,353	1.47
Gurung	162,192	1.97	157,778	1.68	171,609	1.40	174,464	1.16
Limbu	145,511	1.77	138,705	1.47	170,787	1.48	129,234	0.86
Other	335,236	4.07	360,835	3.83	675,594	5.85	955,442	6.361 ¹
Unstated	752	0.01	6,432	0.07	-	-	-	-

* According to 1952/54 census there were 300,768 Maithili, 16,335 Bhojpuri and only 27 Abadhi (see Table 9, Population census 1952/54, Part II). However, this was based on wrong classification of Terai languages (Maithili, Bhojpuri and Abadhi). If classifications of Terai languages were made on the basis of textual comments (as appeared in Part II section 2, pp. 60-71 of population census 1952/54), we would find that those classified as dialects of Central East and Far East Terai were actually Maithili, dialects of Eastern Terai were Bhojpuri and those of Far-west Terai were Abadhi. According to this classification the number of people speaking Maithili, Bhojpuri and Abadhi turned out to be 10,247,80; 477,281 and 328,408 respectively in 1952/54.

¹ In 1981 there was no 'unstated category'. This was merged with category 'others'.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1958 -Population census 1952/54, Part II, Table 9;

” ” 1961, Population census 1961, Vol II, Table 8;

” ” 1975- ” ” 1971, Vol. II, Part II, Table 14;

1984- ” ” 1981, Vol. I, Part III, Table 12.

Percentage Change of Population by Mother Tongues

Table 4.2 presents data on the percentage change of population by mother tongue for the census years 1952/54 to 1981. The table shows some variations in the percentage change of population by mother tongue from one

census to the other. Between the period from, 1952/54 to 1961 *Abadhi-speakers* experienced the highest percentage increase followed by Bhojpuri, Nepali and Tharu. However, between 1961 and 1971, Bhojpuri took the lead in percentage increase followed by Nepali, Limbu and Tharu.

Table 4.2 Intercensal percentage change and geometric growth rate of population by mother tongue, Nepal, Census years 1952/54 – 81

Mother tongue	Percentage change			Geometric growth rate		
	1952/54-61	1961-71	1971-81	1952/54-61	1961-71	1971-81
Nepali	19.51	26.36	44.66	2.25	2.37	3.76
Maithili	10.31	17.41	25.70	1.23	1.62	2.31
Bhojpuri	20.97	39.68	41.70	2.41	3.40	3.55
Tamang	4.86	5.99	-5.88	0.60	0.63	0.60
Abadhi	36.14	-29.11	-26.06	3.93	-3.38	-2.97
Tharu	13.16	21.87	10.04	1.56	2.00	0.96
Newari	-1.42	20.45	-1.35	-0.18	1.88	-0.14
Magar	-6.98	13.24	-26.25	-0.90	1.25	-3.00
Rai, Kirati	1.57	-3.12	-4.70	0.19	-0.32	-0.48
Gurung	-2.72	8.77	1.66	-0.34	0.84	0.17
Limbu	-4.68	23.13	-24.33	-0.60	2.10	-2.75
Others	7.64	87.23	41.42*	0.92	6.47	3.53*
Unstated	755.32	-	-	30.77	-	-
Total	14.30	22.77	30.00	1.67	2.07	2.66

*Others also included those who did not state their languages in 1981.

CC: Same as are those in Table 4.1

Distribution of Languages by Regions

The numerical as well as the proportionate distribution of the major languages by regions for the census years 1952/54 to 1981 is shown in Table 4.3. An interesting aspect of the population distribution of Nepal is the concentration of the different linguistic groups in specific regions of the country. Although there has been a spread of *Nepali* speaking people in almost every region of the country over the years the majority of them still live in the Western and Eastern Hills. These two regions accounted for 88 per cent and 65 per cent of *Nepali-speaking* people in 1952/54 and 1981 respectively. The reduction in concentration of *Nepali speaking* people in the Eastern and Western Hills over the intercensal periods is due, to the fact that *Nepali* is increasingly being spoken in every region. The absolute majority of the *Maithili* and *Bhojpuri* speaking people live in the Eastern Terai and East

Inner Terai although this concentration has been reduced particularly for the *Bhojpuri* speakers over the years. One hundred percent of *Bhojpuri* and *Maithili-speaking* people used to live in the Eastern Terai and Eastern Inner Terai in 1952/54. These regions were still occupied by 95 per cent of *Maithili* and 69 per cent of *Bhojpuri speaking* people in 1981. It shows some spread of *Bhojpuri* speaking people particularly within the Terai zone during the period between 1961 and 1981. Nearly 22 per cent of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people were living in the West, Mid-west and Far western Terai in 1981. At least eighty per cent of the *Tamang* live in the Eastern Hill (39.3), the Eastern and East Inner Terai (20.2) and the Western Hill (20.2). The concentration of *Tamang* in the Eastern and Western Hills has declined, through slightly; over the years, while the proportion of *Tamang* speaking people living in the Eastern Terai and East

Inner Terai has shown a steady increase. The West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai have been and continue to be the home of the Abadhi-speaking population. *Tharus* are mostly concentrated in the Western, Mid-western and Far-western Terai. Seventy-five per cent of the Tharu-speaking population were living in the Mid-western and Far-western Terai in 1952/54. In 1981, 61 per cent of them lived in the Mid-western and Far-western Terai and 30 per cent in the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai. There has been a steady increase, though small, of Tharu-speaking population in the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai over the years. *Newari-speaking* people tend to be concentrated in the Kathmandu Valley although this concentration has increased slightly. In 1952/54, 59 per cent of the *Newari-speaking* people used to live in the Kathmandu Valley compared with 60 per cent in 1981.

Language Composition of the Population by Region

The proportionate share of the major languages in the total population of each region for the census years, is given in Table 4.4. In 1952/54 *Nepali*, *Maithili* and *Newari* were the only three languages spoken by at least 50 per cent of the population of the following regions: *Nepali* in the Eastern and Western Hills; *Maithili* in the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai and *Newari* in the Kathmandu Valley. *Abadhi* was spoken by 49 and 58 per cent of the population of the West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai in 1952/54 and 1961 respectively. In 1981 no language other than that of *Nepali* was spoken by the majority (50 % and over) of the population.

Nepali has been and continues to be the dominant language in the Hill followed by the Mountain and Terai (see Table 4.5). In the Hill and the Mountain at least 70 per cent of the people speak *Nepali* while in the Terai only one-third of the people do so. However,

the proportion of people speaking *Nepali* has been increasing rapidly in the Terai area over the years. During the last intercensal period 1971-81, *Nepali-speaking* people increased by 184 per cent in the Terai, 25 per cent in the Hill and 18 per cent in the Mountain (see Table 4.6.) The greater increase in *Nepali* - speaking people in the Terai compared to the Hill and Mountain was mostly due to the fact that there was a small base of *Nepali*-speaking people there already.

Distribution of Major Languages by Rural/Urban Sector

The proportionate distribution of the major languages by rural and urban sectors in 1981 is given in Table 4.7. Among the people speaking the major languages those who speak *Newari* are proportionately highly urbanized followed by those who speak *Gurung*. Although *Newari-speaking* people account for only 3 per cent of the total population nearly half (43 %) of them live in urban areas and mostly in the Kathmandu Valley (see Table 4.3). The finding of *Newari* speaking people being proportionately greater city dwellers than people speaking other languages may also testify to greater participation in non - agricultural activities among the *Newari* than the other language speaking groups. *Newars*, i.e. those who speak *Newari* have been living in the Kathmandu Valley, the major concentration of the urban population in the country, over centuries and there has been a good spread of non-agricultural occupations, such as trade/ commerce, wood carving, etc.' among this community. The *Gurung* community are the traditional suppliers of soldiers working in the armies of the United Kingdom and India. Some of these *Gurung* soldiers when returning home on completion of their contracts abroad may well settle in the urban centers of the country. *Gurungs also* disproportionately serve in the Royal Nepalese Army.

Table 4.3-Numerical and percentage distribution- of the population - by major rather tongues for regions, Nepal, Census years 1952/54-81

Region ^a	Census year	All persons	Nepali		Maithili		Bhojpuri	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1952/54	8,235,079	4,013,567	100.00	1,024,780*	100.00	477,281*	100.00
	1961	9,412,996	4,796,528	100.00	1,130,401	100.00	577,357	100.00
	1971	11,555,983	6,060,758	100.00	1,327,242	100.00	806,480	100.00
	1981	15,022,839	8,767,361	100.00	1,668,309	100.00	1,142,805	100.00
Eastern Hill	1952/54	1,708,816	876,494	21.84	3	0.00	14	0.00
	1961	1,886,722	1,081,544	22.55	10	0.00	-	-
	1971	2,036,240	1,208,148	19.93	772	0.06	98	0.01
	1981	2,287,173	1,632,428	18.62	10,117	0.61	545	0.05
Kathmandu Valley	1952/54	410,871	161,330	4.07	17	0.00	5	0.00
	1961	459,990	188,938	3.94	88	0.01	82	0.01
	1971	618,911	282,885	4.67	315	0.02	81	0.01
	1981	766,345	410,081	4.68	8,049	0.48	594	0.05
Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai	1952/54	1,991,649	184,057	4.59	1,024,703	99.99	477,159	99.97
	1961	2,406,948	247,275	5.16	1,129,581	99.93	576,547	99.86
	1971	3,234,181	535,040	8.83	1,323,637	99.73	686,365	85.11
	1981	4,585,162	1,381,773	15.76	1,576,407	94.49	785,137	68.70
Central Terai	1952/54	239,677	90,873	2.26	-	-	103	0.02
	1961	244,236	115,606	2.41	24	0.00	653	0.11
	1971	493,958	226,527	3.74	436	0.03	14,251	1.77
	1981	811,810	491,635	5.61	7,168	0.43	98,853	8.65
West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai	1952/54	672,683	47,267	1.18	57	0.01	-	-
	1961	770,515	62,464	1.30	685	0.06	75	0.01
	1971	1,041,624	232,809	3.84	511	0.04	105,134	13.04
	1981	1,746,777	743,268	8.48	16,819	1.01	248,940	21.78
Western Hill	1952/54	3,211,383	2,653,546	66.11	-	-	-	-
	1961	3,644,585	3,100,701	64.64	13	0.00	-	-
	1971	4,131,069	3,575,349	58.99	1,571	0.12	551	0.07
	1981	4,825,572	4,108,173	46.86	49,749	2.98	8,736	0.76

^a. Eastern Hill includes Panchthar, Ilam, Sankhuwasabha, Tehrathum, Dhankuta, Bhojpur, Solukhumbu, Khotang, Okhaldhunga, Dolakha, Ramechhap, Sindhupalchok and Kavrepalanchok; Kathmandu valley includes Kathmandu, Bhaktapur and Lalitpur; Eastern and East Inner Terai include Jhapa, Morang, Sunsari, Udayapur, Saptari, Dhanusha, Siraha, Sindhuli, Mahottari, Sarlahi, Rautahat, Bara and Parsa; Central Terai includes Chitwan.. Makawanpur and Nawalparasi; West, Mid-west, and Far-western Terai include Rupandehi, Kapilbastu, Dang, Banke, Bardiya, Kailali, Kanchanpur; Western Hill includes Nuwakot, Rasuwa, Dhading, Gorkha, Lamjung, Tanahun, Syangja, Kaski, Manang, Mustang, Myagdi, Parbat, Baglung, Gulmi, Palpa, Arghakhanchi, Pyuthan, Rolpa, Rukum, Salyan, Surkhet, Dailekh, Jajarkot, Dolpa, Jumla, Kalikot, Mugu, Humla, Bajura, Bajhang, Achham, Doti, Dadeldhura, Baitadi and Darchula.

Table 4.3-Numerical and percentage distribution- of the population - by major mother tongues for regions, Nepal, Census years 1952/54-81

Tamang		Abadhi		Tharu		Newari	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
494,745	100.00	328,408*	100.00	359,594	100.00	383,184	100.00
518,812	100.00	447,090	100.00	406,907	100.00	377,727	100.00
555,056	100.00	316,950	100.00	495,881	100.00	454,979	100.00
522,416	100.00	234,343	100.00	545,685	100.00	448,746	100.03
239,971	48.50	-	-	-	-	76,514	19.97
244,299	47.09	-	-	4	0.00	63,667	16.86
235,310	42.39	392	0.12	111	0.02	81,471	17.91
205,255	39.29	222	0.09	475	0.09	61,316	13.66
19,169	3.87	-	-	3	0.00	225,819	58.93
23,248	4.48	1	0.00	6	0.00	239,791	63.48
39,960	7.20	8	0.00	26	0.01	286,158	62.89
34,254	6.56	270	0.12	207	0.04	270,765	60.34
43,710	8.83	-	-	34,960	9.72	11,607	3.03
47,859	9.22	340	0.08	100,079	24.60	17,184	4.55
70,851	12.76	2,494	0.79	96,612	19.48	21,890	4.81
105,481	20.19	581	0.25	162,502	29.78	43,218	9.63
79,442	16.06	518	0.16	27,956	7.77	12,568	3.28
76,615	14.77	-	-	24,460	6.01	13,550	3.59
81,045	14.60	35,630	11.24	61,659	12.43	19,920	4.38
60,090	11.50	125	0.05	46,913	8.60	22,042	4.91
39	0.01	327,641	99.77	269,117	74.84	2,700	0.70
18	0.00	466,749	99.92	253,974	62.42	2,471	0.65
69	0.01	277,758	87.63	334,930	67.54	3,890	0.85
12,019	2.30	232,410	99.18	332,272	60.89	11,749	2.62
112,414	22.72	249	0.08	27,558	7.66	53,976	14.09
126,776	24.44	-	-	28,384	6.98	41,064	10.87
127,821	23.03	668	0.21	2,543	0.51	41,650	9.15
105,317	20.16	735	0.31	3,316	0.61	39,656	8.84

* Same as are those in Table 4.1.

Source: Same as are those in Table 4.1.

Table 4.4—Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by major mother tongues for region, Census years 1952/54 – 81

Region a	Census year	All persons	%	Nepali		Maithili	
				Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1952/54	8,235,079	100.0	4,013,567	48.74	1,024,780*	12.44
	1961	9,412,996	100.0	4,796,528	50.96	1,130,401	12.01
	1971	11,555,983	100.0	6,060,758	52.45	1,327,242	11.49
	1981	15,022,839	100.0	8,767,361	58.36	1,668,309	11.11
Eastern Hill	1952/54	1,708,816	100.0	876,494	51.29	3	0.00
	1961	1,886,722	100.0	1,081,544	57.32	10	0.00
	1971	2,036,240	100.0	1,208,148	59.33	772	0.04
	1981	2,287,173	100.0	1,632,428	71.37	10,117	0.44
Kathmandu Valley	1952/54	410,871	100.0	161,330	39.27	17	0.00
	1961	459,990	100.0	188,938	41.07	88	0.02
	1971	616,911	100.0	282,885	45.71	315	0.05
	1981	766,345	100.0	410,081	53.51	8,049	1.05
Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai	1952/54	1,991,649	100.0	184,057	9.24	1,024,703	51.45
	1961	2,406,948	100.0	247,275	10.27	1,129,581	46.93
	1971	3,234,181	100.0	535,040	16.54	1,323,637	40.93
	1981	4,585,162	100.0	1,381,773	30.14	1,576,407	34.38
Central Terai	1952/54	239,677	100.0	90,873	37.91	-	-
	1961	244,236	100.0	115,606	47.33	24	0.01
	1971	493,958	100.0	226,527	45.86	436	0.09
	1981	811,810	100.0	491,638	60.56	7,168	0.88
West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai	1952/54	672,683	100.0	47,267	7.03	57	0.01
	1961	770,515	100.0	62,464	8.11	685	0.09
	1971	1,041,624	100.0	232,809	22.35	511	0.05
	1981	1,746,777	100.0	743,268	42.55	16,819	0.96
Western Hill	1952/54	3,211,383	100.0	2,653,546	82.63	-	-
	1961	3,644,585	100.0	3,100,701	85.08	13	0.00
	1971	4,131,069	100.0	3,575,349	86.55	1,571	0.04
	1981	4,825,572	100.0	4,108,173	85.13	49,749	1.03

^a) Same as are those in Table 4.3.

* Same as are those in Table 4.1

Table 4.4—Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by major mother tongues for region, Census years 1952/54 - 81

Bhojpuri		Tamang		Abadhi		Tharu		Newari	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
477,281*	5.80	494,745	6.01	328,408*	3.99	359,594	4.37	383,184	4.65
577,357	6.13	518,812	5.62	447,090	4.75	406,987	4.32	377,727	4.01
806,480	6.98	555,056	4.80	316,950	2.74	495,881	4.29	454,979	3.94
1,142,805	7.61	522,416	3.48	234,343	1.56	545,685	3.63	448,746	2.99
14	0.00	239,971	14.04	-	-	-	-	76,514	4.48
-	-	244,299	12.95	-	-	4	0.00	63,667	3.37
98	0.00	235,310	12.00	392	0.02	111	0.01	81,471	4.00
545	0.02	205,255	8.97	222	0.01	475	0.02	61,316	2.68
5	0.00	19,169	4.67	-	-	3	0.00	225,819	54.96
82	0.02	23,248	5.05	1	0.00	6	0.00	239,791	52.13
81	0.01	39,960	6.46	8	0.00	26	0.00	286,158	46.24
594	0.08	34,254	4.47	270	0.04	207	0.03	270,765	35.33
477,159	23.96	43,710	2.19	-	-	34,960	1.76	11,607	0.58
576,547	23.95	47,859	1.99	340	0.01	100,079	4.16	17,184	0.71
686,365	21.22	70,851	2.19	2,494	0.08	96,612	2.99	21,890	0.68
785,137	17.12	105,481	2.30	581	0.01	162,502	3.54	43,218	0.94
103	0.04	79,442	33.15	518	0.22	27,956	11.66	12,568	5.24
653	0.27	76,615	31.37	-	-	24,460	10.01	13,550	5.55
14,251	2.89	81,045	16.41	35,530	7.21	61,659	12.48	19,920	4.03
98,853	12.18	60,090	7.40	125	0.02	46,913	5.78	22,042	2.72
-	-	39	0.01	327,641	48.71	269,117	40.01	2,700	0.40
75	0.01	15	0.00	446,749	57.98	253,974	32.96	2,471	0.32
105,134	10.09	69	0.01	277,758	26.67	334,930	32.15	3,890	0.37
248,940	14.25	12019	0.69	232,410	13.31	332,272	19.02	11,749	0.67
-	-	112,414	3.50	249	0.01	27,558	0.86	53,976	1.68
-	-	126,776	3.48	-	-	28,384	0.78	41,064	1.13
551	0.01	127,821	3.09	608	0.02	2,543	0.06	41,650	1.01
8,736	0.13	105,317	2.18	735	0.02	3,163	0.07	39,656	0.82

* Same as are those in Table 4.1

Table 4.5-Percentage distribution of population by mother tongues and geographical zones, Nepal, Census years 1952/54-81

Mother Tongue	Mountain*		Hill*		Mountain + Hill			Terai			Total						
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	1952/54	1961	1971	1981	
Nepali	70.18	73.13	73.48	77.62	69.24	72.99	73.08	76.96	11.09	12.43	18.22	34.35	48.74	50.96	52.45	58.36	
Maithili	0.03	0.83	0.29	0.99	0.00	0.00	0.25	0.96	35.29	33.03	30.13	24.20	12.44	12.01	11.49	11.11	
Bhojpuri	0.00	0.02	0.01	0.14	0.00	0.00	0.01	0.12	16.43	16.87	18.54	17.27	5.80	6.13	6.98	7.61	
Tamang	10.32	8.02	6.58	4.64	6.97	6.58	7.17	5.17	4.24	3.64	0.88	1.30	6.01	5.62	4.80	3.48	
Abadhi	0.02	0.00	0.01	0.02	0.00	0.00	0.02	0.02	11.30	13.07	7.27	3.55	3.99	4.75	2.74	1.56	
Tharu	0.00	0.02	0.04	0.21	0.52	0.47	0.04	0.18	11.43	11.06	11.35	8.09	4.37	4.32	4.29	3.63	
Newari	1.97	1.41	6.72	5.20	6.68	5.75	5.97	4.62	0.93	0.97	0.57	0.88	4.65	4.01	3.94	2.99	
Magar	0.21	0.13	4.18	2.24	4.38	3.52	3.55	1.92	1.40	1.27	0.75	0.77	3.32	2.71	2.50	1.42	
Rai, Kirati	4.13	4.27	2.60	1.80	4.15	3.62	2.84	2.18	0.51	0.65	0.63	0.56	2.87	2.55	2.01	1.47	
Gurung	1.08	1.27	2.43	1.80	2.99	2.60	2.22	1.72	0.10	0.06	0.26	0.44	1.97	1.68	1.49	1.16	
Limbu	3.22	1.88	1.95	1.13	2.72	2.28	2.15	1.24	0.02	0.05	0.37	0.37	1.77	1.47	1.48	0.86	
Others	8.09	9.00	1.71	4.17	2.35	2.21	2.72	4.92	7.25	6.87	11.03	8.22	4.08	3.80	6.00	6.36	
Total	%	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	
No.		1,138,610	1,302,896	60,714,077	1,631,155	331,070	5,991,297	7,210,017	8,466,011	2,904,009	3,421,699	4,345,966	6,556,828	8,235,079	9,412,996	11,555,983	15,022,839

*No separate data were available for the Mountain and Hill zones in the censuses of 1952/54 and 1961.

Source: same as are those in Table 4.1.

Table 4.6-Numerical distribution and percentage change of the population by mother tongues for geographic zones, Nepal, Census years 1971 and 1981

Mother tongue	Nepal			Mountain			Hill			Terai		
	1971	1981	% change	1971	1981	% change	1971	1981	% change	1971	1981	% change
All mother tongues	11,555,983	15,022,839	30.00	1,138,610	1,302,896	14.43	6,071,407	7,163,115	17.98	4,345,966	6,556,828	50.87
Nepali	6,060,758	8,767,361	44.66	807,383	952,824	18.01	4,461,587	5,562,323	24.67	791,788	2,252,214	184.45
Maithili	1,327,242	1,668,309	25.70	343	10,733	3,029.15	17,496	70,784	304.57	1,309,403	1,586,792	21.18
Bhojpuri	806,480	1,142,805	41.70	105	257	144.76	711	10,053	1,313.92	805,664	1,132,495	40.57
Tamang	555,056	522,416	-5.88	117,464	104,760	-10.82	399,263	332,609	-16.69	38,329	85,047	121.89
Abadhi	316,950	234,343	-26.06	307	96	-68.73	777	1,226	57.79	315,866	233,021	-26.23
Tharu	495,881	545,685	10.04	22	295	1,240.91	2,681	15,183	466.32	493,178	530,207	7.51
Newari	454,979	448,746	-1.37	22,417	18,351	-18.14	407,700	372,520	-8.62	24,862	57,875	132.78
Magar	288,383	212,681	-26.25	2,376	1,656	-30.30	253,585	160,713	-36.62	32,422	50,312	55.18
Rai, Kirati	232,264	221,353	-4.70	47,066	55,589	18.11	157,717	128,870	-37.33	27,481	36,894	34.25
Gurung	171,609	174,464	1.66	12,358	16,509	33.59	147,745	129,208	-12.55	11,506	28,747	149.84
Limbu	170,787	129,234	-24.33	36,612	24,530	-33.00	118,141	80,750	-31.65	16,034	23,954	49.40
Others	675,594	955,442	41.42	92,157	117,296	27.28	104,004	298,876	187.37	479,433	539,270	12.48

Note: Others also included those who did not state their languages in 1981.

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975- Population Census 1971, Vol.II, Part II, Table 14;

„ „ 1984- „ „ 1981, Vol. II, Table 11.

Some of them on their retirement from military service may also choose to live in urban areas. This could account for finding the *Gurung* speaking people occupying the second rank in the scale of urbanization among the major language speaking peoples. *Gurungs* account for only one per cent of the total population but 7 per cent of them live in urban areas.

Table 4.7-Percentage distribution of major languages by rural urban sector, 1931

Mother tongues	Proportion in the total population		
	Total	Rural	Urban
Nepali	100	94.35	5.65
Maithili	100	95.70	4.30
Bhojpuri	100	96.71	3.29
Tamang	100	97.26	2.74
Abadhi	100	97.09	2.91
Tharu	100	96.25	3.75
Newari	100	56.61	43.39
Magar	100	98.40	1.60
Rai, Kirati	100	94.93	5.03
Gurung	100	93.09	6.91
Limbu	100	97.32	2.68
Others	100	91.04	8.96

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984 Population Census 1981, Vol. 1, Part III, Table 12 and Vol. III, Table 9.

Among the major language speaking peoples *Magars* are the least urbanized.

Language Composition of the Population by Rural/Urban Sector

The proportionate share of the major languages in the total population of rural and urban areas is given in Table 4.8. It may be observed that a majority of people both within urban and rural areas speak *Nepali*. This is what one would also expect to find given the fact that *Nepali* is increasingly being used as the medium of instructions in educational institutions and it is recognized as the only official language. However, it should be also pointed out here that although a majority of the urban and rural populations speak *Nepali*, a sizeable proportion of rural (41%) and urban (48 %) people still identify languages other than *Nepali* as their mother tongues. *Newari* is the second most important language spoken in urban areas. Twenty per cent of the urban population said they spoke *Newari* in 1981. This is due to the large concentration of *Newari* speaking people in urban areas particularly in Kathmandu Valley which dominates the urban scenario of the country. In rural areas *Nepali* was followed by *Maithili*, *Bhojpuri* and *Tharu* as important language speaking groups in 1981.

Table 4.8-Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by major mother tongues for the rural and urban areas, Nepal, Census year 1981

Sector	All Persons	Nepali	Maithili	Bhojpuri	Tamang	Abadhi	Tharu	Newari	Magar	Rai, Kirati	Gurung	Limbu	Others	Total
Rural	14,066,118	58.80	11.35	7.85	3.61	1.61	3.73	1.80	1.48	1.49	1.15	0.89	6.18	100.0
Urban	956,721	51.78	7.49	3.92	1.49	0.71	2.14	20.35	0.35	1.16	1.26	0.36	8.94	100.0
Total	15,022,839	58.36	11.10	7.60	3.47	1.55	3.63	2.98	1.41	1.47	1.16	0.86	6.35	100.0

Source: Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984- Population Census 1981, Vol. 1, Part III, Table-:12, Vol. III, Table 9.

Distribution of Languages by Zones

The numerical as well as proportionate distribution of the major languages by zones, for the census years 1971 and 1981, is shown in Table 4.9. Although there has been a steady increase of *Nepali-speaking* people in almost every zone of the country during the last intercensal period 1971-81 the major proportion of them still live in Bagmati, Gandaki, Lumbini, Rapti and Koshi zones. These zones accounted for 50 per cent and 49 per cent of Nepali-speaking people in 1971 and 1981 respectively. The absolute majority of *Maithili* speaking people live in Sagarmatha and Janakpur zones. These two zones, accounted for 91 per cent and 80 per cent of *Maithili* speaking people in 1971 and 1981 respectively. This reduction in *Maithili-speaking* in Sagarmatha and Janakpur zones during the last intercensal period 1971-81, may imply among other things the movement of *Maithili* speaking people to other regions of the country over the years. Nearly one hundred per cent of the *Bhojpuri-speaking* people used to live in Narayani and Lumbini zones in 1971. These two regions still account for 84 per cent of the *Bhojpuri-speaking* population in 1981. However, there has been an interesting interzonal shift of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people during the last intercensal period. For example, the proportion of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people living in Lumbini increased from 15 per cent in 1971 to 30 per cent in 1981. This increase was mostly due to the move of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people from Narayani to Lumbini. The proportion of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people in Narayani was reduced from 85 per cent in 1971 to 56 per cent in 1981. One also finds a steady increase of *Bhojpuri* speaking people in Janakpur zone during the last intercensal period 1971-81. Only one tenth of one per cent of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people lived in Janakpur zone in 1971, the corresponding figure in 1981 was 13 per cent.

These findings also demonstrate inter-regional mobility of *Bhojpuri-speaking* people particularly within the Terai.

The majority of the *Tamang-speaking* people live in Bagmati zone, although this concentration decreased slightly during the last intercensal period 1971-81. This area accounted for 51 per cent and 47 per cent of the *Tamang-speaking* people in 1971 and 1981 respectively.

Abadhi-speaking people are mostly concentrated in Lumbini zone, although there has been considerable increase of *Abadhi* speaking people in Bheri zone during the last intercensal period. The proportion of *Abadhi* speaking people living in Bheri zone increased by one hundred per cent from 13 per cent in 1971 to 26 per cent in 1981.

This increase of *Abadhi-speaking* people in Bheri zone during the last intercensal period was mostly due to the movement of the *Abadhi-speaking* people from Lumbini to Bheri.

The *Tharus* are mostly concentrated in Seti, Bheri, Koshi and Rapti zones. These areas accounted for 75 per cent and 69 per cent of *Tharu-speaking* people in 1971 and 1981 respectively. There has also been a steady increase of *Tharu-speaking* people in Narayani and Sagarmatha zones, particularly in the latter, on the one hand and a decrease of this proportion in Lumbini zone, on the other, during the last intercensal period.

The *Newari-speaking* people have been and continue to be concentrated in Bagmati zone, although this concentration decreased marginally during the last intercensal period. This area accounted for 73 and 71 per cent of the *Newari-speaking* people in 1971 and 1981 respectively. This reduction, although small, in concentration of *Newari-speaking* people may imply among other things, some degree of mobility among this group of people from Bagmati to other zones of the country.

Table 4.9-Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by major mother tongues for zones, Nepal, Census years 1971 and 1981.

Zone	Census year	All persons	Nepali		Maithili	
			Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1971	11,555,983	6,060,755	100.0	1,327,242	100.0
	1981	15,022,839	8,767,361	100.0	1,668,309	100.0
Mechi	1971	617,760	301,556	5.0	3,087	0.2
	1981	932,625	636,210	7.3	11,609	0.7
Koshi	1971	1,060,766	506,648	8.4	105,363	7.9
	1981	1,423,624	800,030	9.1	205,437	12.3
Sagarmatha	1971	1,118,974	324,063	5.3	575,113	43.3
	1981	1,352,674	579,947	5.6	547,186	32.8
Janakpur	1971	1,265,755	314,600	5.2	630,740	47.5
	1981	1,688,115	489,768	5.6	790,562	47.4
Bagmati	1971	1,496,971	844,211	13.9	520	0.0
	1981	1,782,439	1,118,304	12.8	15,850	1.0
Narayani	1971	1,103,027	234,949	3.9	10,122	0.8
	1981	1,438,803	506,095	5.8	31,211	1.9
Gandaki	1971	904,421	660,727	10.9	272	0.0
	1981	1,107,569	832,152	9.5	19,206	1.2
Lumbini	1971	1,165,701	567,190	9.4	902	0.1
	1981	1,567,828	825,932	9.4	12,619	0.8
Dhawalagiri	1971	376,308	343,505	5.7	160	0.0
	1981	453,462	411,443	4.7	1,298	0.1
Rapti	1971	705,813	587,768	9.7	174	0.0
	1981	876,723	723,257	8.2	2,250	0.1
Karnali	1971	207,122	194,968	3.2	155	0.0
	1981	242,486	220,271	2.5	987	0.1
Bheri	1971	575,071	371,192	6.1	358	0.0
	1981	836,402	579,478	6.6	14,676	0.9
Seti	1971	597,124	490,750	8.1	131	0.0
	1981	794,911	600,030	6.8	8,193	0.5
Mahakali	1971	361,170	318,631	5.3	145	0.0
	1981	525,178	444,444	6.0	7,225	0.4

Source : Same as are those in Table 4.1.

Table 4.9-Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by major mother tongues for zones, Nepal, Census years 1971 and 1981.

Bhojpuri		Tamang		Abhadi		Tharu		Newari	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
806480	100.0	555,056	100.0	316,950	100.0	495,881	100.0	454,979	100.0
1142805	100.0	522,416	100.0	234,343	100.0	545,685	100.0	448,746	100.0
77	0.0	17,163	3.1	344	0.1	2,537	0.5	4,412	1.0
1042	0.1	19,306	3.7	53	0.0	1,509	0.3	3,749	0.8
1670	0.2	23,143	4.2	1,691	0.5	92,421	18.6	17,690	3.9
6258	0.5	37,739	7.2	278	0.1	78,673	14.4	15,852	3.5
88	0.0	26,673	4.8	81	0.0	43	0.0	12,112	2.7
553	0.0	26,484	5.1	112	0.0	50,434	9.2	5,875	1.3
669	0.1	101,490	18.3	648	0.2	629	0.1	25,826	5.7
143679	12.6	95,073	18.2	201	0.1	9,347	1.7	21,477	4.8
93	0.0	284,367	51.2	47	0.0	33	0.0	331,444	72.8
1097	0.1	244,668	46.8	372	0.2	711	0.1	317,020	70.6
684217	84.8	83,929	15.1	121	0.9	25,817	5.2	21,603	4.7
635135	55.6	67,605	12.9	141	0.2	54,142	9.9	36,610	8.2
55	0.0	9,815	1.8	1	0.0	24	0.0	21,151	4.6
7,909	0.7	11,206	2.1	135	0.1	803	0.1	23,866	5.3
118823	14.7	334	0.1	270,625	85.4	66,736	13.5	14,509	3.2
346,323	30.3	4,957	0.9	171,132	73.0	29,701	5.4	19,218	4.3
6	0.0	3,873	0.7	16	0.0	-	0.0	3,846	0.8
47	0.0	953	0.2	22	0.0	41	0.0	2,606	0.6
137	0.0	11	0.0	1,284	0.4	72,482	14.6	1,796	0.4
330	0.0	2,584	0.5	657	0.3	84,226	15.4	563	0.1
13	0.0	4,198	0.8	-	0.0	1	0.0	13	0.0
24	0.0	208	0.0	5	0.0	65	0.0	46	0.0
446	0.1	34	0.0	41,318	13.0	101,762	20.5	480	0.1
301	0.0	5,755	1.1	61,124	26.1	93,048	17.1	1,349	0.3
175	0.0	23	0.0	129	0.0	103,939	21.0	69	0.0
50	0.0	3,229	0.6	49	0.0	120,539	22.1	382	0.1
11	0.0	-	0.0	645	0.2	29,452	5.9	28	0.0
57	0.0	2,649	0.5	62	0.0	22,446	4.1	133	0.0

Table 4.10- Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by -major mother tongues for zones, Nepal, Census years 1971 and 1981.

Zone	Census Year	All persons	%	Nepali		Maithili	
				Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1971	11,555,983	100.0	6,060,758	52.45	1,327,242	11.49
	1981	15,022,839	100.0	8,767,361	58.36	1,668,309	11.11
Mechi	1971	617,760	100.0	301,556	48.8	3,087	0.5
	1981	932,625	100.0	636,210	68.2	11,609	1.2
Koshi	1971	1,060,766	100.0	506,648	47.8	105,363	9.9
	1981	1,423,624	100.0	800,030	56.2	205,437	14.4
Sagarmatha	1971	1,118,974	100.0	324,063	29.0	575,113	51.4
	1981	1,352,674	100.0	579,947	42.9	547,186	40.5
Janakpur	1971	1,265,755	100.0	314,600	24.9	630,740	49.8
	1981	1,688,115	100.0	489,768	29.0	790,562	46.8
Bagmati	1971	1,496,971	100.0	844,211	56.4	520	0.0
	1981	1,782,439	100.0	1,118,304	62.7	15,850	0.9
Narayani	1971	1,103,027	100.0	234,949	21.3	10,122	0.9
	1981	1 438 803	100.0	506,095	35.2	31,211	2.2
Gandaki	1971	904,421	100.0	660,727	73.1	272	0.0
	1981	1,107,569	100.0	832,152	75.1	19,205	1.7
Lumbini	1971	1,165,701	100.0	567,190	48.7	902	0.1
	1981	1,567,828	100.0	825,932	52.7	12,619	0.8
Dhawalagiri	1971	376,308	100.0	343,505	91.3	160	0.0
	1981	453,462	100.0	411,443	90.7	1,298	0.3
Rapti	1971	705,813	100.0	587,768	83.3	174	0.0
	1981	876,723	100.0	723,257	83.5	2,250	0.3
Karnali	1971	207,122	100.0	194,968	94.1	155	0.1
	1981	242,486	100.0	220,271	90.8	987	0.4
Bheri	1971	575,071	100.0	371,192	64.5	358	0.1
	1981	836,402	100.0	579,478	69.3	14,676	1.8
Seti	1971	597,124	100.0	490,750	82.2	131	0.0
	1981	794,911	100.0	600,030	75.5	8,193	1.0
Mahakali	1971	361,170	100.0	318,631	88.2	145	0.0
	1981	525,178	100.0	444,444	84.6	7,225	1.4

Source : Same as are those in Table 4.1.

Table 4.10- Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by major mother tongue for zones, Nepal Census Year 1971 and 1981

Bhojpuri		Tamang		Abadhi		Tharu		Newari	
Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
806,480	6.98	555,056	4.80	316,950	2.74	495,881	4.29	454,979	3.94
1,142,805	7.61	522,416	3.48	234,343	1.56	545,685	3.63	448,746	2.99
77	0.0	17,163	2.8	344	0.1	2,537	0.4	4,412	0.7
1,042	0.1	19,306	2.1	53	0.0	1,509	0.2	3,749	0.4
1,670	0.2	23,143	2.2	1,691	0.2	92,421	8.7	17,690	1.7
6,258	0.4	37,739	2.7	278	0.0	78,673	5.5	15,852	1.1
88	0.0	26,673	2.4	81	0.0	48	0.0	12,112	1.1
553	0.0	26,484	2.0	112	0.0	50,434	3.7	5,875	0.4
669	0.1	101,490	8.0	648	0.1	629	0.0	25826	2.0
143,679	8.5	95,073	5.6	201	0.0	9,347	0.6	21,477	1.3
93	0.0	284,367	19.0	47	0.0	33	0.0	331,444	22.1
1,097	0.1	244,668	13.7	372	0.0	711	0.0	317,023	17.8
684,217	62.0	83,929	7.6	121	0.0	25,817	2.3	21,603	2.0
635,135	44.1	67,605	4.7	141	0.0	54,142	3.8	36,610	2.5
55	0.0	9,818	1.1	1	0.0	24	0.0	21,151	2.3
7,909	0.7	11,206	1.0	135	0.0	803	0.1	23,866	2.2
118,823	10.2	334	0.0	270,625	23.2	66,736	5.7	14,509	1.2
346,323	22.1	4,957	0.3	171,132	10.9	29,701	1.9	19,218	1.2
6	0.0	3,873	1.0	16	0.0	-	0.0	3,846	1.0
47	0.0	953	0.2	22	0.0	41	0.0	2,605	0.6
137	0.0	11	0.0	1,284	0.2	72,482	10.3	1,796	0.3
330	0.0	2,584	0.3	657	0.1	84,226	9.6	563	0.1
13	0.0	4,198	2.0	-	0.0	1	0.0	13	0.0
24	0.0	208	0.1	5	0.0	65	0.0	46	0.0
446	0.1	34	0.0	41,318	7.2	101,762	17.7	480	0.1
301	0.0	5,755	0.7	61,124	7.3	93,048	11.1	1,349	0.2
175	0.0	23	0.0	129	0.0	103,939	17.4	69	0.0
50	0.0	3,229	0.4	49	0.0	120,539	15.2	382	0.0
11	0.0	-	0.0	645	0.2	29,452	8.2	28	0.0
57	0.0	2,649	0.5	62	0.0	2,446	4.3	133	0.0

Language Composition of the Population by Zones

The proportionate share of the major languages in the total population of each zone for the census years 1971 and 1981 is given in Table 4.10. There has been a steady increase in the proportion of people speaking *Nepali* with a corresponding decline in the proportion speaking non-nepali languages in almost every zone of the country. *Nepali* was the language of the majority of people in 8 out of 14 zones of the country in 1971. In 1981 this number had increased to twelve or 86 per cent of the zones. In 1981 *Nepali* was spoken by at least 50 per cent of the population in all but three zones. These three zones were Janakpur, Narayani and Sagarmatha. The mother tongues of the majority of the population of these three zones still continue to be non-nepali although there has also been a considerable increase in the proportion of people speaking *Nepali* in these zones during the last intercensal period.

Among the non-nepali languages spoken in these zones, *Maithili* in Janakpur and Sagarmatha and *Bhojpuri* in Narayani constitute the single most important languages. About 40 per cent of the people in Sagarmatha and 47 per cent in Janakpur spoke *Maithili* in 1981. *Bhojpuri* was the mother tongue of 44 per cent of the people of Narayani zone in 1981.

Among other important languages mention may be made of *Tamarag*, *Newari*, *Abadhi* and *Tharu*. These languages are spoken by at least 10 per cent of the population in one zone. *Tamang*, and *Newari* are spoken by 14 per cent and 18 per cent of the population of Bagmati zone respectively in 1981. Eleven per cent of the population of Lumbini and Bheri spoke *Abadhi* and *Tharu* respectively.

B. RELIGIOUS COMPOSITION

Information regarding the religious affiliation

of people was obtained by all the censuses of Nepal. In a situation where the religion of a person was not clearly distinguishable, traditional practices during birth and death and the worship of different gods were closely observed to identify his/her religious affiliation. For example, *Rais* and *Limbus* of the Eastern Hill practice their tribal religious rites which conform neither with the Hindu nor the Buddhist religion. But the census has classified them either as Hindus or Buddhists on the basis of the resemblance of their birth and death rituals to Buddhist or Hindu practices. Members of a religious group may belong to several sects but they were classified under the main religion. For example, the sects of Hindus, are *Vaisnab*, *Shaiva* and *Sanatani*. They were considered Hindus while *Heenayan*, *Mahayan* and *Bajrayan* were considered Buddhists. *Shia* and *Sunni* were considered Muslims.

The data obtained by the census on religion has given rise to some problems. In Nepal there is a close association between a person's mother tongue and his/her religion. In this situation inference on the religious identity of a person can be drawn on the basis of a prior knowledge of one's mother tongue. The population censuses of 1971 and 1981 asked the question on mother tongue prior to asking the question on religious identity. The prior knowledge of a person's mother tongue on the part of enumerators may induce them to guess at the religious identity of a person without actually asking the question directly. And this could lead to over / under enumeration of a religious community. Moreover, in Nepal the differences between religious groups particularly between Hindus and Buddhists are very subtle and academic in nature. And this could create a lot of confusion in the minds of both enumerators and respondents while categorizing a person as either Hindu or Buddhist.

Distribution of Population by Religious groups

Table 4.11 presents data on numerical and percentage distribution of the population by various religious groups from 1952/54 to

1981. The overwhelming majority of the population has been and continue to be Hindu. They accounted for at least 88 percent of the population during the period from 1952/54 to 1981. The Hindu population not only remained

Table 4.11 Numerical and percentage distribution of the population by religion, Nepal, Census years 1952/54 - 1981

	1952/54		1961		1971		1981	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Hindu	7318392	88.9	8254403	87.7	10330009	89.4	13445787	89.5
Buddhist	707104	8.6	870991	9.2	866411	7.5	799081	5.3
Muslim	208899	2.5	280597	3.0	351186	3.0	399197	2.7
others	684*	0.0	1289	0.0	8377	0.1	378774	2.5
unstated	-	-	5716	0.1	-	-	-	-
All religions	8235079	100.0	9412996	100.0	11555983	100.0	15022839	100.0

* Including unstated

source: - Central Bureau of Statistics, 1958 – population census 1952/54, Part II, Table 5;

Central Bureau of Statistics, 1968 – population census 1961, Vol. II, Table 7;

Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975 – population census 1971, Vol. II, Table 13;

Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984 – population census 1981, Vol. I, Part III, Table 13.

Table 4.12 Percentage increase and growth rate in population by religion, 1952/54 – 61, 1961 – 71, 1971 – 81 and 1952/54 – 1981.

Religion	Percentage increase in population				Growth rate (geometric)			
	1952/54-61	1961-71	1971-81	1952/54-81	1952/54-61	1961-71	1971-81	1952/54-81
Hindu	12.8	25.1	30.2	83.7	1.52 (1.50)	2.27 (2.24)	2.67 (2.64)	2.20 (2.17)
Buddhist	23.2	-0.5	-7.8	13.0	2.64 (2.61)	-0.05 (-0.05)	-0.81 (-0.81)	0.44 (0.44)
Muslim	34.3	25.2	13.7	91.0	3.76 (3.69)	2.27 (2.24)	1.29 (1.28)	2.34 (2.31)
others	-	214.8	4421.6	-	-	12.15 (11.47)	46.40 (38.11)	-
unstated	924.1	-	-	-	33.75 (29.08)	-	-	-
All religions	14.3	22.8	30.0	82.4	1.69 (1.67)	2.07 (2.05)	2.66 (2.62)	2.17 (2.15)

Note : The figure in parenthesis refers to exponential growth rate.

Source : Same as are those in Table 4.11.

the most prominent group of the country but they were also growing numerically as well as in percentage terms. In 1952/54 over 88 per cent of the population were Hindus compared with 90 per cent in 1981. *The Hindu* population grew at the rate of 2.67 per cent per annum compared with the 2.66 per cent growth rate of total population during 1971 and 1981 (see Table 4.12). In other words, the highest growth that the country has ever experienced during the intercensal period 1971-81 was mostly due to the increase of Hindu population.

The second largest religious group in Nepal is Buddhist, though the proportion of Buddhists in the total population has been declining in the last two decades 1961-1981. The proportion of Buddhists in the total population declined from nearly 9 per cent in 1952/54 and 1961 to 7.5 per cent in 1971 and 5.3 per cent in 1981. It is to be noted also that Buddhists had decreased not only in terms of percentage but also numerically during the period between 1961 and 1981. This decline of Buddhists in absolute numbers may be attributed to a) increasing difficulties in drawing distinctions between Buddhists and Hindus; b) *Nepali* being the official language - it is being increasingly adopted by members of different ethnic and religious groups including Buddhist. And since *Nepali-speaking* people are commonly considered as Hindus there is a possibility of mis-classifying some *Nepali speaking* Buddhists in the category of Hindus.

Numerically muslim i.e. the adherents of Islam formed the third largest religious group in Nepal. Their proportion in the total population remained more or less constant at about 3 per cent in all the census years.

Percentage Change of Population by Religious Groups

The numerical as well as proportionate distribution of the various

religious groups by zones is shown in Table 4.13. This data was available only for the censuses of 1971 and 1981. The table shows that at least 51 per cent Hindus live in 5 zones viz: Koshi, Sagarmatha, Janakpur, Bagmati and Lumbini, while the majority of Buddhists live in the following 4 zones viz: Bagmati (45-38%), Janakpur (14%) Narayani (12 %) and Gandaki (9-11 %). Nearly 87 per cent of Muslims live in 5 zones viz: Narayani (28-26%), Janakpur (20-23%), Lumbini (19-16%), Sagarmatha (11-10%) and Koshi (9-12%).

Religious composition of the Population by Zones

The religious composition of the population by zones (for 1971 and 1981) is shown in Table 4.14. The geographical concentration of the Hindus and the Buddhists is well marked. In each zone Hinduism was the religion followed by over 74 per cent of the population while in none of the zones was Buddhism or Islam followed by over 50 per cent of the population. There has been little change in the distribution of religious groups by zones over the intercensal period.

Distribution of Religious Groups by Zones

Table 4.15 provides the numerical as well as the proportionate distribution of the major religious groups by three geographic zones of the country (Mountain, Hill and Terai) for the census years 1971 and 1981. It may be noted that the majority of Hindus live in the Hill although its share of the total Hindu population had declined from 53 per cent in 1971 to 48 per cent in 1981. The proportion of Hindus living in the Mountain has also declined, although nominally, from 9 per cent in 1971 to 8 per cent in 1981. However, the proportion of Hindus living in the Terai, on the other hand, has increased by nearly 6 percentage points from 38 per cent in 1971 to 44 per cent in 1981. This increase is mostly due to the movement of the Hindu population from

Table 4.13 Numerical and percentage distribution of the religious groups by zones, Nepal, Census years 1971-1981

Zone	Census year	All persons		Hindu		Buddhist		Muslim		Others	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1971	11,555,983	100.0	10,33,0009	100.0	866,411	100.0	351,186	100.0	8,377	100.0
	1981	15,022,839	100.0	13,445,787	100.0	799,081	100.0	399,197	100.0	378,774	100.0
Mechi	1971	617,670	100.0	580,587	5.6	26,995	3.1	7,820	2.2	2,358	28.1
	1981	932,625	100.0	878,042	6.5	30,535	3.8	13,302	3.3	10,746	2.8
Koshi	1971	1,060,766	100.0	977,432	9.5	50,753	5.9	31,528	9.0	1,053	12.6
	1981	1,423,624	100.0	1,320,435	9.8	44,708	5.6	45,844	11.5	12,637	3.3
Sagarmatha	1971	1,118,974	100.0	1,024,532	9.9	56,252	6.5	37,418	10.7	772	9.2
	1981	1,352,674	100.0	1,249,769	9.3	54,163	6.8	40,326	10.1	8,416	2.2
Janakpur	1971	1,265,755	100.0	1,070,601	10.4	124,129	14.3	70,528	20.1	497	5.9
	1981	1,688,115	100.0	1,456,214	10.8	113,612	14.2	92,875	23.3	25,414	6.7
Bagmati	1971	1,496,971	100.0	1,102,204	10.7	391,556	45.2	1,654	0.5	1,557	18.6
	1981	1,782,439	100.0	1,450,200	10.8	300,018	37.5	9,741	1.2	27,480	7.3
Narayani	1971	1,103,027	100.0	900,854	8.7	101,721	11.7	99,750	28.4	702	8.4
	1981	1,439,803	100.0	1,184,944	8.8	92,142	11.5	103,160	25.8	58,557	15.5
Gandaki	1971	904,421	100.0	820,170	7.9	79,112	9.1	5,051	1.4	88	1.1
	1981	11,075,569	100.0	966,495	7.2	86,375	10.8	4,413	1.1	50,286	13.3
Lumbini	1971	1,165,701	100.0	1,095,610	10.6	2,509	0.3	66,702	19.0	880	10.5
	1981	1,567,828	100.0	1,439,349	10.7	19,748	2.5	64,261	16.1	44,470	11.7
Dhawalagiri	1971	376,308	100.0	358,508	3.5	17,512	2.0	240	0.1	48	0.6
	1981	453,462	100.0	425,996	3.2	19,551	2.4	382	0.1	7,533	2.0
Rapti	1971	705,813	100.0	703,530	6.8	206	0.0	2,053	0.6	24	0.3
	1981	876,723	100.0	840,150	6.2	5,804	0.7	2,717	0.7	28,052	7.4
Karnali	1971	207,122	100.0	191,796	1.9	15,315	1.8	1	0.0	10	0.1
	1981	242,486	100.0	221,352	1.6	10,828	1.3	64	0.0	10,342	2.7
Bheri	1971	575,071	100.0	547,002	5.3	181	0.0	27,560	7.8	328	3.9
	1981	836,402	100.0	766,765	5.7	8,737	1.1	25,677	6.4	35,223	9.3
Seti	1971	597,124	100.0	596,338	5.8	61	0.0	696	0.2	29	0.3
	1981	794,911	100.0	754,628	5.6	8,029	1.1	1,176	0.3	31,078	8.2
Mahakali	1971	361,170	100.0	360,845	3.5	109	0.0	185	0.1	31	0.4
	1981	525,178	100.0	491,448	3.7	4,931	0.6	259	0.1	28,540	7.5

*Others also included those who did not state their religions in 1981.

Source: Same as are those in Table 4.11

Table 4.14 - Religious composition of the population groups by zones, Nepal, Census years 1971-1981

Zone	Census year	All persons		Hindu		Buddhist		Muslim		Others	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1971	11,555,983	100.0	10,330,009	89.4	866,411	7.5	351,186	3.0	8,377	0.1
	1981	15,022,839	100.0	13,445,787	89.5	799,081	5.3	399,197	2.7	378,774	2.5
Mechi	1971	617,670	100.0	580,587	94.0	26,995	4.4	7,820	1.3	2,358	0.4
	1981	932,625	100.0	878,042	94.1	30,535	3.3	13,302	1.4	10,746	1.2
Koshi	1971	1,060,766	100.0	977,432	92.1	50,753	4.8	31,528	3.0	1,053	0.1
	1981	1,423,624	100.0	1,320,435	92.8	44,708	3.1	45,844	3.2	12,637	0.9
Sagarmatha	1971	1,118,974	100.0	1,024,532	91.6	56,252	5.0	37,418	3.3	772	0.1
	1981	1,352,674	100.0	1,249,769	92.4	54,163	4.0	40,326	3.0	8,416	0.6
Janakpur	1971	1,265,755	100.0	1,070,601	84.6	124,129	9.8	70,528	5.6	497	0.0
	1981	1,688,115	100.0	1,456,214	86.3	113,612	6.7	92,875	5.5	25,414	1.5
Bagmati	1971	1,496,971	100.0	1,102,204	73.6	391,556	26.2	1,654	0.1	1,557	0.1
	1981	1,782,439	100.0	1,450,200	81.4	300,018	16.8	9,741	0.3	27,480	1.5
Narayani	1971	1,103,027	100.0	900,854	81.7	101,721	9.2	99,750	9.0	702	0.1
	1981	1,439,803	100.0	1,184,944	82.4	92,142	6.4	103,160	7.2	58,557	4.1
Gandaki	1971	904,421	100.0	820,170	90.7	79,112	8.7	5,051	0.6	88	0.0
	1981	11,075,569	100.0	966,495	87.3	86,375	7.8	4,413	0.4	50,286	4.5
Lumbini	1971	1,165,701	100.0	1,095,610	84.0	2,509	0.2	66,702	5.4	880	0.1
	1981	1,567,828	100.0	1,439,349	91.8	19,748	1.3	64,261	4.1	44,470	2.8
Dhawalagiri	1971	376,308	100.0	358,508	95.3	17,512	4.7	240	0.1	48	0.0
	1981	453,462	100.0	425,996	93.9	19,551	4.3	382	0.1	7,533	1.7
Rapti	1971	705,813	100.0	703,530	99.7	206	0.0	2,053	0.3	24	0.0
	1981	876,723	100.0	840,150	95.8	5,804	0.7	2,717	0.3	28,052	3.2
Karnali	1971	207,122	100.0	191,796	92.6	15,315	7.4	1	0.0	10	0.0
	1981	242,486	100.0	221,352	91.3	10,728	4.4	64	0.0	10,342	4.3
Bheri	1971	575,071	100.0	547,002	95.1	181	0.0	27,560	4.8	328	0.1
	1981	836,402	100.0	766,765	91.7	8,737	1.0	25,677	3.1	35,223	4.2
Seti	1971	597,124	100.0	596,338	99.9	61	0.0	696	0.1	29	0.0
	1981	794,911	100.0	754,628	94.9	8,029	1.0	1,176	0.1	31,078	3.9
Mahakali	1971	361,170	100.0	360,845	99.9	109	0.0	185	0.1	31	0.0
	1981	525,178	100.0	491,448	93.6	4,931	0.9	259	0.0	28,540	5.4

* Same as in Table 4.13

Source: Same as are those in Table 4.11

the Hill to the Terai.

Buddhists are found to be disproportionately concentrated in the Hill followed by the Mountain although this concentration decreased appreciably during the last intercensal period 1971-81. The proportion of Buddhists living in the Hill and Mountain declined by 8 percentage points (71.2 to 63.5 %) and 3 percentage points (23.0 to 19.9%) respectively in 1971 and 1981. However, the proportion of Buddhists living in the Terai increased considerably during the last intercensal period from 6 per cent in 1971 to 17 per cent in 1981. This was mostly due to the influx of Buddhists from the Mountain and Hill particularly to the Terai. It shows that although a majority of Hindus and Buddhists tend to live in the Hill, there has been a considerable movement of the people of these two religious persuasions from the Hill to the Terai during the last intercensal period 1971-81.

The highest concentration of Muslims has been and continues to be in the Terai. The Terai accounted for nearly 97 per cent of the Muslim population in 1971 and 1981.

A comprehensive distribution of the major religious groups by a finer classification of the regions is provided in Table 4.16. The Table shows the concentration of different religious groups in specific regions of the country. The majority of Hindus live in the Western Hill followed by the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai. These two areas accounted for 66 and 63 per cent of the total Hindu population in 1952/54 and 1981 respectively. This decline, although small, in concentration of the Hindu population in the above regions particularly in the Western Hill, was mostly due to the spread of the Hindu population across the regions over the intercensal period. There has been a spread of the Hindu population in almost every region of the country with the exception of the Kathmandu valley and the Eastern Hill. The lowest concentration (about 5%) of Hindus has been and continues to be in the Kathmandu Valley. The proportion of the Hindu population living in the Eastern Hill shows a steady decline over the years particularly during the intercensal period 1961-71 and 1971-81.

Table 4.15 - Religious composition of the population and percentage distribution by geographic zones, Nepal, Census years 1971-1981

Zone	Census year	All persons	Hindu		Buddhist		Muslim		Others*	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%		
Nepal	1971	11,555,983	10,330,009	100.0	866,411	100.0	351,186	100.0	8,377	100.0
	1981	15,022,839	13,445,787	100.0	799,081	100.0	399,197	100.0	378,774	100.0
Mountain	1971	1,138,610	938,617	9.1	199,674	23.0	166	0.0	153	1.8
	1981	1,302,896	1,111,967	8.3	159,091	19.9	487	0.1	31,351	8.3
Hill	1971	6,071,407	5,439,279	52.7	617,195	71.2	10,136	2.9	4,797	57.3
	1981	7,163,115	6,447,523	48.0	507,214	63.5	13,447	3.4	194,931	51.5
Terai	1971	4,345,966	3,952,113	38.3	49,542	5.7	340,884	97.1	3,427	40.9
	1981	6,556,828	5,886,297	43.8	132,776	16.6	385,263	96.5	152,492	40.3

* Same as are those in Table 4.13

Source:- Central Bureau of Statistics, 1984-Population Census 1981, Vol. II, Part II, Table 12 and 13

The majority of Buddhists live in the Eastern Hill followed by the Western Hill. These two areas accounted for 65 and 62 per cent of the total number of Buddhists in 1952/54 and 1981 respectively. There has been a steady decline in the number of Buddhists in almost every region of the country, the major exceptions being the

Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai. The proportion of Buddhists living in the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai increased from 6.9 per cent in 1952/54 to 16 per cent in 1981. There has also been an increase, although small, in the Buddhist population in the West, Mid-west and Far

Table 4.16 -Numerical and percentage distribution of the religious groups by regions, Nepal, Census years 1952/54-1981

Region ^a	Census year	All persons	Hindu		Buddhist		Muslim	
			Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1952/54	8,235,079	7,318,392	100.0	707,104	100.0	208,899	100.0
	1961	9,412,996	8,254,403	100.0	870,991	100.0	280,597	100.0
	1971	11,555,983	10,330,009	100.0	866,411	100.0	351,186	100.0
	1981	15,022,839	13,445,787	100.0	799,081	100.0	399,197	100.0
Eastern Hill	1952/54	1,708,816	1,396,740	19.1	311,864	44.1	19	0.0
	1961	1,886,722	1,545,780	18.7	340,545	39.1	31	0.0
	1971	2,036,240	1,705,248	16.5	327,791	37.8	245	0.1
	1981	2,287,173	2,010,044	14.9	256,491	32.1	945	0.2
Kathmandu Valley	1952/54	410,871	311,068	4.3	98,391	13.9	1,034	0.5
	1961	459,990	371,243	4.5	86,276	9.9	1,127	0.4
	1971	618,911	496,745	4.8	119,514	13.8	1,390	0.4
	1981	766,345	669,476	5.0	76,943	9.6	4,041	1.0
Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai	1952/54	1,991,649	1,797,805	24.6	49,063	6.9	144,696	69.3
	1961	2,406,948	2,150,027	26.0	54,920	6.3	197,275	70.3
	1971	3,234,181	2,906,832	28.1	78,832	9.1	246,237	70.1
	1981	4,585,162	4,071,222	30.3	128,179	16.0	293,116	73.4
Central Terai	1952/54	239,677	140,046	1.9	99,614	14.1	17	0.0
	1961	244,236	163,895	2.0	80,012	9.2	211	0.1
	1971	493,958	385,567	3.7	99,471	11.5	8,413	2.4
	1981	811,810	710,192	5.3	77,358	9.7	8,191	2.1
West. Mid-west and Far-western Terai	1952/54	672,683	614,313	8.4	305	0.0	58,049	27.8
	1961	770,515	694,492	8.4	415	0.0	75,291	26.8
	1971	1,041,624	953,089	9.2	910	0.1	86,548	24.6
	1981	1,746,777	1,588,692	11.8	17,646	2.2	85,370	21.4
Western Hill	1952/54	3,211,383	3,058,420	41.8	147,867	20.9	5,084	2.4
	1961	3,644,585	3,328,966	40.3	308,823	35.5	6,662	2.4
	1971	4,131,069	3,882,528	37.6	239,893	27.7	8,353	2.4
	1981	4,825,572	4,396,161	32.7	242,364	30.3	7,534	1.9

a. Same as are those in Table 4.3.

Source: Same as a;e those in Table 4.11.

western Terai from zero per cent in 1952/54 to 2.2 per cent in 1981. This increase was mostly due to the influx of Buddhists from the Hill to the Terai particularly in the Eastern, East Inner, West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai.

The absolute majority of Muslims has been and continues to be in the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai. These regions accounted for 69 and 73 per cent of the total Muslim population in 1952/54 and 1981 respectively.

Religious Composition of the Population by Regions

The proportionate share of the major religious groups in the total population of each region for the census years is given in Table 4.17. The table shows the preponderance of Hindus in every region. In 1952/54 Hindus accounted for at least 80 per cent of the population in each region with the exception of the Central Terai and the Kathmandu

Table 4.17-Religious composition of the population by regions, Nepal, Census years 1952/54-1981

Region ^a	Census year	All persons		Hindu		Buddhist		Muslim	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Nepal	1952/54	8,235,079	100.0	7,318,392	88.9	707,104	8.6	208,899	2.5
	1961	9,412,996	100.0	8,254,403	87.7	870,991	9.2	280,597	3.0
	1971	11,502,833	100.0	10,330,009	89.4	866,411	7.5	351,186	3.0
	1981	15,022,833	100.0	3,445,789	89.5	799,081	5.3	399,197	2.7
Eastern Hill	1952/54	1,708,816	100.0	1,396,740	81.7	311,864	18.3	19	0.0
	1961	1,886,722	100.0	1,545,780	81.9	340,545	18.0	31	0.0
	1971	2,036,240	100.0	1,705,248	83.7	327,791	16.1	245	0.0
	1981	22,87,173	100.0	2,010,044	87.9	256,591	11.2	945	0.0
Kathmandu Valley	1952/54	410,871	100.0	311,068	75.7	98,391	23.9	1,034	0.3
	1961	459,990	100.0	371,243	80.7	86,276	18.8	1,127	0.2
	1971	6,18,911	100.0	496,745	80.3	119,514	19.3	1,390	0.2
	1981	766,345	100.0	669,476	87.4	76,943	10.0	4,041	0.5
Eastern Terai and Eastern Inner Terai	1952/54	1,991,649	100.0	1,797,805	90.3	49,063	2.5	144,696	7.3
	1961	2,406,948	100.0	2,150,027	89.3	54,920	2.3	197,275	8.2
	1971	3,234,181	100.0	2,906,832	89.9	78,832	2.4	246,237	7.6
	1981	4,585,162	100.0	4,071,222	88.8	128,179	2.8	293,116	6.4
Central Terai	1952/54	239,677	100.0	140,046	58.4	99,614	41.6	17	0.0
	1961	244,236	100.0	163,895	67.1	80,012	32.8	211	0.1
	1971	493,958	100.0	385,567	78.1	99,471	20.1	8,413	1.7
	1981	811,810	100.0	710,192	87.5	77,358	9.5	8,191	1.0
West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai	1952/54	672,683	100.0	614,313	91.3	305	0.0	58,049	8.6
	1961	770,515	100.0	694,492	90.1	415	0.1	75,291	9.8
	1971	1,041,624	100.0	953,089	91.5	910	0.1	86,548	8.3
	1981	1,746,777	100.0	1,588,692	90.9	17,646	1.0	85,370	4.9
Western Hill	1952/54	3,211,383	100.0	3,058,420	95.2	147,867	4.6	5,084	0.2
	1961	3,644,585	100.0	3,328,966	91.3	308,823	8.5	6,662	0.2
	1971	4,131,069	100.0	3,882,528	94.0	239,893	5.8	8,353	0.2
	1981	4,825,572	100.0	4,396,161	91.1	242,364	5.0	7,534	0.2

a. Same as are those in Table 4.3.

Source: Same as are those in Table 4.11.

Valley. In 1952/54 Hindus and Buddhists accounted for 58 and 42 per cent population of the Central Terai. Hindus and Buddhists accounted for 76 and 24 per cent of the total population of the Kathmandu Valley in 1952/ 54. However, by 1981 Hindus account for at least 87 per cent of the population in each region.

Although Hindus account for 90 per cent of the total population in 1981 there are regions where this fraction slightly falls short of the national average. These are :the Eastern Hill (87.9 %), the Kathmandu Valley (87.4%), the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai (88.8) % and the Central Terai (87.5 %). The regions where the proportion of Hindus exceeds that of the national average include the West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai (90.9 %) and the Western Hill (91.1 %).

Buddhists accounted for 5.3 per cent of the total population in 1981. But there are regions where fraction of Buddhists in

the total population exceeds that of their national average. These areas include the Eastern Hill (11.2 %), the Kathmandu Valley (10.0 %) and the Central Terai (9.5 %). In all other regions particularly the Eastern and East Inner Terai and the West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai, the proportion of Buddhists in the total population falls short of the national average.

Although Muslims accounted for 2.7 per cent of the total population they accounted for 6.4 and 4.9 per cent of the population of the Eastern Terai and East Inner Terai and West, Mid-west and Far-western Terai respectively. But in the remaining four regions the representation of Muslims constituted at the most one per cent of the population.

Distribution of Religious Groups by Rural/ Urban Sectors

Table 4.18 presents data on the rural/ urban distribution of the population by

Table 4.18-Rural / Urban percentage distribution and percentage change in population by religion, Nepal, Census years 1971-81

	1971			1981			% change in 1971 - 81	
	Total Population	% distribution of		Total population	% distribution of		Rural	Urban
		Rural	Urban		Rura	Urban		
Hindu	10,330,009	96.3	3.7	13445787	93.8	6.2	26.7	120.9
					(94.9)	(5.1)	(28.3)	(80.2)
Buddhist	866,411	92.6	7.4	79908	92.2	7.8	-8.1	-3.2
					(92.7)	(7.3)	(-7.7)	(-9.1)
Islam	351,186	95.0	5.0	399197	90.8	9.2	8.6	109.3
					(91.2)	(8.8)	(9.1)	(99.9)
Jains	2,541	78.5	21.5	9,438	83.1	16.9	293.4	191.2
					(83.2)	(16.8)	(293.9}	(189.6)
Others	5,836	85.3	14.7	369,336*	94.6	5.4	6,918.0	2,217. 9
					(95.0)	(5.0)	(6,947.1)	(2048.5)
Total	11,555,983	96.0	4.0	15,022,839	93.6	6.4	26.8	107.1
					(94.7)	(5.3)	(28.2)	(72.3)

*Same as are those in Table 4.13.

Note : Figure in parenthesis refers to the population of only sixteen town Panchayats which were regarded as urban in 1971.

Source : Central Bureau of Statistics, 1975-Population census 1971, Vol. II, Part II, Table 13 & Vol. V, Table 41 ;

” ” ” 1984- ” ” 1981, Vol. I, Part III, Table 13 & Vol. III, Table 10.

religion for the period 1971-81. It shows that the minority religious groups (Jains, Buddhists and Muslims) are more urbanized, while the dominant religious group, i. e. Hindus, are less urbanized both in 1971 and 1981. Ranking the religious groups in terms of the proportion living in the urban

areas in 1971 Jains³ were placed first (21.5%) followed by Buddhists (7.4 %), Muslims (5.0 %) and Hindus (3.7 %). This rank order remained almost unchanged in 1981 with the exception that the second place which was held by Buddhists in 1971 was taken over by Muslims.

³ Jains are a small religious community. They accounted for only 0.02 and 0.06 per cent of the total population in 1971 and 1981 respectively.

