



4D INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MANAGEMENT AND SCIENCE
ISSN-2250-0669
www.4dinternationaljournal.com
Volume-7, Issue-1-2016

POPULATION MANAGEMENT – A DISTNAT DREAM

Dr. D.K. Batta

Bhawna Batta

ABSTRACT

Rapid Growth of population and its management is an area of concern and interest as it is going to have burgeoning effect on all aspects of life and is neutralizing the efforts being put in to improve the socio-economic status of masses. In fact the contents of this article are the warning signals for all of us at all levels because failing which the disaster is the answer. Over two crores of new faces are added to this already big segment of population of India and this is the total population of the country like Australia. We have already crossed one billion mark and the present population is more than 1200 millions. This makes every sixth person on the earth as Indian against the share of 2.4 % of the total earth. This speaks of the high density of population in India which is 392 at the national level. Projections of the population for the year 2030 is far more disturbing as India will surpass China and will be 153 crores whereas China will be 146 crores.

It is a known fact that resources do not grow as fast as population hence a mismatched situation responsible for deprivation, high prices and social evils like poverty and illiteracy

etc. To meet the basic needs, we are resorting to mindless destruction of natural resources resulting in repeated and regular natural calamities like earth quakes, drought, floods, epidemics and death even as envisaged in Molthecean Hypothesis. Hence it should be taken in all seriousness to avoid challenge to our existence.

INTRODUCTION

India is the 2nd largest populated country, having achieved 1.2 billion mark next to China only. 1 billion mark was crossed in year 2000 a very high growth rate of population. This happened just one year after the world population crossed 6 billion mark. It has been further estimated that the projected population of India will be 1.53 billions by the year 2030, where as the China will be 1.46 billions. In the present scenario, every 6th is the Indian on this earth having share of only 2.4 percent of the earth. It is responsible for high density of population resulting from high rate of growth of population. This has burgeoning effect on the overall socio-economic development of our country. It can be safely and rightly called as POPULATION EXPLOSION a very dangerous and difficult proposition to deal with.

Approximately more than 2 crores of people are added every year to the already big segment of population in India. This is almost comparable to the population of Country like Australia. Whatever efforts are being put in year after year to raise the standard of living of people are neutralized by high growth rate of population. At the time of independence we were just 35 crores which means the population have grown by more than three times since then.

In year 1950, the fertility rate was very high as on an average six children per women were born. Sensing the grave consequences in the times to come in year 1952 the Government of India worked out hard to control population but without much success.

Consequent to the rapid growth of population in geometrical progression, the Government of India framed its National Population Policy in year 1976. It called for increase in the legal age of marriage from 15 year to 18 years in females and from 18 to 21 years in males so as to stabilize the high growth of population. This policy document was modified in year 1977 and the new policy statement re-iterated the importance of small family norm and changed the

title of the program to Family Welfare from Family Planning. Birth target of 25/1000 population was fixed by the year 1984 again not achieved. This was followed by adoption of long term Demographic Goals of reducing net reproduction rate to 1 by year 2000. These were designated as National Demographic Goals. The salient features of these goals were:-

1. Average size of the family will be reduced from 4.2 to 2/3 children.
2. Birth rate per 1000 populations to 21.
3. Death rate per 1000 populations to 9.
4. Effective couple protection rate to 60 per 1000 populations.
5. IMR reduced to 60 or less.

Again these cherished goals were not achieved, a new revised population policy was adopted in year 1986 to promote it on voluntary basis as a movement of the people and by the people and for the people. The salient features of this policy document are:-

1. Advancing the age of marriage of girl to 20 years.
2. Promoting two children norm.
3. Increasing the female literacy rate.
4. Promotion of spacing methods.
5. Enhancing child survival through Universal Immunization Program and promotion of Rehydration therapy.
6. Revamping of infrastructure and improving program management at all levels.
7. Linkage with anti poverty schemes like Integrated Rural Development Programs and National Rural Employment Programs etc.

With all these measures in vogue, the desired goals of population stabilization were not achieved hence the present status where about 40 percent of the population is living below poverty line (BPL).

Malthusian, a social scientist made observations regarding high growth rate of population and its bad effects long back and is known as Malthusian hypothesis which state as under:-

“If you fail to control the population yourself, the nature will take care of you by way of natural calamities like Earth quakes, floods, drought, poverty, disease and even death.”

This is what is happening the world over. To meet the basic needs of life, we are resorting to mindless destruction of nature and natural resources hence this sad state of affair. Natural calamities as stated above are normal phenomena happening the world over. Green House effect or Global Warming is again the other name of these observations which are responsible for natural calamities happening globally. Hence it is imperative to know the common causes for this population explosion and remedial measures need to be adopted to stem this dangerous situation.

The most common causes for this multiplication of population and its bad effects are related to social, familial, economic, political, religious and health sectors etc.. Still further various important operational factors, practices, customs, misconceptions, believes and myths have been identified which regularly and repeatedly energize these causes and need consideration. These are:-

1. Early age at marriage (Child marriage).
2. Short inter birth interval.
3. Concept of large completed size of the family.
4. Strong son preference in the society.
5. High incidence of illiteracy in females.
6. Poverty.
7. Child labour
8. Concept of Universalization of marriage in Indian society.
9. Rapid Urbanization.
10. Lack of political and religious commitment.

1. **EARLY AGE AT MARRIAGE:-** In spite of the fact that the legal age of marriage has been defined both for males and females as 20 and 23 years respectively but the ground

situation is quite different as Child marriages are quite common. Statistics have shown that more than 1/3 of the total child marriages are taking place in India. Nearly 2.5 million women were married by the age of 18 in year 2007. The natural out come of marriage is the children. Longer the married life, the more chances of having large family are very high. The concept of “The More the merrier” is very much relevant even today. This need to be discouraged if population growth is to be brought down to the desired level. People need to be educated from all platforms available to us i.e. Social Political religious and even legal.

Studies have shown that the children born to child mothers have low IQ as compared to those born to elder mothers. Further there are very high chances of babies being LBW (Low birth weight) resulting in high IMR and repeated pregnancies and miscarriages, high incidence of other pregnancy related problems resulting in high MMR (Mother Mortality Rate). Both are undesirable for harmonious growth and developments of infant and care of the family. In fact this sets in the vicious circle of high growth rate of population which must be stemmed. This trend of child marriage is more common in the rural areas and tribes. Health education coupled with legal measures shall go a long way in curbing this tendency. It has to be regular campaign against child marriage. Female literacy also plays important role in curbing this social evil.

- 2. CONCEPT OF LARGE COMPLETED SIZE OF THE FAMILY:-** Since the IMR is high, one is not sure who is going to survive then the simple solution available to the people is to go in for repeated pregnancies resulting in high IMR and MMR. We need to raise the standard of health services which will ensure survival of the infant hence no chance of having large completed size of the family.

In year 2005 India had fertility rate of 2.58 whereas USA had 1.78 and Pakistan had 3.52. In year 1950 fertility rate was as high as that a woman had six children on an average. We need to have high standard of health services in our society so that people feel secure and ensured that who so ever is born, will live long and healthy. We should accept small family norm as a way of life not as an exception.

- 3. STRONG SON PREFERENCES:-** It also plays important role in sustaining the population explosion. It is also called as SON SYNDROME. All parents irrespective of caste/creed want to have a son, no matter at one number or age he comes. I have known a couple who had 8/9 daughters just to have a son and she died during the gestation period when she was on the family way for 10/11 times. It is a hard fact that for the harmonious growth and development of the child, the role of the mother is of paramount importance as mother is the first teacher and home is the first school. This is possible only if the children are limited in number as repeated pregnancies are known to damage the health of the mother resulting in high MMR. If she is unable to attend the infant, the child is bound to have one or the other problem.

Further studies have shown that daughters are more committed to the parents and are more helpful if the need arises in their life span as compared to the sons. Somebody has rightly said that “The son is son till he gets his wife and the daughter is daughter throughout her life” It is a very logical and true statement we need to understand and implement if the population control is to be made effective. Further female feticide need to be stemmed with iron hand, which is an other social evil in our society.

- 4. SHORT INTER BIRTH INTERVAL:-** It is a social practice in our society which goes against population control. Short inter birth interval means repeated pregnancies at short interval. Studies have shown that under such circumstances the IMR and MMR are high hence the vicious circle. It is a deep rooted practice in our society and not easy to change. There has to be regular campaign of education to the masses and there is a need to improve the standard of living and healthcare services otherwise multiple pregnancies at short interval for any reason will damage the health status of mother and she will not be able to discharge her duties both as mother and homemaker.

Studies have proved that the during the first five years of married life 2 to 3 children are born and in the next five years a little slow rate of pregnancies and thereafter it drops down significantly. In fact by them the stage is set large size of the family. Studies have further shown that there has to be a gap of 3/5 years between the two

pregnancies and this is a sufficient time gap for the mother to be fit to bear another child otherwise the health of both mother and child is at stake.

5. **FEMALE LITERACY:-** Literacy plays very significant role in stabilizing the population growth. It is a fact if one is educated and doing some job, there is every valid reason to believe that the problem of the child marriage will be avoided per force and reproductive period will be cut short resulting in a few well spaced pregnancies. Still further, this endeavor will offer her opportunities to know her responsibilities of healthy and safe motherhood and healthy childhood. If the infancy period is healthy then the childhood will also be healthy and it is good both for the individual and the nation at large.

Studies have established that the fertility rate is quite high in uneducated as compared to educated people. In India female literacy is 59% and 64.70% in males. We must encourage literacy among the rural masses so that child marriage is discouraged and numbers of pregnancies are limited. These measures will go a long way in controlling the population growth. It has been rightly said which need to be understood and practiced “that no pregnancy before 20 years and after 30 years of age.

6. **POVERTY:-** It is directly linked with population growth as studies have shown that the poverty along with illiteracy brings in the concept of “THE MORE THE MERRIER”. This is a absolutely wrong concept. Because of poverty, they are not having any other source of entertainment except resorting to sex hence repeated pregnancies which further perpetuate the poverty. This mind set is not for growth and development in the society but for propagation of population without much qualitative change in lifestyle. So, there is a vicious circle of poverty and rapid growth of population at the cost of health of individual, family and financial status of the family. We must bring in such measures, may be with the involvement of Govt. or NGOs or both for poverty alleviation so as to break the cycle if we aspire to become developed and strong nation with healthy individuals.

7. **CHILD LABOUR :-** This is also another important area which need our attention if we want to stem the rapid growth of population. The concept of the more the merrier is again

operative here as one starts earning when one is supposed to be busy with the schooling. The parents do not feel the burden of the child as he starts earning at a very tender age and contribute to family kitty. This need to be discouraged with all the forces including legal provisions at our command. So that healthy childhood supported by the literacy essential for harmonious growth and development of the individuals and strong nation at large.

The problem of child labour in India remains as rampant as the country's apathy towards its gravity. In fact the administration should go out of the way to ensure that laws like the Right to Education are not contravened. Securing childhood is as important as any other development matrix. Child labour is largely responsible for perpetuating large unprivileged segment of population.

8. RAPID URBANIZATION:- It is also contributing to rapid growth of population. Urbanization is taking place at a rate of a little more than 2% in India. It is a very high rate and is responsible for sub human living conditions in the slums in and around urban areas. The density of population is quite high in the slums and civic facilities like water supply, electricity, schools, hospital and road network is practically non existing resulting in low literacy rate, high poverty rate, high incidence of communicable diseases, high death rate, high IMR and MMR hence vicious cycle for high birth rate from repeated pregnancies. This ultimately adds to unprivileged segment of population. Hence, there is a very valid reason to check this influx of population responsible for high growth rate of population by creating avenues of employment in the rural areas.

9. CONCEPT OF UNIVERSALIZATION OF MARRIAGE:- Universalization of marriage is a unique social practice in India. Marriage is a must no matter what you are. The natural outcome of marriage is children. It is a common sight that a blind beggar who gets married without realizing that he can hardly take care of himself what to talk of supporting a family. This process not only adds to the problem of population explosion but also perpetuates the poverty, illiteracy hence vicious circle. It is a fact that to go in for marriage is a highly personal and family issue but one should always weigh the entire issue in the light of one's contribution towards qualitative way of life and national development. This should not be

limited to ritual of marriage thus adding to the population load against meager resources available.

- 10. LACK OF POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS COMMITMENT:-** Last but not the least important is the lack of political and religious commitment for population management. This could be because of democratic set up of governance and multiplicity of the religious groups having varied interest in this important program of population management. It is for this reason that we are nowhere near the solution of problem of this vital issue.

I know some 20 to 25 years ago, Indonesia was passing through a similar situation of high population growth rate and the same has been solved to large extent by way of strong political and religious commitment displayed by the leaders of all political shades and religious sects. We can also draw some logical conclusions from there success story.

These are the major causes/operative factors for population explosion taking place in India. If remedial measures are not planned and implemented with deep sense of responsibility and commitment at all levels, the situation will take a turn for the worst and may even challenge our existence and which is absolutely undesirable.

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