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Chapter 7

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

7.1 Introduction

Population dynamics along with causes and consequences of observed population trends constitutes a study area which is usually referred to as Population Studies. It is rather an expansion of the domain of formal demography which encompasses the study of the size, composition or structure and spatial distributions, and the manner in which these aspects of population change over time. The complexities associated with population research can be addressed only through a systemic approach involving multiple disciplines. Over a period of time a number of disciplines (including Sociology, Geography, Economics, Anthropology, Social Psychology, Political science, Reproductive physiology and so on) have contributed to the development of this study area. In the words of Stycos (1987), Demography draws heavily on biology and sociology for the study of fertility; on economics and geography for studies of migration; and on the health sciences for analyses of mortality.

The association between Anthropology and Demography is not a recent phenomenon. Anthropologists have been interested in examining the demographic determinants and consequences of cultural processes. Demographers have looked for the cultural causes and effects of demographic processes. Thus it is not a matter of surprise that both fields have imported and exported theory and data to each other (Zubrow, 1976). The study of population within the domain of anthropology has resulted in an academic sub discipline which has come to be known as Demographic Anthropology. Unlike a demographer who is usually interested in studying populations at regional or more commonly at national level, a demographic Anthropologist is more interested in societies with distinctive and recognizable cultural systems. Traditionally, Anthropologists were accustomed to studying populations that may number only in few hundreds or possibly thousands of individuals. However, in the present scenario they are also involved with the study of populations (like caste groups) which might not be as small, yet maintain a cultural distinctiveness. The anthropological approach
is very useful in carrying out in depth examination of population parameters because it helps in identifying grass root realities which may be region or culture specific.

Fertility, mortality and migration constitute the major components of population dynamics. They are usually referred to as demographic processes. Anything and everything that affects the demographic character of a population- its size, rate of increase, geographic distribution, age and sex structure, life expectancy and family composition- must work through one of the three demographic processes: fertility, mortality and migration. While births (fertility) and immigration constitute the two kinds of inputs for the population, the two outputs are death (mortality) and emigration. If the inputs are greater than the outputs, the population tends to grow and vice versa.

The trends and differentials of population growth of any country or of any region vary depending on its social and cultural determinants and level of economic development among other factors. These trends set the stage of demographic transition, depending primarily on the gap between birth rates and death rates. More developed countries have completed their demographic transition where fertility and mortality are at low levels and natural increase adds little. Many less developed countries are in an intermediate statge, in which mortality and fertility are falling at various rates but are still high relative to the levels in Europe and more developed regions (Gelbard et al 1999). India and its states have been passing through various stages of transition as reflected by the fertility and mortality trends. With few exceptions, fertility and mortality have been declining, but from greatly varying levels and at different speeds for different states. Thus, India is in the midst of demographic transition that exhibits striking spatial differences (Dreze and Murthy, 2001). The future trajectories of population size could be determined by future trends in fertility, mortality and migration and by the current distribution of population by age and are thus crucial to India’s population prospects (Bongaarts and Bulatao, 1999).

Fertility is the most important factor in the study of population dynamics and refers to actual reproduction, i.e. actual bearing of children and is measured in terms of live births. It is responsible for biological replacement and for
maintenance of human society. Thus, in population dynamics fertility is a positive force through which the population expands, counteracting the force of attrition caused by mortality. It not only affects the size of the population but also affects its age and sex structure. Any change in the level of fertility immediately affects the young age of the population and hence the whole age distribution of the population. On the other hand mortality affects the population of all the ages and therefore any change in the level of mortality does not disrupt the age structure so significantly. Also with the decline in mortality in all groups- weak or strong, fertility has become the differentiating factor. In addition to this, human fertility is a complex phenomenon as within the limits set by physiological factors it is associated by a host of social, cultural, economic and psychological factors. In order to get an in-depth understanding, these factors need to be assessed in different cultural and socio-economic settings through micro level surveys that utilize anthropological approach. Keeping this in mind, the present study was planned among the population groups of Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh.

7.2 Aims and Objectives
The aim of the present investigation is to study the determinants of fertility among the Ansaris, Brahmans and Jatavs of Meerut district, Uttar Pradesh.

Objectives of the Study are as follows:

1. To study the ethnographic account of Ansaris, Brahmans and Jatavs.
2. To study population composition and characteristics of Ansaris, Brahmans and Jatavs.
3. To study the reproductive profile of women and basic measures of fertility among Ansaris, Brahmans and Jatavs.
4. To study the fertility determinants among Ansaris, Brahmans and Jatavs.
5. To identify significant predictors of differential fertility among Ansaris, Brahmans and Jatavs.

7.3 Research Methodology
The present study was conducted in Meerut district of Uttar Pradesh. Keeping in mind the objectives of the present study, a research design was developed which could act
as a blueprint for streamlining the research work. Before initiating the main field work, two pilot surveys were undertaken. During the first survey, general information about the area was collected. Also the study populations were finalized. During the second survey, emphasis was given to rapport establishment and pre-testing of the interview schedule.

The present study is based on a cross sectional design. At the first stage of Sampling, all the villages in three (out of twelve) development blocks were arranged according to the size of population. Then, a sample of 14 villages was selected on the basis of PPS Sampling (Probability Proportional to the Size of the Population). At the second stage, 987 households were randomly selected from these 14 villages with number of households from each village ranging between 40 and 141. Thus, a total of 987 married women in their reproductive age (15 to 49 years of age) constitute the sample for the present study. Of these, there are 296 Ansari women, 314 Brahmin women and 377 Jatav women.

The main fieldwork was carried out in four phases from April 2008 to February 2010. Data on fertility & related aspects, basic demographic parameters and socio-economic & cultural attributes was collected through interview schedules. Besides, some case studies were also taken to substantiate the findings of quantitative data. In addition to the primary data, secondary data was also collected and incorporated as per the study requirements.

After completion of field data collection, each schedule was edited and entered in MS-Excel data sheets. Each respondent was given a code number in order to keep the identity confidential. After filtering the data adequately, an in-depth data analysis (primarily using SPSS 12.0 version) was undertaken keeping in view the specific objectives of the study. The data was analyzed for various measures of population composition, basic measures of fertility, indices & rates pertaining to socio-economic status, and reproductive profile of women. The main statistical tools used during the present study are measures of central tendency and dispersion; t-test; ANOVA; Correlation and Step wise Regression.

The ethical issues were taken into consideration while conducting the present study.
The topic of research was presented before the Ethics Committee of Department of Anthropology, University of Delhi and only after its consent, research work was carried out. It was observed as a basic premise that the respondents were informed about what they were volunteering for. In addition to this, standard procedures were followed to minimize the chances of a breach of confidentiality.

7.4 Area and People

Uttar Pradesh (Northern Province) is the most populous and fifth largest state in the Union of India. The administrative and legislative capital of Uttar Pradesh is Lucknow. The state comprises of 70 districts, which are grouped into 17 divisions. Meerut district is one of the five districts, those come under Meerut division. According to general and revenue administration Meerut is divided into three tehsils namely – Meerut, Mawana and Sardhana and twelve development blocks namely – Sarurpur Khurd, Sardhana, Daurala, Mawana Kala, Hastinapur, Parichitgarh, Machara, Rohatta, Janikhurd, Meerut, Rajpura and Kharkhoda.

Population of district Meerut, like that of other districts in the state, is multi religious. Majority of population is of Hindus, followed by Muslims. Besides, there are followers of Christianity, Sikhism, Buddhism and Jainism. People of the district are enterprising and hard working who belong to various socio-religious communities. Jats, Tyagis, Rajputs, Vaishyas, Gujjars, Jatavas, Pathans, Ansaris, Quraishis etc. are found in abundance in the district.

The present study involves three population groups viz. Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav. Each one of them constitutes an endogamous group. Following account describes each of these three population groups.

**Ansaris:** Ansaris, who are referred to as Momin, Julaha, Momin Ansari, Jola. are identified as Muslim Julaha or weavers. Julaha is a Persian word for weaver. In Uttar Pradesh, they are distributed in almost all districts; however their maximum concentration is in Meerut, Gorakhpur, Faizabad, Lucknow, Azamgarh, Unnao, Saharanpur, Barabanki, Basti, Bareilly and Allahabad districts. They use Ansari as their surname. Weaving, their traditional occupation is no longer practiced by all because of the development of modern and well equipped cloth mills. Now days many of them are
in government and private jobs. Others work as skilled or unskilled laborers while some are self employed in small-scale and cottage industries. They speak Urdu as well as Hindi and use Arabic and Devanagari script. They profess Islam and their sacred specialist, a Qazi or Mulla performs birth, marriage and death rites.

**Brahmins:** Brahman is a varna category traced to Vedic period and also a jati. They continue to be the rallying factor of various Hindu groups, particularly in rural parts because they define and redefine customs. There are a large number (over 125) of Brahman jatis all over India. Adh Brahman or Gaur is one such group that shows a significant presence in western Uttar Pradesh. They are one among the few groups (like Chaurasia, Acharaj, Panchali, Bairagi) of Brahmins who are ranked low. The present study was carried out among Gaur Brahmins. Formerly they used to perform sacredotal services but have of late taken up agriculture. The Vedas are the primary source of knowledge for all Brahmin traditions. Brahmins also give tremendous importance to purity of body and mind and hence attach importance to ritual baths and cleanliness. Daily practices of Brahmins include sandhyavandana (prayers to Gayatri and Sun God), prayer to ishtadaiva (personal God), yoga, non-violence, vegetarianism.

**Jatavs:** Jatavs are included in ‘Schedule Caste’ category by constitution of this country. They constitute a significantly high proportion of SC population in Meerut district. Since the beginning of twentieth century, particularly in twenties and thirties, Jatavs have asserted their distinct identity and have even refused to be synonymously referred to as Chamars. Pre-independence they were strongly influenced by the ideals of Arya Samaj and Achutananda’s Adi Hindu movement. Post-independence they were significantly influenced by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar. Beginning with the first conversion to Buddhism in 1956 under the leadership of Dr. B.R. Ambedkar in Nagpur, there have been recurrent conversions to Buddhism. These conversions came as a rejection of the Hindu caste system and as an assertion of the equality of all individuals. Never the less majority of Jatavs are Hindus by faith. Earlier Jatavs had a low status in the society, and they were mainly involved in leather works such as tanning or preparing shoes or were landless laborers. Now they are engaging themselves as farm workers and are
involved in buffalo and other cattle works. A number of members of the educated younger generation have found jobs in government sector where a certain percentage of jobs are reserved for Scheduled Castes.

7.5 Salient Findings

7.5.1 Demographic and socio-economic profile

The study of population composition constitutes a basic and most relevant field of demography. The higher percentage of population under 15 years as compared to the population above 60 years shows young age composition for all the three groups. The age distribution shows that 49.51%, 31.41% and 43.33% of the total population of Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs respectively falls in the age group of 0-14 years. However, only 1.70% of Ansari population, 7.32% of Brahmin population and 4.25% of Jatav population fall in (60+ years) age group. The age group of 15-59 years, comprising of the population at peak productive ages, constitutes 48.79% of Ansari population, 61.27% of Brahmin population and 52.41% of Jatav population.

The young age dependency ratio (YADR) is highest (101.49) for Ansaris, followed by Jatavs (82.68) and then by Brahmins (51.27). Same is the case with the total dependency ratio (TDR) which is 104.97 for Ansaris, 90.79 for Jatavs and 63.22 for Brahmins. However, the old age dependency ratio (OADR) is highest among Brahmins (11.95), followed by Jatavs (8.11) and then by Ansaris (3.48). The Index of Aging for Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs is 3.43 for Ansaris, 23.30 for Brahmins and 9.81 for Jatavs.

The sex ratio for Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs is 960, 942 and 891 respectively. The values of masculinity index obtained for Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs are 51.03, 51.49 and 52.87 respectively.

Total literacy rate has been found to be 38.87 (males: 47.16, female: 29.44) for Ansaris, 89.99 (males: 96.20, females: 83.88) for Brahmins and 74.31 (males: 84.42, females: 62.87) for Jatavs. As compared to a very high frequency (87.8%) of illiterate women (respondents) among Ansaris, 46.4% of Jatav women and only 10.8% of Brahmin women were found to be illiterate. Even among educated Ansari and Jatav women, a majority had received education only up till primary level. Among
Brahmins, a relatively higher number of women were found to be educated up till middle school, high school and even higher secondary. While 67.2% of Ansari men (husbands of respondents) were found to be illiterate, 18% Jatav and only 2.5% Brahmin men were found to fall in this category. In comparison to 3.7% Ansari and 15.4% Jatav men, 29.6% of Brahmin men had completed high school.

As per the standard of living index (SLI) majority of Ansari (66.2%) and Jatav (52.5%) households belonged to medium SLI category while majority of Brahmin households (75.8%) belonged to high SLI category. While most (56.4%) of the Ansari households belongs to the ≤7500 category, a majority of Brahmin (53.8%) and Jatav (50.2%) households fall in the category (>7500 but ≤15000).

While most of the Ansari (83.1%) and Jatav (71.1%) families are nuclear families, among Brahmins the number of nuclear families is almost same as the number of joint families. Majority of women in all the three groups were housewives. 98.0% Ansari, 93.9% Brahmin and 91.0% Jatav women belonged to this category. Most of the employed Jatav women were either involved in private jobs or were working as laborers. Same was the case with Ansari women. However, Brahmin women were primarily involved in government jobs. Among Ansaris, most (65.5%) males worked as laborers. Around 16% were employed in private jobs while almost the same number was involved in business. In Brahmins, most (36.3%) of the males were in private jobs. Agriculture (18.8%), government jobs (15.9%) and business (10.5%) were other major occupations for Brahmin males. Other than working as laborers (46.4%), Jatav males sought employment primarily in private sector (19.4%) or were involved in business of some kind (15.4%).

While exposure to media is very high among Brahmin (98.1%) and Jatav (95.2%) women, it is relatively lower (74.0%) among Ansari women. Major concentration of women in all the three groups viz. Ansari (49.3%), Brahmin (50.6%) and Jatav (75.6%) was in the medium autonomy category. In comparison to 40.8% of Brahmin women with high autonomy, a relatively lower percentage (14.6%) of Jatav and a still lower (2.7%) percentage of Ansari women belonged to this category. Almost 21% of the marriages (of participant couples) among Ansaris are consanguineous marriages.
The findings of the present study suggest the presence of strong sex preference in all the three groups. However, it was most pronounced among Ansaris followed by Jatavs and then by Brahmins (based on three attributes: ‘proportion of sons desired’, ‘preference of sex of the first child’ and ‘preference of sex of any new born child’).

The three most common reasons that were given (in all three groups) for the general perception of not wanting daughters were, ‘the lack of respect a woman gets on giving birth to a daughter’, ‘problem of Dowry’ and ‘lack of safety of girls in general’. The most common reasons given (in all the three groups) for the general perception of preferring sons were ‘their role in carrying the family name’ and ‘old age support’.

7.5.2 Measures of Fertility

To quantify the birth performance of the population over a period of time, measures of fertility are used. The measures that have been discussed in the present study are: child woman ratio, crude birth rate, general fertility rate, age specific fertility rates, total fertility rate and gross reproduction rate. These measures of fertility largely indicate that the overall current fertility levels are higher among Ansaris and Jatavs as compared to Brahmins and also as compared to the estimates for Uttar Pradesh and India. On the other hand, the estimates for Brahmins show that they are in a better position as compared to the overall population of Uttar Pradesh and India.

The Crude Birth Rate (CBR) of Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs was found to be 36.41, 20.73 and 38.51 respectively. This is in line with a generally better picture portrayed by socio-economic indicators for Brahmins as compared to Ansaris and Jatavs. The general fertility rate (GFR) among the Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs was found to be 157.89, 70.80 and 157.28 respectively. In the present study, the age specific fertility rate (ASFR) was highest for age group 20-24 years among Ansaris (289.47) and Jatavs (345.24) thereafter showing a decline in subsequent age groups. However, among Brahmins, the ASFR shows an increase up till age group 25-29 years where it is highest (172.90) and then shows a decline in the following age groups. This could be attributed to a delayed age at marriage among Brahmin women. The total fertility rate (TFR) for Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs has been found to be 4.76, 1.96 and 4.35 respectively. It is evident that TFR for Brahmins is lower than the national and state figures and is in fact below replacement level. The lower total fertility rate
Summary and Conclusion

among Brahmins could be attributed to their better educational status (particularly for women), delayed age at marriage and better knowledge and attitude towards the use of birth control measures. The gross reproduction rate (GRR) was calculated as 2.78 for Ansaris, 0.92 for Brahmins and 2.34 for Jatavs. The child woman ratio (CWR) is highest among Ansaris (794.74) followed by Jatavs (760.56) and then by Brahmins (351.77).

7.5.3 Reproductive profile of women

As compared to 60.35 percent of Brahmin women, 51.95 percent of Jatav and 47.09 percent of Ansari women belong to the reproductive age group (15 to 49 years).

The mean age at menarche was found to be 13.85 ± 1.12, 14.33 ± .99 and 14.08 ± 1.09 for Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav women respectively. The mean age at marriage was found to be 17.64 ± 2.37, 19.42 ± 2.38 and 18.88 ± 2.65 for Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav women respectively. The Mean age at return marriage was found to be 18.16 ± 1.86 among Ansari women, 19.58 ± 2.23 among Brahmin women and 19.09 ± 2.35 among Jatav women. The mean age at first pregnancy was found to be 19.23 ± 2.52, 20.39 ± 2.25 and 20.08 ± 2.47 for Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav women respectively. The mean age at menopause was highest for Jatav women (45.38 ± .97) followed by Brahmin women (44.78 ± 2.62) and then by Ansari women (44.33 ± 2.87).

The mean number of pregnancies was found to be highest among Ansaris (4.46 ± 2.46) followed by Jatavs (3.71 ± 2.06) and then by Brahmins (3.21 ± 1.55). The mean number of live births was found to be highest among Ansaris (4.074 ± 2.442) followed by Jatavs (3.421 ± 1.908) and then by Brahmins (2.691 ± 1.208). A difference has been observed between mean number of pregnancies and mean number of children ever born. This could be attributed to abortions, miscarriage and still births. In the present study, 23.31 percent Ansari women, 41.04 percent of Brahmin women and 20.16 percent of Jatav women in the age group 15-49 years have experienced a non live birth. In addition to this, 20.95 percent Jatav women, 9.46 percent Ansari women and 4.78 percent Brahmin women reported occurrence of infant deaths. The mean number of children surviving were found to be highest among Ansaris (3.86 ± 2.29) followed by Jatavs (3.07 ± 1.58)
and then by Brahmins (2.62 ± 1.17).

The *mean duration of total breast feeding* was found to be 16.45 ± 5.08, 18.65 ± 6.64 and 17.79 ± 7.84 for Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav women respectively. The *mean duration of exclusive breast feeding* was found to be highest in Ansaris (5.76 ± 1.65) followed by Jatavs (5.68 ± 1.6) and then by Brahmins (5.00 ± 1.47). The *mean duration of post partum abstinence* was found to be highest among Brahmin women (1.98 ± 0.43) followed by Jatav (1.85 ± 0.44) and then by Ansari women (1.70 ± 0.24). The *mean duration of post partum amenorrhea* was found to be longest in Jatav women (5.82 ± 3.40) followed by Ansari (4.37 ± 2.30) and Brahmin women (3.65 ± 2.81).

### 7.5.4 Family Planning

In the present study, 89.5% Ansari women, 99.0% Brahmin women and 98.4% Jatav women reported that they had heard of Family Planning. As compared to 99.0% Brahmin and 98.4% Jatav women, 84.8% Ansari women had knowledge of at least one method of family planning. As compared to 72.6% Brahmin and 74.0% Jatav women, around 47.0% Ansari women reported the usage of some family planning method at some point in time (ever used).

While 69.1% Brahmin women and 64.2% Jatav women reported that they were currently using some family planning method. A much lower number (36.8%) of Ansari women reported any such usage. Among Ansaris, the current usage is highest in age groups 25-29 and is reasonably high in age groups 30-34 and 35-39. Similar is the case with Jatavs where the usage is highest (25.62%) in age group 25-29 years followed by age group 30-34 years. However, among Brahmins the usage is highest (24.88%) in age group 35-39. But it is reasonable high in age groups 25-29 and 30-34 years. The data on current usage clearly shows that in comparison to Brahmins and Jatavs where majority of couples’ preferred terminal methods of family planning, the Ansarís preferred temporary methods.

### 7.5.5 Inter group variations in fertility

The fertility (in terms of number of pregnancies and live births) is significantly higher among Ansarís, as compared to Jatavs and Brahmins. Similarly, it is significantly higher among Jatavs as compared to Brahmins. Khan et al (1997) concluded that
higher fertility among Muslims was primarily due to poor education, poor access to information, traditional views and community pressure / feeling of insecurity. Dharmalingam et al (2004) in their study found that Muslims are much more likely than Hindus to intend to have additional children and among those who do not want more children, Muslims are much less likely than Hindus to use contraceptives.

7.5.6 Differentials in Fertility

It is well known that the components of population dynamics, particularly fertility exhibit tremendous variations across regions and across communities. Fertility is a complex phenomenon because within the limits set by physiological factors it is affected by a number of social, cultural, economic and psychological factors. These factors are responsible for the observed differentials in fertility.

The effect of **standard of living** on fertility was found to be non significant among Ansaris. However, significant differences in fertility were observed in Brahmin and Jatav women. Women belonging to households with higher SLI showed significantly lower fertility. Studies by Tabah (1980), Hodgson (1983), Singh (1986), Mahadevan (1989) have reported a negative association of fertility with standard of living.

In studies on fertility behavior, income is often used to explain fertility differences (manifesting negative relationship) across areas and populations (Stycos, 1963; Frisancho et al, 1976; Mamdani, 1981; Mahadevan, 1989; Audinarayana and Senthilnayaki, 1990). In the present study as well, for all the three groups’ viz. Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs; **per capita income** showed a significant impact on fertility. Women belonging to households with higher per capita income had significantly lower fertility as compared to women belonging to households with lower per capita income.

**Type of family** has been associated with fertility in a number of studies. It is usually hypothesized that nuclear family promotes lower fertility than extended or joint family (Chaudhary, 1982). However some studies (Nag, 1967; Bebarta, 1977; Mahadevan, 1989; Veleti, 2001) have shown that nuclear type families have higher fertility than extended/joint families. In all the three groups, women belonging to
nuclear families showed significantly higher fertility as compared to women living in joint families.

A large number of studies in India and elsewhere have shown inverse relationship between **woman’s education** and fertility (Coale, 1965; Caldwell, 1980; Jain, 1981; Mason, 1992; Martin, 1995; Jejeebhoy, 1995; Dreze and Murthy, 2001; Singh et al 2002). United Nations (2003) report summarized that in general women in developing countries want fewer children than they actually have and this gap between desired and actual fertility is large among women with no education or primary education than among women with secondary or higher education. In the present study, woman’s education status has shown a significant impact (inverse relation) on fertility in all the three groups.

**Husband’s occupation** seems to have affected the fertility in all the three groups. Among Ansaris significant differences in fertility were observed between women whose husbands were laborers (higher) and those whose husbands were either businessmen or were involved in private jobs. As far as Brahmins are concerned, fertility (in terms of number of live births) was found to be significantly higher for those women whose husbands were involved in agriculture as compared to those whose husbands were either in government or in private jobs. Among Jatavs the differences were even more pronounced. Fertility was found to be significantly higher for those women whose husbands were laborers as compared to those whose husbands were either involved in business or were contractors/ self employed. Similarly, fertility was found to be significantly higher for those women whose husbands were contractors/ self employed as compared to those whose husband’s were either involved in business or in private jobs.

In general the average fertility is expected to be related to **current age of woman**. In all the three groups, average fertility showed an increase with current age of woman. The findings of the present study suggests that Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav women at higher current ages show statistically significant differences with women at lower current ages in having higher fertility.

The effective reproductive span for a woman begins at menarche or marriage,
whichever occurs last. Age at marriage has been found to exhibit an inverse relationship with the fertility of the women in a number of studies (Freedam, 1963; Bumpass, 1969; Bushfield, 1972; Andorka (1978); Nag, 1980; Audinarayana and Senthilnayaki (1990), Islam and Khan, 1995; Gulati and Sharma, 2002; Guru et al (2003). However, in rural areas of north India it is only after Gauna or Rukhsat (Return marriage ceremony) that the wife goes to live with the husband and partners enter conjugal relations. In the present study age at cohabitation has been taken as the independent variable. Among Ansaris no significant impact of age at cohabitation was observed. Women with age at cohabitation < 18 years were found to have a significantly higher fertility as compared to those with age at cohabitation 18-21 years or ≥ 22 years. Similarly women with age at cohabitation 18-21 years were found to have a significantly higher fertility as compared to those with age at cohabitation ≥ 22 years. Among Jatavs also, women with age at cohabitation < 18 years were found to have a significantly higher fertility as compared to those with age at cohabitation 18-21 years or ≥ 22 years.

Maternal age at first conception is an important demographic indicator. The delay in first conception is associated with low fertility. Among Ansaris, women with age at first conception of ≤ 18 years showed a significantly higher fertility as compared to those with age at first conception of ≥ 22. Among Brahmins, women with age at first conception of ≤ 18 years showed a significantly higher fertility as compared to those with age at first conception of ≥ 22. Similarly, women with age at first conception of 19-21 years showed a significantly higher fertility as compared to those with age at first conception of ≥ 22. However among Jatavs, no significant effect of age at first conception on fertility was observed.

In the present study no significant impact of woman’s autonomy has been observed among Ansaris and Jatavs. However, a modest influence is seen only among Brahmins where women with high autonomy have significantly lower fertility (in terms of number of pregnancies) as compared to women with medium autonomy. A possible explanation for such findings is that autonomy increases with age, which is true for highly fertile women too. The age at which a woman (in traditional setting) attains considerable autonomy coincides with the later part
of her effective reproductive span. Similar findings have been reported by Singh et al (2002).

Among Ansaris, there is no significant impact of current usage of any FPM on fertility. However, among Brahmins and Jatavs; current usage of any FPM showed significant association with lower fertility. According to Singh et al (1998), low use rate of contraception has been an important factor that has resulted in a high fertility in rural area of eastern Uttar Pradesh.

Among Brahmins, the affect of usage (ever used) of any family planning method on fertility was not found to be significant. Among Ansaris and Jatavs, a significantly higher fertility was observed for those women who have never used any FPM as compared to those who have used some method at one time or the other. However among Jatavs, the affect was found to be most profound.

**Number of children desired** has shown a significantly association with fertility. Among Ansaris, the fertility is significantly higher for those men and women who held a desire for > 3 children as compared to those who had a desire for ≤ 3 children. Similarly among Brahmins and Jatavs, the fertility is significantly higher for those men and women who held a desire for > 2 children as compared to those who had a desire for ≤ 2 children. A number of studies have shown that high fertility is generally the result of various social norms supporting a high average family size (Freedman, 1963; Coward, 1980; Davis, 1980). Deep rooted customs, traditions and socio-cultural beliefs favor bigger family size in many parts of India. However, people belonging to younger generation usually have a desire for smaller family size (Guruswamy and Sureender, 1997).

The results of the present study suggest that **son preference** does have an impact on fertility among Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs. However, this impact is moderate and in some cases is not statistically significant. Similar findings were made by a number of other studies whose results do not demonstrate a consistently strong effect of son preference on fertility (Arnold, 1992; Bairagi and Langsten 1986; Das 1987; Parasuraman et al. 1994; Repetto, 1972; Park 1986; Srinivas 1977).
7.5.7 Stepwise Regression Analysis

Further, to substantiate the findings of the above analysis (results from t-test and ANOVA) and to display the cumulative effect of all the determinants on fertility, correlation and stepwise regression analysis was carried out. The variables that showed significant association in correlation analysis were taken up for step wise regression analysis. The significant predictors of fertility (number of pregnancies and number of live births) in each of the three groups have been presented so as to give a comparative picture.

7.5.7.1 With respect to ‘number of pregnancies’

The significant predictors among Ansaris are: Current age of woman, Number of children desired by woman, Age at first conception, Occurrence of Infant deaths, Per capita income, Husband’s occupation. The significant predictors among Brahmins are: Current age of woman, Age at first conception, Occurrence of still births, Number of sons desired by woman, Number of sons desired by husband, Ever used any FPM, Exposure to media, Husband’s level of education, Standard of Living Index (SLI). The significant predictors among Jatavs are: Current age of woman, Occurrence of infant deaths, Age at first conception, Per capita income, Number of children desired by woman, Husband's level of education, Number of sons desired by woman.

7.5.7.2 With respect to ‘number of live births’

The significant predictors among Ansaris are: Current age of woman, Number of children desired by woman, Age at first conception, Occurrence of Infant deaths, Per capita income, ever used any Family Planning Method, Husband's Occupation, Number of sons desired by husband. The significant predictors among Brahmins are: Current age of woman, Number of children desired by woman, Age at first conception, Per capita income, Exposure to media, Proportion of sons surviving, Husband's level of education. The significant predictors among Jatavs are: Current age of woman, Occurrence of infant deaths, Per capita income, Age at first conception, Source of media, Number of children desired by woman, Ever used any Family Planning Method, Number of sons desired by woman.
7.6 Conclusion

The demographic as well as socio-economic indicators clearly suggest that among the population groups studied, Brahmins are more progressive demographically. With a low (below replacement level) TFR and an age structure that suggests low birth and death rates, the estimates (primarily relating to fertility) for Brahmins place them much ahead of the other two population groups studied i.e. Ansaris and Jatavs, the population of Uttar Pradesh and also the Indian national population. On the contrary, Ansaris and Jatavs have a young age structure that is clearly indicative of significant population growth. The differences between these two groups in terms of socio-economic attributes as well as demographic indicators are marginal with Jatavs maintaining a slightly better position. From the point of view of the estimates/measures of fertility, both Ansaris and Jatavs are lagging behind the national and state (Uttar Pradesh) populations.

The present study highlights factors that are having a significant effect on fertility of Ansaris, Brahmins and Jatavs. Though most of the factors stated are operating in all or at least two of the population groups, the level of their association with fertility differs in each of the three groups. Another point that is worth mentioning here is that even though a factor shows significant association with fertility of a group, this effect needs to be assessed in the backdrop of the general trend exhibited by this attribute (factor) in the population. The predictor, ‘education status women’ could precisely justify this point. Education of women is playing a significant role in each of the three population groups showing an inverse relationship with fertility. However, almost 87.8 percent of Ansari women (respondents) as compared to 46.4 percent Jatav and 10.8 percent Brahmin women were illiterate. The literacy rate also shows a stark difference with figures of 29.44 percent, 83.88 percent and 62.87 percent for Ansari, Brahmin and Jatav women respectively. Similar situation has been observed in case of other factors including education status of males, standard of living, adoption of family planning methods, sex preference and occupation status.

Ansaris constitute a substantial proportion of Muslim population and Jatavs constitute a substantial proportion of scheduled caste population in Meerut district. Thus an improvement in their demographic indicators will surely bring about a marked
improvement in the overall estimates for Meerut district. The present study suggests that this improvement is very much achievable through implementation of various developmental and welfare schemes. A general improvement in terms of better education status (primarily of women), standard of living, occupational opportunities, exposure to media, better and channelized (involving socio-religious considerations) knowledge and access to family planning methods will certainly bring about a marked change in the scenario thereby helping in achievement of the goal of lower levels of population growth.