CONCLUSION:

These then are our findings. We are an ancient community in a decaying region, distributed over the land-surface according to the availability of Natural Resources. Despite the phenomenal density there are areas where habitation is sparse due to lack of natural and man-made facilities. In certain other zones there is too much concentration - creating manifold problems - social, economic, and biological. We are a 'young' people, but our 'yougness' is on a slow decline. We are predominantly 'male' and our masculinity is increasing. Our adjustment to the geographical and economic environment is anything but satisfactory. Famines and pestilence stalk the land, malnutrition is chronic, and hunger is at large.

We are an uncritical, tradition-ridden people, our culture-patterns being more subservient to antiquated ideas than to present-day needs. We marry universally, marry early, breed lavishly, and die lamentably. And the great tragedy is not so much the number who die, but the age at which they die. If conditions are left unchanged, we shall multiply fast, perhaps faster than before. Under the impact of cultural advance, a rise in the age at marriage, popularization of widow remarriage, prevention of maternal mortality will accelerate the rate of growth, while prevention of disease and death and dissemination of health education will add momentum to it.

Our Economy is predominantly agrarian, but industrialization - though in an unplanned and erratic manner - has made some headway. While a sound basis for industrial expansion is still lacking, disintegration has already started in the rural society and agrarian structure. Our cropped acreage is small, agriculture is over-crowded.
crowded, holdings are uneconomic, land-distribution is unequal, capitalization is meagre, technique is poor, and productivity is low.

As a solution against this state of affairs, conflicting opinions have been expressed. Two schools of thought are clearly discernible. (a) Those who advocate extensive and organized birth-control movement, and (b) those who advocate basic changes in the social structure and property relations, and harnessing of science to conquer nature for man's survival and prosperity.

According to the first group of writers it will be a fantastic foolishness to undo with one hand what we do with the other. We create life with a tremendous energy and "devote an equal dose of labour to make life impossible."* We embark upon Damodar Valley Projects and Community Planning Schemes, but we "recklessly let loose a devastating flood of human life not only by doing nothing to stay it, but by seeking to tie the hands of those who would educate the community in the vital task of controlling procreation......... It was fabled of old that the world was destroyed by a flood; it is by a flood that the world is threatened to-day, but not of water, and not by Jehova, by Man himself."* The solution they advocate is - control of population - by two-fold methods: "the first, acting before conception, by decreasing fertility, and the second after conception, and indeed throughout life by increasing elimination."*

The exactly reverse opinion is expressed by the other experts, and with equal zeal. The real problem is not one of overpopulation, but underproduction. People may die of a different deficiency

deficiency disease, - Malaria, or Cholera, Diarrhoea or T.B. But majority of deaths in our country are directly or indirectly caused by chronic malnutrition. "No preventive campaign against Malaria, against Tuberculosis or against Leprosy, no maternity relief or child welfare activities are likely to achieve any great success, unless those responsible recognize the vital importance of this factor of defective nutrition, and from the very start give it their most serious attention."

This country, according to them, can support not merely its present population in comfort, but an increased population - also in comfort. Misery exists here not because the region is over-run with the people, nor because the soil is saturated, but because of inadequate exploitation of resources both natural and human, caused by a Colonial Economic System, for centuries based on a defective social structure, more specifically a feudal land-regime. To them the eradication of hunger is no Utopian Scheme; it is a perfectly available objective. These writers are stout optimists and believe:

"We can retain the fertility of our good soils and even slowly increase it. We can get more pork from every hog and more corn off every stalk. We can learn to irrigate rich arid lands without ruining them. We can even see looming ahead more daring ventures for bigger stakes (and more stakes), as increasing knowledge will permit present hints to become real potentialities. We may predigest and render edible the grasses, or even the trees, which

which can be grown on poorer soils; or shoot off dry ice in the clouds to make it rain where we need moisture instead of where we have too much; or apply radioactive or other charges to soils or plants to stimulate growth; or devise means to restore soil life more quickly through bacteriology and chemistry; or utilize more sea resources or raise lands out of the oceans; or solve some of the difficulties of tropic and arctic agriculture. Cheaper, more abundant energy from nuclear fission may make economically feasible developments which now seem impossible."*

When experts differ, it is expedient to maintain silence. But if vital issues are involved, silence cannot be maintained. We have got to say something and do something. "An orphan's curse would drag to Hell, a Spirit from on high, but on more horrible than that, is the curse in a dead man's eye."** Those who live and cannot live happily, unless those who starve and die, are saved from the unnecessary deaths. It is sometimes pointed out that if deaths from some causes be checked, increased deaths from other causes will compensate the loss. "When liabilities are in excess of assets, liquidation must be the normal process of redressing the balance."@ With all respect to these authorities, we can only point out, that the balance sheet can be balanced not only by liquidating the liabilities, but also by augmenting the assets.

Augmentation of the assets require time. In the last chapter we spoke of absolute (or permanent) and relative (or temporary) overpopulation. When the optimists base their opinion on the fundamental

* Dr. Jossue de Castro - "Geography of Hunger" - Pp. (251-52)
** S.T. Coleridge - Rime of the Ancient Mariner.
@ India's Teeming Millions - 1939, P.130. S. Chand
fundamental and revolutionary changes in the organization and technique of production, they only say what we said in the last chapter - there cannot be an overpopulation in the absolute sense. Science can work miracles, if it is allowed to, and reduce Malthus's forebodings to a scare-crow. But this may not be possible within the set time-limit, and it is essentially with time that we are concerned.

Before launching our attack, we must be sure where specifically to attack. Experts are not unanimous whether poverty is an effect or a cause of overpopulation. In his brilliant treatise "Geography of Hunger," Dr. Josue de Castro, Chairman of Executive, F.A.O. has laid special emphasis on this aspect of the problem.

"The Psychological effect of chronic hunger is to make sex important enough to compensate emotionally for the shrunken nutritional appetite. Under normal circumstances it is universally agreed, the instincts toward reproduction and nutrition, compete with each other, and when one retreats, the other advances."* Cattle-raisers have experienced that animals which get too fat in become sterile, and that proportion as the diet increases in protein content reproductive capacity drops.

"With the human species the case is the same. The groups with highest fertility are those who have the lowest percentage of complete protein, animal protein in their regular diet. ...........

The exaggerated multiplication of humanity through excessive fertility, then,  

then, is ultimately a problem in specific hunger. Hunger is responsible for the overproduction of human beings, excessive in number and inferior in quality who are hurled blindly into the demographic metabolism of the world."

The validity of the opinions expressed above is debated. And we will not enter into the polemics of cause and effect. We consider overpopulation and poverty to be two phases of a vicious cycle, and both must be eradicated. An attempt to solve the problem of overpopulation only by birth-control and family limitation would amount to putting the cart before the horse. Birth-control is necessary; but birth-control cannot be collectively planned and imposed from above. With a rise in the standard of living and advance in education and culture, people will increasingly take recourse to planned pregnancy and family-limitation, just as they grasp every new benefit science bestows upon them - and ride motor cars, and aeroplanes, use D.D.T. or Penicillin.

Leaving birth-control to the care of the individual, the collective solution must be towards a planning to create a broad co-operative National Economy with Science as our servant, and Nature (human nature including) under our control. Thus alone will we become abler and healthier, and "better adjusted, numerically," to our natural and cultural resources.