CHAPTER : X

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Population geography lays emphasis on 'spatial dimension in the distribution, density, structure and composition, mobility and migration, dynamics and growth, demographic processes and other demographic facts. Structurally the South Ganga Plain in Bihar is a segment of the great Indo-Ganga trough. This region is comprised of four administrative divisions viz, Patna, Magadh, Munger and Bhagalpur which incorporates 16 districts and 90 Police Stations. This Plain contains a total population of 3,11,37,560 (about 3.11 crores) (2001) persons or 37.57% of the total population of the state. The total urban population of the area under study is 51,52,287 (nearly 51.52 lakhs) (2001) persons or 16.55% of the population of the study area while the percentage of the state in general is 10.47. The study region is very fertile which support dense population concentration, both rural and urban. High agglomeration and dynamics of population pose a number of population hazards.

The land is plain with a few hills and hillocks which are the outliers of the Chotanagpur (Jharkhand) Plateau. Climatic conditions is suitable for agriculture, industry and human labour. Most of the rivers of South Ganga Plain debouch from the southern highlands, except river Ganga which originates from the Himalayan region. River Ganga is the master stream in Bihar and is the most sacred. Other significant rivers are the Son, the Punpun, the Phalgu, the
Karmanasa, the Sakri, the Kiul etc. The main type of vegetation in the area is "Tropical Dry Deciduous". The land of the study area has been built of the alluvium brought from the southern hills. The soil is very fertile. Cities and large towns had become the centres of trade and commerce. The region is facilitated with all sorts of means of communication and transport.

The spatial variation in distribution and density of population have been the concern of geographers. Determinants of population distribution are relief, climatic conditions, drainage and water bodies, soil and agricultural activities, industrialization, economic activities, cultural factors etc. Highest number of persons are distributed, in Patna district (47,09,851; 2001) followed by Gaya district (34,64,983 persons; 2001). Sheikhpura, the newly created district out of the portion of old Munger district, has the minimum number of people (5,25,137 persons; 2001). Highest density of people is found in Patna district (1,471 persons/Km²). Lowest density of population has been recorded in Kaimur district (382/Km²). Density are of various types like General or Crude Density (Arithmetic Density), Physiological or Nutritional Density, Agricultural Density, Critical Density, Economic Density etc. Of all these the first one is the most popular and easy one to calculate.

The most important aspect of Population Geography is the study of the composition or structure of the population. This includes sex and age structure, dependency-ratio, literacy, occupational
structure, ethnic composition, Scheduled Castes etc. Marked variation of sex-ratio may be seen in the districts of the study area, the maximem being 948/1000 males in Nawada district and that of minimum in Patna district 873/1000 males. Rurat-urban differentials in sex - ratio is also observed. About one person is dependent on one as regards dependency Ratio (DR). The percentage of literates to the total population of the districts is very depressing ranging from the lowest of 42.74% (Jamui district) to the highest of 63.72% of Patna district. As regards literacy rates, rural-urban and male-female differentials are also recorded. The work participation rates in the districts of the study area is very low, about one - third of the total population. Highest number and percentage of SC population is found in Gaya district (29.58%).

Population growth is not a unitary phenomena, but it consists of four major components - fertility, mortality, immigration and emigration. The general characteristics of the growth of population in South Ganga Plain in Bihar is not the constant increase of population, rather there is marked decline in certain decade, like 1921. The net growth of population during the last 100 years was 302.98 percent. First fifty years of the century shows a slow rate of increase, only 44.69% during 1901 - 51; while in the next fifty years (1951 - 2001), it was 178.48%.

Population changes has been defined in terms of fertility, mortality and migration. Fertility is socially controlled to some extent
in all population. The crude birth rate for Patna district is 37.52 per thousand persons. But it varies to a extent in different districts. In general it is observed that high rates of Births and Deaths are in all districts of South Ganga Plain in Bihar. Natural increase is more than 20 persons per thousand persons or about 2 percent.

The most significant component of population change, besides fertility and mortality, is migration. Migration is not merely the change of place by people but also is most fundamental to the understanding of the everchanging 'Space - Content' and 'Space - Relations' of an area. The term 'immigration' is used for in-migration from one country or area to another, while the term 'Emigration' is used for out-migration from one country or region to another. Population components like age - sex composition, rural - urban composition and workers, non-workers composition are the various elements of differentials of inter - district migration pattern. Pull and push factors are important in rural - urban migration. The main factor stimulating out-migration is economic reasons. Migration are of various types like temporary migration, seasonal, matrimonial or casual, semi - permanent, permanent; rural to urban, urban to rural, rural to rural, urban to urban; besides primitive, impelled, free mass migration; inter-district, inter - state, inter-regional and international.

The term urbanization is mainly considered as a process of continuous change in the pattern of population distribution. The study of urbanization has assumed increasing importance all over the world,
particularly in the developing countries like India which are undergoing urbanization at a fast rate. The pattern of the growth of population like the features of the general growth pattern of the study area. Still some distinct features may be observed. There are only 70 urban centres including all categories. Class I towns are only 9. Density of urban population is 153 persons / Km² (2001), while density of towns for 1000 Km² on the average is 2.08.

Life in big cities is becoming a nightmare for a majority of the people and if the present trends continue, there will be a total failure of the urban system in the new millennium, according to the environmentalist Rashmi Mayar. Rapid urbanization creates several urban problems and environmental hazards. It will be difficult to quantify the institutional breakdown, crime, corruption, alienation etc. arising out of the giganticism of the city. The continuous accentuation of the urban-rural dichotomy has led to the parasitic relationship between the city and the hinterland. The spectacular population growth, specially in urban areas, will strain all resources and specially in urban areas, will strain all resources and social institutions beyond any Malthusian calculation.

The glaring problems of the dynamics of the population growth are housing, strain on the economy, arcuate sex - ratio, environmental pollution, poor health services etc.

The more pervasive picture painted of urban life in India as well as the cities of the study region to-day is pockets of glittering
modern skyscrapers, surrounded by squalid slums, stretching far into the suburbs with all the concomitant problems of poverty, unemployment, pollution, traffic congestion, crime, filth and misery.

It is suggested in the context that urban development should be made part of the regional planning based on resources requirement, economic viability, optimum productivity, cultural growth and integrated development halting any further growth in major large cities areas.