

PREFACE

An outline theory of population (edited by Professor D.I. Valentey, Moscow 1980 chapter XXI, p. 276) defines Population Geography as "the most wide-scale integrated research into patterns of spatial differences characterising the population and its living conditions is the province of population geography. It is concerned with regional differences in the composition, dynamics and distribution of populations, and also with the patterns underlying the emergence of those differences, the territorial systems of centres of population and the patterns of development to be observed in these systems". While population geography has more and more come to play an important role in planning for developing economies.

Indian geographers have been rarely called upon to play their proper role in India's economic planning. Of the two categories under which programme planning is applied to developing economies, it is labour-intensive planning rather than capital-intensive planning that should serve India better. A human resources analysis is the essential starting point of any labour-intensive planning programme. Development planning for the region should begin with a geo-demographic study that takes account of the population characteristics of a region and relates it to its ecological pattern. It is for the geographer to study the ecology of a region, find out its resources pattern and relate both to the characteristics of its population. Planning in exclusively economic terms, with no
basis in the human aspects of the problems, can never reach its goal.

Nadia District is a district in West Bengal that felt the impact of the Partition of 1947 directly and was left truncated. This border district of West Bengal lying along the line separating Bangladesh and India has been political movements and disturbances over a long stretch of time. This district has also had a rich cultural heritage. Unfortunately, under the pressure of the influx of refugees and the ravages of natural calamities, the district has not reached the position it would have otherwise reached.

Under the general area of the "Population Geography of the Nadia District", the author has tried to cover all the salient aspects of population geography relevant to the district in particular.

The methodology adopted here is that of an examination of the important elements of population geography concentrating on the distribution and density of population. The three components of population, viz., fertility, mortality and migration, have been systematically examined. The different compositions of population in terms of variations in age, sex, religion and literacy have been distinguished. The nature of the working population in terms of rural, urban and sex-wise-age-wise variations
has been examined as a background to a study of the possible absorption of human labour in different fields. This district, unlike other districts, has been affected by the partition as regards its total area and by transfer of population, and this has necessitated the use of reconstructed data for comparability. A few statistical tools, suitable specially for the study and pictorial representation of the problems have been adopted and used. For the data the author has depended largely on published and unpublished data from census operations. But the data often uncomparable and undependable, have been counterchecked, substantiated and supplemented through extensive fieldwork undertaken by the author.

One per cent of the villages, numbering 13 in total, were taken up for case study under the random sampling method. Eight out of the 13 towns in the district were taken up for case study to take account of the heterogeneous characteristics of the towns and a house to house survey was made. Statistical tabulation was used to derive conclusions under different headings. Only the provisional data of the 1981 census were available at the state level; and the handbook of the district is yet to be published. The author could thus use the 1981 census data in a few cases only and had to base her analysis and interpretation mainly on the latest available dependable data from the 1971 census.
To draw the study into the micro level, percentage variations in 1961 and 1971 and crude density for 1971 have been computed for all 1275 villages. Maps at the individual village level underline true percentage variations.