CONCLUSIONS

Occupying an intermediary location between low Siwalik hills and high mountains of the great Himalayas, the spread of their network has made this region an amalgam of many diversities of physical environment and cultural responses within just two degrees of latitude. The distributional analysis of important attributes of its population goes to reflect the physical conditions, socio-cultural characteristics and economic compulsions of the hill dwellers.

The cultural significance of mountain barriers in having created the physical and social isolation, in producing the uniqueness and stagnation of localism in matters of all human choices, and in grafting of beliefs and caste prejudices, is undeniably noticed. The valleys within them open the passageways for human occupation.

The interplay of caste-tribal traits with their demographic associates and beliefs in religious cults of local origin make it a distinctive cultural realm with gaps in socio-economic levels of living of various sections of the society. Yet the vagueness of boundaries between castes and beliefs, a genuine sense of cultural pluralism and similarity of conditioning factors have imparted an underlying homogeneity of 'pahari culture'.

While the high altitude and non-liveable temperatures are absolute checks on distribution of human settlements and means of living, the favourable distribution of temperature-rainfall, congeniality of slope and of depositional features in the valleys...
have helped in concentration of population in fewer such areas with 40% of the total area occupied by vacant spaces around.

The degree of unevenness in dispersal of population and lesser or greater scattering is commonly observed both in the heavily populated southern valleys and sparsely populated northern tracts. The patterns of population with its clusters in centres of river valleys, greatest convergence of lines of communication towards them, and their common history of settlements, reflect their hydrographic characteristics. Amidst such distributional patterns, the hill towns stand as islands of unintegrated and retarded rural-urban growth.

Thus the problem of numbers in low valleys, of expansion of population in mid altitudinal tensional belt of lesser competition between forestry and cultivation and a disproportionately larger population existing on scarce resources in high latitudes, are coming to be a problem of ecological changes, social and cultural imbalances.

Not the arithmetic density but inhabited area and nutritional densities stand more reliable in successfully bringing out the contrast of high densities in sparse distribution and pockets carrying low densities amidst relatively thicker population. Relatively, higher proportion of cultivated area does not suffice for heavier population in low Himalayas and the low cultivated acreage gives an equally lesser share even for smaller population in high Himalayas. This situation has led to the appearance of higher nutritional density in numerous tracts all over the region.
The grading and analysis of the mosaics of densities, patterned by varying local conditions and an unbelievable fixity of people to places of their communal concentrations, is full of complexity.

The carrying capacity of agricultural land has recently been improved in selected valleys by adopting mixed agriculture, diversification and intensification of cropping. But great pressure and rapid growth of population, increase the constraints on agricultural economy, deplete the initiative and capital formation and slow shift to non-agricultural activities do not resolve the acuteness of the problem.

The curve of population growth has been rising rapidly, more in the recent two decades than in earlier fifty years of this century.

In recent years, even the interior parts with low population have in many instances recorded a relatively higher growth initially, beneficial for faster economic development. In already densely populated low valleys, even smaller percentile increases prove too heavy a strain on existing resource base. The in-migration has contributed much to the decennial growth of population in certain pockets of strategic far-flung areas, although much of it proved of temporary nature.

Besides this, the rapid urbanization and overgrowing of bigger villages into townlets along main roads, terminal, nodal or break-in-traffic points have brought about higher growth in population. The improvement in health services, maternity welfare,
eradication of diseases have resulted in fall in the death rate with correspondingly little or no fall in the birth rate. The attitude of a large body of people towards population control has remained unchanged; steeped as they have been in agrarian needs of free family labour and in similar culture-religious notions.

The pockets of greater family migrations, male adults going out to other areas of greater economic development in the region and higher death rate in difficult tracts due to exhaustion, undernourishment or natural accidents have turned them into areas of decrease in population on the growth map of the study area.

The trends and patterns of migrations, despite scanty data directly available on them, are of great assistance in further understanding the different rates of population growth.

In the historical period, only parts of the outer zone, contiguous to the plains, were experiencing occasional in and out migrations. The internal rural mobility of people was virtually absent in the deep interior because of traditionally fixed mode of life and unrelieving responsibility of early marriages and joint family households of the peasants.

In recent decades, the construction of roads and dams, the development of administrative infra-structure, improvement of local economy as well as the strains of population pressure have tended to multiply the number of regional and local migrational centres.

By 1961, a new trend of greater, although temporary, in-migration in and around the inner zone of higher Himalayas,
was observed in the wake of unprecedented developments in these areas. The relatively permanent in-migrants entered more in the outer zone, particularly the towns from the adjoining state of Punjab, with increasing numbers from neighbouring mountainous regions in the middle and inner zones.

The area of greatest out-migration is found in parts of the outer zone possessing higher literacy, greater accessibility and population pressure, as well as the tradition among a section of people, like old warrior Rajputs to join the armed forces and others going to work in factories and miscellaneous services.

Within the region, the intra-zonal and inter-zonal movement of people was observed on small scale from the drier, difficult, isolated and crowded parts respectively to irrigated valleys, tracts with better economic opportunities and relatively greater social density and up the reclaimable forest patches suited for horticulture. This has brought in the patterns of internal migrations from inner to middle, from middle to outer and from outer to the middle zone of this region.

In addition to these movements, there are seasonal migrations notably from tribal areas of high Himalayas up and down the mountains for grazing animals and for wage earning in a bid to use the vertically stratified resources for supplementing the scarce agriculture, ending sometimes in permanent migration to lower or adjoining parts of the region.

The populous outer valleys of this region share the characteristic of high sex ratio with other Himalayan areas of Uttar Pradesh mountain districts and Sivalik belt of western
Himalayas. At the other end of the scale, low sex ratio is observed in northernmost areas of inner zone besides the still lower values noticed usually in female-deficient towns. The two-fold variations respectively, in the southern and northern fringes are caused by male selective out and in-migration. In rest of this study area, within a moderate range of sex ratios hinging more on birth-death rates than on migrations, minor oscillations are noticed from one local area to another in the wake of practices like polygamy among a section of people in the hill interiors tending to raise the sex ratio, internal male and marriage migrations from one locality to another pushes up or pulls it down following the increase or decrease in females.

Among the scheduled castes in urban areas, unlike among their general population, a relatively higher sex ratio expresses the willingness of low caste spouses to live and work together under deficient living accommodation thereby escaping discriminatory social conditions in villages. Their male-selective migration from rural areas where majority of them are owner-cultivators or in tracts where dependence on the labour of their females is greater, tends to raise their sex ratio in the countryside.

Likewise the sex ratio in tribal population of the inner zone is higher, unlike the one prevailing among general population. The closed structure of tribal community tends to raise it, without any incoming or outgoing of people in normal course of events.

Despite a general rise in sex ratio all over the region during the last 70 years, because of oscillatory socio-demographic
changes, there have been sharper periodical variations in the inner zone, unlike a more or less smoother curve in the case of other areas.

In the perspective of age group, a falling sex ratio is commonly marked (putting aside the effect of migrations) just after the young adulthood because of greater deaths among married females at the close of prime of their life on account of frequent pregnancies and hard chores faced in running joint or polyandrous peasant households.

The data pertaining to age structure, although not free of its inaccuracies, broadly points out the larger number of children in low Himalayan areas, more of adults in inner areas of high Himalayas, their numbers swelled by in-migration of adult males and finally a generally-noticed male excess in old age, partly because of longer span of life among them and partly by the return of earlier out-migrants. The age curves show both the outward and inward bulges more on male side in case of areas experiencing male selective in and out-migration.

A rapid replacement of population is indicated by larger proportion of children, that of younger adults points out its youthfulness as this section happens to be the largest contributor to natural growth of population in years to come.

The region has high dependency ratio, more of non-working youngsters and old people in the outer than in inner zone. It makes it imperative to divert more of already limited means for the demographic than for the solid economic investment. In out-migrational areas, despite good earnings sent by the out-migrants
to their hard-pressed rural families, the affected areas are deprived of adult manpower likely to contribute to faster economic development. The excess of women and children in working age group is a liability and a large number of young war widows, belonging to martial classes, with widow re-marriage not permissible among such high-caste people, poses a question whether greater contribution to population growth is not being made by low caste families whose male members generally keep within their native areas.

On the other hand, particularly in parts of higher Himalayas and generally in towns, an excess of adult males from outside not well-rooted in local areas because of their shorter stay, creates a social vacuum despite their contribution to economic development.

In 1961 the literacy percentage in this region was one of the highest achieved among all other Himalayan areas.

In 1951-61, great strides were made in literacy drive although the number of illiterates further increased in rural areas, thanks to the rapid rate of population growth. The overall achievement in this field conceals striking rural-urban, low-high caste, tribal-non-tribal and female-male differential in literacy all over as a result of long-standing apathy towards the education of former weaker sections as late as 1951.

The rougher terrain, lack of inter-communication between the schools and the feeding villages scattered apart from each other, created the biggest problem. Areas with greater number of school-less villages but with easier transport links achieved higher literacy, which itself proved an incentive in fighting sub-illiteracy.
The longer snow-bound winters in higher valleys and large-scale seasonal migratory movements among graziers have been peculiar problems in the way of achieving universal and compulsory literacy. Low density of population and scattering of villages made it difficult for the schools and teachers to get best returns for the economic investment put in. Still, the progress in this direction was rapid in every part of the region where individual and group efforts of any strata of society could overpower geographic disadvantages and cultural handicaps.

As far as the occupational pattern of this region is concerned, it is the product of internal conditions least influenced by external relations with other regions. It signifies a society whose needs are served more by occupational traditions than by its specialisation.

The size of the working force is considerable as compared to adjacent plain areas, the highest participation ratio marked in extremely difficult inner zones and women are seen working shoulder to shoulder with men particularly in agriculture and generally in household industry in the countryside.

The need of sheer manual labour by larger numbers has absorbed a bigger size of working force for getting a bare subsistence from land and for combining it with varied jobs to make both ends meet.

At the stage of economic development where this region stands it has become difficult, rather futile, to draw lines of
distinction between blurred existence of different occupations in rural areas as very few can be divorced easily from the most primary one of agriculture. As a preponderant majority of rural workers, even an appreciable proportion of urban manpower, own some little parcel of land, agriculture is an all absorbant activity because of few other sources of living available. The occupation of graziers and of forestry as an essential adjunct of hill agriculture is followed by a large number of farming-shepherds as an alternate source of living and only by an insignificant number as a primary one. This has made it difficult to make a fair estimate of the share of true graziers and forest workers in the rural manpower. Likewise, with the exception of village craftsmen mostly landless agricultural labourers and scheduled caste people, the work in household industry is part and parcel of peasant’s household and the drawing of distinction between primary and secondary industrial workers is not as meaningful as it appears.

Productive organisation in subsistence type of cultivation has been dependant more on traditional mutual obligations between different categories of agricultural workers supplying the manual working force on the one hand and sparing a section of the suitable people to go in various miscellaneous services leaving their fields to the care of non-owner cultivators.

Cultivators in the outer populous zones work under favourable conditions congenial for most intensive agriculture but increasing fragmentation of holdings has shattered the economy making even this occupation hardly self-sufficient for average peasants.
In high Himalayas, the struggle for arable land has been still more acute. Only through thriftier living, following integrated occupations and the prevalence of joint or polyandrous households have alone saved a part of these critical areas from fragmentation of scarce land.

In agriculturally resourceless high valleys, grazing has been adopted as a sheer economic necessity engaging people more in middle and inner zones as local and migratory graziers to pastures at various levels.

With greatest area under timber forests in the middle altitudes, regularly seasonal jobs to a section of local people are available but they become periodical in the case of difficult forests exploitable only for a selective working. Along higher elevations of the inner zone experiencing a general scarcity of trees, collection of minor forest produce and that of resin from low hill forests of outer zone throws fringe employment to people in the vicinity.

The natural handicaps and the growing demands of traditional users living within short distance from forests in the high hills have precluded the large scale development of job potential of forests occupying more than three times the cultivated area.

The hold of household industry run on family basis in proximity of forest, animal resources and of local skills is noticed more commonly in inaccessible pockets of the interior in such areas, the producers of raw materials, industrial workers and consumers come nearer in a sort of traditional ecological sequence and supply each other's needs without the operation of
market-transport oriented price mechanism. In the outer zone, the number of such industrial workers rises near the roads and towns as equally close to local resources swiftly catering to the demands of denser population in these areas. The industry other than household is largely confined to the hill towns, both resource and non-resource based, the latter depending upon needs of the people.

A slower but surer shift to non-agricultural jobs is initiated by the construction of roads, which proves to be a multiplier of a host of non-farm jobs in course of time.

All attributes of the regional population and a large array of its important facts are synthesised spatially in a scheme of seven population regions laid down at the close of this study.

As a final word, it is the change from age-old fixity of people (to the under-developed mountain abodes) to their increasing mobility which has been induced by rapid rise in numbers. This virtually underlies the current phase of transformation of social stratification, kinship ties, traditionally defined age sex roles and occupational chores.

In the nature of things, the physical setting of different locations and social family organisation supplied the initial wherewithals to fix the hill dweller to this place learning to subsist on local resources. But the current changes, likely to help in larger development of resources, have at the same time magnified the problem of poverty following the maladjustment between man and the use of whatever nature has placed around him.