“ENVIRONMENT, AGRICULTURE AND FOOD SECURITY IN INDIA”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Authors</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Impact of Warana Co-operative Complex on Demographic Characteristics in Central Warana Basin of Southern Maharashtra, India</td>
<td>Dr. K. C. Ramotra and Dr. S. B. Karsare</td>
<td>315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Factor analysis to measure economic development in Anebion Portinale quntrico</td>
<td>Dr. H. Nagaraj, Fedhi Abdulgani A Al Mo'ajyn</td>
<td>323</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Growth of vehicles and their impact on quality of air and health in Belgaum city</td>
<td>Mrs. Rita Basantra, Dr. A. K. Wodeyar</td>
<td>332</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Socio Economic problems of the elderly in Chamara Janapara rural district, Karnataka - A Geographical Study</td>
<td>Dr. D. Mahesh, Dr. B. N. Shivlingappa</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Dynamics of Urban Population growth- A Case Study of Bangalore Urban District</td>
<td>Dr. M. R. Shivaram, Dr. S. H. Jayalakshmi, Prof. A. S. Rayamane, Miss. Minutha V, Dr. Subash S. Sannashiddamannavar</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Spatial analysis of healthcare facilities in Mysore City using GIS</td>
<td>Dr. N. Murugesan</td>
<td>351</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Ecological Structure of Diseases in Relation to the Socio-Economic and Environmental Factors</td>
<td>Dr. N. Murugesan</td>
<td>359</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>Urban problems: A Case study of Athani Town: Belgaum District : Karnataka</td>
<td>S. S. Kalaghatagi, Dr. S. N. Waghmare</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Urban Land use analysis: A case study of Belgaum city: Karnataka.</td>
<td>Dr. S. N. Waghmare, S. Kalaghatagi, Dr. S. N. Waghmare</td>
<td>377</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Development and utilization of tourism resources in Gadag District.</td>
<td>Prof. Kalyani Pawar, Dr. H. Nagaraj, Dr. A. S. Rayamane</td>
<td>383</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Scope and Potential of Small Wind Machine for energy generation: Case study from India.</td>
<td>Pardeshi Pratap Singh B., Dhare Amar M., Nikam Balasheb T., Barkade Jagannath D., Gujar Santosh N.</td>
<td>389</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>54</td>
<td>IT Industries As An Aid To Infrastructure Development*: A Case Study Of Kolkata City</td>
<td>Ms Sritama Dutta, Ms Achyuta Subba, Mr. Kantharaju, Dr. A.S. Rayamane</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Measurement of the Levels of development on the basis of regional disparities: A Case study of Bangalore districts.</td>
<td>Sunanda I. Kittal, Dr. S.S. Hangaragi</td>
<td>404</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>56</td>
<td>Trends of Population growth: Causes and Consequences: A case study of Dharjeeling district.</td>
<td>Miss Achyuta Subba, Dr. A. S. Rayamane</td>
<td>413</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>57</td>
<td>Impact of urban sprawl in and around Bangalore Metropolitan region</td>
<td>Mr. Abhishek, M. J., Dr. Ashok. D. Hanjagi, Dr. Ashok. D. Hanjagi</td>
<td>421</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>58</td>
<td>Changing Land Use Pattern Largest Urban Agglomeration Of Chhattisgarh.</td>
<td>Dr. Sheela Shridhar</td>
<td>432</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>59</td>
<td>Green Hotels-In the Garden City of Bangalore: A Geographical Perspective</td>
<td>Mrs. Ananya Mitra, Dr. B. Eswarappa</td>
<td>440</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60</td>
<td>Socio Economic conditions of slum dwellers in Mysore city</td>
<td>Mr. Shiva Kumar S. P., Dr. Ashok. D. Hanjagi</td>
<td>449</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Miss Achyuta Subba, Research Scholar, P.G Department of Geography, Bangalore University.
Dr. A. S. Rayamane, Professor and Chairman, P.G Department of Geography, Bangalore University.


Population growth is the change in population over time, and can be quantified as the change in the number of individuals in a population using "per unit time" for measurement. A typical time frame for calculating growth is yearly. In India, the census tracks population growth over a 10-year span. People are to be equipped to achieve progress in social and economic fields. For this, all countries give special significance on human resource development. Population of a country is the total number of people living in that country at a given time period. Demand of consumer items varies in accordance with the size of the population, sex ratio, population density, age structure, income and preferences. Study of population is essential to know the availability of human resources required for production, to estimate the basic needs, commodities and services required, and to make a comparison with the population of other countries.

This study is based on the secondary data which is collected from different census reports of Darjeeling. The present paper is an attempt to understand the population growth of Darjeeling and its causes and consequences. As per the 2001 census, the Darjeeling districts, with an area of 3149 sq.km has a population of 16, 09,172 and the density of population is 511 per sq.km. Darjeeling district has seen fluctuation in the growth of its population in the last one century. Population growth in the district of Darjeeling has been increasing in ascending order from the base year 1901. Closer examination, however, highlights the fact that the growth in population has been more rapid from 1961 onwards. The growth rate had touched the sky height of about 40.29% in 1961.

Poverty, superstitions, religious beliefs, illiteracy and ignorance, early marriage, high fertility, increased birth rate and decreased death rate are some of the major cause for the rapid growth in population in Darjeeling district. Rapid increase in population may give rise to many economic problems like poverty and unemployment. Stabilizing population is an essential requirement for promoting sustainable development with more equitable distribution.

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P.G Dept. of Geography, Bangalore University
Key Words: Population trends, decennial growth, literacy, fertility, sustainable development.

Introduction

The concept of population change or growth of population is often used to connote the change in the number of inhabitants of a territory during a specific period of time, irrespective of the fact whether the change is negative or positive. Growth of population reflects the history of man’s response to the environment. It exerts considerable pressure on the economy of a society and changes the ecosystem by making technological advances.

Whether the population on the whole shall grow, stand still, or diminish depends on the relative strength of contending forces making for life or death; on the one hand, those favoring a high birth rate and low death rate, and on the other those limiting births and survival. This control of the movement of population loses its cruder aspect and is waged in the realm of motive. More and more it is volition that controls in human society the growth of population; less and less it is the objective limit of the food-supply. Dire need resulting in ill-health and even in starvation is still acting in some portions of society, but less to-day than ever before. The growth of population in this stage is not "fatalistic," as there is no inevitable tendency to increase or to decrease. It depends on the interaction of a number of forces, clearly distinguishable, by which population actually is kept far within the limits of food resources. Human choice is the guiding influence, choice shared by every normal member of the community.

The subject of population was brought into prominence in economic discussion by the writings of Malthus. Before that some thoughtful comments had been made here and there, but it had been generally assumed that the larger the population the better for the country. Malthus arrived quickly at the conclusion that the excessive growth of population is the cause of much of the misery and poverty in the world.

The quality of population is of quite as great import as its quantity, alike in its economic, its social, and its ethical results. The productive force of a population is not measured merely by numbers. "Who" make up the population at any moment is no more a matter of indifference than "how many." One new-born child, unintelligent, incapable, foredoomed to become a burden, represents a negative addition to society; another, with energy, thrift, inventive genius, comes to enrich and uplift his fellow men. Quality counts for much. Social progress is not necessarily the biological betterment of the native ability of men. Indeed, the progress of the past two thousand years has been in social organization, in the enlargement and simplifying of the mass of knowledge which has to be reappropriated by each new individual, rather than in race-breeding and in quality.

Every kind of dynamic change involves a shift in the ratio of the various factors of production in the community. On one side of this ratio is always the human factor, and the most general and far reaching of all dynamic problems is presented by changes in population. The effects of the saving and conservation of material goods, of waste, luxury, and destruction, of multiplying tools and machines and of improving them in quality by invention, all are relative to the number of people in that economy. If the number of people increases in exactly the same ratio as the area of land (having like qualities) that is brought into use, as the number of tools and machines, and as the whole economic equipment, it is as if no change took place. But if any one of these factors moves faster or slower than any one of the other, or if other changes occur of a moral, political, or educational nature affecting the capacity, efficiency, and habits of choice of men, then the static equilibrium is disturbed. A new normal equilibrium is involved in every new setting of the population in its economic environment. Some of these changes may involve little more than a substitution of one material agent for another, such as electricity for steam, or cement for lumber; some of these changes affect the relative positions of various individuals without altering much the general or average level of income; but all of them involve more or less a shift in the general level of welfare, the most important economic change in the eyes of the social student.
Study area

Darjeeling district is the northernmost district of West Bengal. It is located on the lap of the Himalayas. The district comprises of four subdivisions namely, Darjeeling Sadar, Kalimpong, Kurseong and Siliguri. While Siliguri is mainly characterized by the tarai and foothills of the district. The Darjeeling district with a geographical area of 3,149 sq.kms., The Terai is only 91 meters high above the sea level. The area is bounded by the Sikkim Himalaya in the north, the Bhutan Himalaya in the east and Nepal Himalaya in the west. The southern foothill belt is demarcated by a highly dissipated platform of terrace deposits extending along the east west axis. The exquisite scenic grandeur and invigorating climate in the area have earned the title of "Queen of the Hill Stations". River Teesta is the master stream in the area while the Rammam and Rangit are the two important tributaries of the Teesta. Besides, numerous rain fed rivulets in the hills become the most dominating factor of environmental control during rainy season. Tourism is a climate-based industry while tea plantations that earned fame for Darjeeling Himalaya is largely a contribution of the climate. The climate of Darjeeling is especially noteworthy. Springs and autumns are the seasons most favoured by visitors. The monsoon is a period of continuous rainfall while the winter after December is too cold and unpleasant. The local climate in fact depends largely on the elevation and aspect. When British came here, it was inhabited merely by a few hundred souls in the pure natural environment, between the undiscovered flora and fauna.

Objectives

i. To investigate the reason for variation in the trends and pattern of in population growth.
ii. To investigate and review the methods and procedures involved in compilation of data to determine decennial variation, decennial growth rate and distribution of human population.
iii. To analyze how demographic, economic and social factors play a vital role in population growth.
iv. To investigate and evaluate the causes and consequences of population growth on the demographic structure of the district.
v. To suggest action plans that needs to be implemented to address the consequences as a result of population growth.

Trends of population growth

The concept of population change or growth of population is often used to connote the change in the number of inhabitants of a territory during a specific period of time, irrespective of the fact whether the change is negative or positive.

Growth of population reflects the history of man’s response to the environment. It exerts considerable pressure on the economy of a society and changes the ecosystem by making technological advances.

Thus there has been a growing interest of social scientists including population geographers in the ever increasing demographic dynamism. The growing consciousness among the social scientists about the need for exploring the trends in population change may be attributed to the

1. Recent population explosion reserving in a great demand for goods and other resources.
2. Widening gap between the per capita income of developed and less developed countries.
3. Increasing population pressure upon the limited resources of the less developed world.

For a population geographer however the phenomena of population growth has a special significance. He values it as a vital index for measuring the regions economic development, social awakening, historical and cultural background and political ideology.
Population growth is thus "pivotal to the regions demographic dynamism". It is the attribute with which all other characteristics of population are intimately related and from which they derive their significance.

The analysis of population growth of a region is a major issue to understanding not only its problems but also for future planning at the local and regional levels because the task of providing food, schooling, employment, health care, housing etc., depends on the precise description and interpretation of the spatial patterns of population change.

Population growth determines density, distributional pattern and composition of population, therefore, an understanding of the process of population growth is essential for the students of population geography, which is related to the study of the dynamics of population as it is found on the earth's surface.

Population growth trend in the district of Darjeeling

In demographics and ecology, Population growth rate (PGR) is the fractional rate at which the number of individuals in a population increases. Specifically, PGR ordinarily refers to the change in population over a unit time period, often expressed as a percentage of the number of individuals in the population at the beginning of that period. The changes in the total population size have attracted a great deal of attention and change in population size between one census and another requires immediate attention. The annual rate of growth is computed by the formula,

\[ \text{P}\% = \frac{P_2 - P_1}{P_1} \times 100 \]

Where "P_1" is the number of people in the total population at the first census, "P_2" is the number of people in the population at the second census.

The following table-1 indicates the population of the district from 1901-2001, the decennial variation in population and decennial growth rate.

![Population Growth Chart](image)
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For a population geographer however the phenomena of population growth has a special significance. He values it as a vital index for measuring the regions economic development, social awakening, historical and cultural background and political ideology.
The contemporary pattern of population in the district of Darjeeling is largely a reflection of the history of settlement within different parts of the district to accommodate immigration of early settlers from Bangladesh, Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet and to some extent an expression of the carrying capacity of various regions.

According to the census 2001, the population of India (1,02,70,15,247) is 16.87% of world population. Of this, 51.73% (53,12,77,078) are males and 48.27% (49,57,38,169) are females. Population of Darjeeling comes to 0.16% (16,09,172) of the population of India. Out of this, 51.62% (8,30,644) are males and 48.38% (7,79,528) are females.

As is evident from Table 1, the population of the district of Darjeeling was 265,780 (1901) while in 2001 it increased to 16,09,172. The year 1921 is a turning point in the demographic history of the district. Till 1921 the decennial growth rate of the district was almost stationary but after 1921 there was a marked increase in the decennial growth rate.

In the thirty years 1901 to 1931 the population increased by nearly 24.94% than in 1901 and in 50 years it has more than doubled. During the thirty years precedent 1931 census there were several natural checks on the population which operated through vastly increase deaths. These checks were made up of famines, epidemic diseases, endemic diseases the last being malaria in large parts of the district. The ravages of famine and disease were severe till 1921 but thereafter appropriate measures had been taken with regards to public health care. Correspondingly the numbers grew. This will be clear from the above given table. The population has grown rapidly after 1921 and the decennial growth rate has steadily increased.

It can be seen from Table 1 that during the past 90 years the district’s population has increased from 265,780 in 1901 to 16,09,172 in 2001. The period 1961 to 2001 may be regarded as the period of fluctuating growth of population. 1961 recorded the highest increase in the growth rate. The decennial growth rate in 1961 had almost doubled when compared to 1951 decennial growth rate.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sl. No.</th>
<th>Darjeeling district/Subdivision</th>
<th>Area in Sq.km</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Person</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Darjeeling subdivision</td>
<td>921.68</td>
<td>3,88,107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Kalimpong subdivision</td>
<td>1,053.12</td>
<td>2,25,220</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kurseong subdivision</td>
<td>503.03</td>
<td>1,77,264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Siliguri subdivision</td>
<td>802.01</td>
<td>8,18,581</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Darjeeling district | 16,09,172 | 8,30,644 | 7,78,528

Source: District Statistical handbook - Darjeeling

P.G. Dept. of Geography, Bangalore University
The influence of physical factors depends on the way of life of the people. The more developed is the society; the less is the influence of the physical factors in the distribution and vice-versa. Thus the distributional pattern of the population is the result of all geographical phenomena operating in a region. Since population distribution is a dynamic process which is ever changing. The causes and effects vary in time and space. Therefore, after discussing population growth an attempt has been made to analyze the distribution of population of the subdivision of Darjeeling district.

Darjeeling district consists of 4 subdivisions and population is not uniformly distributed among them. The district recorded the total population of 2,39,018 in 1951 and it increased to 16,09,172 in 2001. The population of each of the subdivision is indicated in Table-2. Among the subdivision in the district, Siliguri has the largest population of 8,18,581 persons about 51% of the district. But in area it ranks 3rd place and covers 24.45% total area of the district. Inspite of Siliguri being ranked 3rd in the area coverage of the district it still has around 51% of the population of the district as it is the pivotal point for trade and commerce. It is the gateway to the northeast region of India. It is important for us to notice that the number of people is not always proportionate to the area of a subdivision. On the other hand Kurseong has the smallest population and also the smallest in area too. Kurseong ranks 4th in area and it have only 11% of the total population of the district.

Causes and consequences:
Two important factors that caused steady increase in the population needs to be highlighted -

The most potent factor contributing to the growth of population in the district has been the tea industry.

Another potent factor, which also encouraged immigration in the district, has been the general agriculture (this is especially true in case of Kalimpong Sub-division with relatively low altitude and comparatively high potential for agriculture).

Besides, immigrations due to political reasons (mainly from Bangladesh, Tibet and Bhutan) have played role in the growth of population in Darjeeling. The rapid population increase has caused the expansion of the area of cultivated
fields. Natural pahkas (slopes) and jungles have thus receded to greater distances from the original settlement. The daily transportation of fodder leaves and grasses, as well as firewood, has become far more difficult and painstaking. This has reduced the number of animals per household over the period of time, which has in turn impacted the agricultural productivity in rural areas of the district. Such situation has forced the local folks to construct new terraced fields on more and more inappropriate slopes. Vast areas of forests have shrunk and many pahkas have been turned into cultivated fields. Consequently, the jungles around the villages have begun to disappear. This nibbling effect is apparent in around the hill villages and its diameter is increasing day by day. In consequence, soil erosion has accelerated. In areas where the cover of natural vegetation has been stripped off, the cycle of successive landslides has been abruptly shortened. Thus a number of landslides have begun to destroy fields and threaten the areas of inhabitants. Sources of water have begun to decrease in quantity. Consequently, the burden of everyday task of carrying water has become far more severe than before impacting the rural women. In number of cases, the quality of water has also dropped and as a result sickness increased. This simply means additional distress and economic burden.

Poverty, superstitions, religious beliefs, illiteracy and ignorance, early marriage, high fertility, increased birth rate and decreased death rate are some of the major cause for the rapid growth in population in Darjeeling district. Rapid increase in population may give rise to many economic problems like poverty and unemployment. Stabilizing population is an essential requirement for promoting sustainable development with more equitable distribution.

Conclusion

In the new millennium, nations are judged by the well-being of their peoples; by levels of health, nutrition and education; by the civil and political liberties enjoyed by their citizens; by the protection guaranteed to children and by provisions made for the vulnerable and the disadvantaged.

The vast numbers of the people of Darjeeling district can be its greatest asset if they are provided with the means to lead healthy and economically productive lives. Population stabilisation is a multisectional endeavour requiring constant and effective dialogue among a diversity of stakeholders, and coordination at all levels of the government and society. Spread of literacy and education, increasing availability of affordable reproductive and child health services, convergence of service delivery at village levels, participation of women in the paid work force, together with a steady, equitable improvement in family incomes, will facilitate early achievement of the socio-demographic goals.

The study concludes that for the last many decades the district of Darjeeling endured several environmental problems including soil erosion, detorestation, overgrazing, landslides, siltation, decreasing soil fertility, drying of springs, increasing of slums, health hazards, etc. It can be suggested that all development efforts for the region should be made according to demagogic traits and needs, and keeping in mind the availability of the resources and ecologically fragile and geologically sensitive nature of the environment. A separate population policy should be framed for the Darjeeling district. Any approach adopted for planning in this region must consider the aspects of man and his environment. More employment generation programs should be launched in the region. Local participation must be considered at the time of policy framing.

The present analysis would be incomplete without specific suggestions for actions plans that need to be implemented to address the consequences as a result of population growth.

1. Address the unmet needs for basic reproductive and child health services, supplies and infrastructure.
2. Make school education up to age 14 free and compulsory, and reduce drop outs at primary and secondary school levels to below 20 percent for both boys and girls.
3. Reduce infant mortality rate to below 30 per 1000 live births.
4. Reduce maternal mortality ratio to below 100 per 100,000 live births.
5. Achieve universal immunization of children against all vaccine preventable diseases.
6. Promote delayed marriage for girls, not earlier than age 18 and preferably after 20 years of age.
7. Achieve universal access to information/counseling, and services for fertility regulation and contraception with a wide basket of choices.
8. Achieve 100 per cent registration of births, deaths, marriage and pregnancy.
10. Bring about convergence in implementation of related social sector programs so that family welfare becomes a people centered programme.

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