Social Impact of Population In India
CHAPTER-6

SOCIAL IMPACT OF POPULATION IN INDIA

India's society is deeply rooted in religion, language and tradition. Religion and Conflicts among religious and cultural groups are fundamental forces in Indian life that bear on economic and educational disparities, the division of political power, the traditional role of women and on the demographic profile of the Country.

At the 2001 census, just over 80 percent of Indians practiced Hinduism, one of the world's oldest religions.

Muslims are second with 13 percent and rest of population consists of Christians, Sikhs, Buddhists, Jains and others, such as Parsis.

The ongoing conflicts between the Hindu majority and Muslim minority which occasionally erupt in violence fuel fear about the long-term effects of demographic changes that could shift the balance of the groups in some states.

Muslims have higher fertility and are growing at a slightly faster rate than Hindus. While a relatively small minority, nationally muslims make up one-quarter or more of the population in Kerla, West-Bengal, Assam and Jammu and Kashmir, as shown by 2001 [230]
census results with higher fertility and a more rapid, growth rate, the Muslim percentage is slowly increasing nationally. Between 1991 and 2001, the Muslim percentage in India increased from 12 percent to 13 percent. The Muslim percentage increased slightly more in many states, for example, it rose from 23 percent to 25 percent in Kerala, from 18 percent to 19 percent in Uttar Pradesh.

Hinduism has been a unifying force throughout India's history with its many holy festivals and caste system; it defines life for the great majority of Indians. Several other religions, although with much smaller percentage of the population, have also had an important role in some regions. Sikhs, for example, whose religion branched off from Hinduism, are native to Punjab State. They are generally credited with turning that region's marginal crop land into "India's Granary".

The importance of Hindu tradition is manifested in India's deeply caste system, which continues to play a key role in the Organization and stratification of Indian society. The system, which was largely based upon occupation, has four main divisions: Brahmin (Priests, Teachers), Kahatriya (Kings, Warriors), Vaishya (Merchants, Landowners, Craftsmen) and Sudra (Labourers,
Artisans).

The "Untouchables" are the lowest caste, who usually performed menial jobs. Mahatma Gandhi attempted to remove discrimination against this group by referring to them as Harijans or children of God\(^1\).

Today, untouchables are called by the label they themselves prefer, Dalits or "the oppressed".

The discriminatory aspects of the caste system have been under assault since India's independence in 1947, all before the landmark civil rights laws in the United States, India established a system whereby a percentage of public sector jobs and university slot were reserved for certain castes of dalits. The castes identified were known as scheduled castes (SCs) and recognized only among Hindu and Sikhs. The reservation of jobs and University seats was also extended to specific tribal groups (Scheduled tribes or STs) that had suffered from discrimination. STs were not necessarily Hindu or associated with a caste, but had a long history of poverty and low educational attainment. In 2006, 15 percent of job vacancies and University seats were reserved for SCs and nearly 8 percent for STs.

\(^{1}\) Singh, Yogendra, Social change in India, Har-Anand Publication New Delhi, 1993.
The reservation policy is not without controversy, in part because of concerns that STs and SCs are not adequately prepared for these positions, and that they prevent more qualified candidates from getting jobs or University seats.

Many ST and SC youths grow up in poverty, with limited educational resource and find it hard to compete with more-educated students in the University setting.

A recent Times of India article noted that 2,000 of the 9,000 places reserved for SC/STs in prestigious Delhi University remained unfilled at time when India is trying to expand the number of qualified graduates.

But the significance of these groups is apparent when we consider that they represent one fourth of the country's population. In addition to SCs and STs a large group of lower castes who had not previously benefited from the scheduled caste system other backward classes (OBCs), are now seeking similar accommodation. While the caste system has not been eliminated it plays a somewhat reduced role among the educated elite. It is quite common to see the phrase "Caste no bar" in advertisements in the matrimonial sections of newspapers placed by the parents of prospective brides and grooms².

² Vishwa Mohan Jha: Settlement, society and Polity in Early Medieval Rural India (Social Science Probings Vol 11/12) [233]
The Indian society has been traditionally highly hierarchial in nature. The caste system practised by the hindu society did not allow social mobility across the classes. Though other religions are supposed to be casteless, in the Indian context all religious groups covertly practice caste-based discrimination. Dalits who are outcastes are the worst victims of caste discrimination followed by the adivasis who are outside the caste hierarchy. Our constitution has special provisions to protect the interests of these groups who are characterized as scheduled castes (SCs) and scheduled tribes (STs). All the affirmative action in favour of them so far has helped only a small proportion of them.

The SCs who account for over 16 percent of the Population, remain backward in economic and social development. Mostly landless and asset less being largely agriculture labours in rural areas their living conditions and access to basic amenities of life are pathetic: As a result, the incidence of poverty, illiteracy and ill health among the SCs is significantly higher as compared to the rest of the population. Though untouchability has been abolished by the constitution more than 50 years ago, still they continue to be victims of various forms of discrimination.
While in India, Caste continues to be an important category leading to grave social inequities, national origin and Race have become important factors in how inequality is propagated in much of the modern world. Racial and national discrimination was at the care of how colonial rulers justified their exploitation of the colonies. The colonial system was unique in how human exploitation reached a level of intensity unseen in human history and enable the creation of exploitative patterns across vast ocean and geographical territories.

While it is undeniable that the task of democratization of Indian society in incomplete, that caste and gender discrimination continue to cause grave harm, that Adivasi and Dalits still face all manner of trials and tribulation and that all such social inequities need to be fought with continued vigour India's social civils cannot be analyzed or eliminated in isolation of other necessary changes. It is important that the process of how social relations become shaped in a certain way be better understood while battles for social equality need widespread support, their ultimate success may be determined as much by how India's economy develops.

All through human history, Poverty-loss classes have suffered social discrimination of one kind or another. Economic disparities
today. Any social system that is based on unequal access to economic assets. (Whether they be land, raw material industrial or commercial wealth) will inevitably lead to some form of social discrimination and inequity victims of older forms of discrimination will either continue to be victimized or simply become victims of new forms of discrimination.

For that reason, the challenges for countries like India is not only to light against all instances of social discrimination, but to also struggle for greater economic equality—not only with in India, but also in terms of India, but also in terms of India's equality with the rest of the world. India's high population density and variety of social economic and cultural configurations are the products of a long process of regional expansion. Through India's history, religion has been the carrier and preserver of culture.

Closely allied with religious belief and deeply rooted in history of India, caste remains an important feature of Indian society caste in many Indians languages is jati, or birth a system of classifying and separating people from birth with in thousands of different groups labeled by in thousands of different groups labeled by in occupation, ritual status, social etiquette and language.
Religious, caste and regional diversity exist in India against a background of poverty. At independence in 1947, the British left India in terrible condition. The country emerged from World War II with a rudimentary scientific and industrial base and a rapidly expanding population that lived primarily in villages and was divided by gross inequalities in status and wealth.

Caste is closely connected with the Hindu philosophy and religion, custom and tradition. It is deeply social institution in India. The Hindu society was divided into four main castes. Brahmins, Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and Shudras. The caste system prevalent during the Vedic period was mainly based on division of labour and occupation.

The highest caste is of Brahman. Member of this class are priests and the educated people of the society. The caste after them is Kshatriya. The member of this class are the ruler and aristocrats of the society. After them are the Vaisia. Member of this class are the landlords and businessman of the society.

After them are the Sudra member of this class are the peasants and working class of the society who work in non-polluting jobs. Below these castes are the outcaste who are untouchable to the four
castes. These untouchables worked in degrading jobs like cleaning sewage etc.

The first three castes had social and economical rights which the Sudra and the untouchables did not have here.

Caste system in modern India:

The leaders of independent India decided that India will be democratic, socialist and secular country. Untouchability or discriminating a person based on his caste is legally forbidden. Along with this law the government allows positive discrimination of the depressed classes of India.

The Indian have also become more flexible in their caste system customs. In general the urban people in India are less strict about the caste system than the rural. In cities one can see different caste people mingling with each other, while in some rural areas there is still discrimination based on caste and sometimes also on unsociability. Sometimes in villages or in the cities there are violent clashes which are connected to caste tensions. Sometimes the high castes strikes the lower castes who dare to uplift their status.

The caste, which were the elite of the Indian society were classified as high castes. The other communities were classified as
lower caste or lower classes. The lower classes were listed in three categories. The first category is called scheduled castes. This category includes in it communities who were untouchables. In modern India Unsociability exists at a very low extent. The untouchables call themselves Dalit, meaning depressed. Until the late 1980s they are called Harijan, meaning children of god. This little was given to them by Mahatma Gandhi who wanted the society to accept untouchables with in them. The second category is scheduled tribes. This category include in it those communities who did not accept the caste system and preferred to reside away from the main population. The third category is called sometimes other back ward classes or backward classes. This category includes who belong to Sudra.

According to the central government policy these three category are entitled for positive discrimination. Sometimes these three category are defined together as backward classes. 15% of India's population are scheduled castes. According to central government policy 15% of the government jobs and 15% of the students admitted to universities must be from scheduled castes. For scheduled tribes about 7.5% places are reserved which is their proportion in Indian population. The other backward classes are
about 50% of India's population, but only 27% of government jobs are reserved for them.

MODERN STATUS OF THE CASTE SYSTEM

The Government of India has officially documented caste and subcastes, primarily to determine those deserving reservation through the census. The Indian reservation system, though limited in scope, relies entirely on quotas. The Government lists consist of scheduled castes, schedules tribes and other backward classes:

Scheduled Castes (SC)

Scheduled castes generally consist of former "untouchables" (the term 'Dalit' is now preferred). The present population is 16% of the total population of India around 160 million).

Scheduled Tribes (ST)

Schedules tribes generally consist of tribal groups. The present population is 7% of the total population.

Other Backward Classes (OBC)

The Mandal Commission covered more than 3000 castes under OBC category and state that OBCs form around 52% of the Indian population. However, the National Samples Survey puts the figure at 32%.
The caste-board reservations in India have led to wide-spread protests, with many complaining of reverse discrimination against the forward caste (the castes that do not qualify for the reservation). The 2006 Indian anti-reservation protest are one major example. The modern view is caste-based reservations should be based on the individual's personal economic status, as there are now many Dalits who are more wealthy and more educated than forward caste but still benefits from caste-based reservations and other government advantages, which is seen as unfair and discriminatory against forward castes. Many view the only realistic solution to these problems of unfairness is caste based reservations should being based on the individual's personal economic status not on their caste, social background or cultural heritage.

In India, some observers felt that the caste system must be viewed as a system of exploitation of poor low ranking groups by more prosperous high-ranking groups. In many parts of India, land is largely held by high-ranking property owners of the dominant castes that economically exploit low-ranking landless labourers.

With the growth of fundamentalism all over the world and also in India, religion is bound to be invoked in election campaigns and
Fig. 6a: Population Estimation & Reservation % of various communities

- Backward Classes
  - Mandal: 52
  - NSS 99-00: 36
  - NPHS 98-99: 33.5

- SC/ST
  - Mandal: 27
  - NSS 99-00: 22
  - NPHS 98-99: 28.3

- Forward Classes
  - Mandal: 25.6
  - NSS 99-00: 35.6
  - NPHS 98-99: 38

Modern Status of Caste System
the agenda of political parties. The growth rate of scheduled caste population, which is poor, is also high. The population of scheduled castes in India during 1981-91 was 31 percent. The scheduled tribes also belong to the poorer sections of the population. In their case, however, the growth rate during 1981-91 was 25.7 percent which is much lower than that of the scheduled caste population.

Table-6.1. Decadal growth rate of population by communities in India.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>(1981-91 %)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>23.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Caste Population</td>
<td>31.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Tribe Population</td>
<td>25.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non - SC/ST population</td>
<td>22.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It will be seen that both the scheduled castes and scheduled tribes population have grown faster than the non SC/ST population. With in each state also there is much disparity between the literacy rate of the SC and ST population and the overall literacy rate. The disparity between the literacy rates of males and females is equally striking.

Table-6.2. Literacy rate of India, 1991 (Percent Age) (7 + population)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Males</th>
<th>Females</th>
<th>Persons</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INDIA</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Population</td>
<td>64.1</td>
<td>39.3</td>
<td>52.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scheduled Castes</td>
<td>49.9</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>37.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Schedules Tribes</td>
<td>40.7</td>
<td>18.2</td>
<td>29.6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3 Census of India, 1991
There are two groups of historically disadvantaged minorities in India comprising of 24.4 percent of the total population according to 2001 census. They comprise of scheduled caste and scheduled tribes. Historically disadvantaged because these groups have been perennially discriminated against and excluded from all possible cultural practices and institutional rights, that leads to economic and social advancement in India society.

Table-6.3. Economic characteristics of schedules castes and scheduled tribes

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Scheduled Class</th>
<th>Scheduled Tribes</th>
<th>Non SC/ST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>All India Population Share with group characteristics</td>
<td>16.4</td>
<td>7.9</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rate (0-5 Years)</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate (Rural)</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Literacy rate (Urban)</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School Enrollment (7-17 Years)</td>
<td>65.7</td>
<td>56.3</td>
<td>81.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drop out rate age (6-14 Years)</td>
<td>72.2</td>
<td>73.0</td>
<td>50.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural Head Count Ratio</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban Head Count Ratio</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SC are defined as having historically low social and ritual standing. SCs population share varies from one state of another with a maximum of 25 percent in any state.

4 NSSO, Census of India, Thorat (2005) and SC and ST Commissioner's Report.
STs are distinguished by their tribal culture and physical isolation. STs' population share also varies from one state to another with a maximum of 95 percent in any state. This disadvantaged minorities in India have been discriminated in all spheres for ages. The poverty rate (% of people below Indian poverty line, measured by Head count ratio) among the disadvantaged minorities is highest across all states as compared to the rest of the population. On a similar dimension, the literacy rate is by far the lowest among the SCs and STs in both rural and urban India across all states as compared to their counterparts. Their health indicator is no better, the infant mortality rate for SC is 118 while for ST is 121. Both these figures are much higher compared to their counterparts. According to NSSO 2005 only 52.4 percent of ST and 58.2 percent of SC children (age 6-14) can read and write as compared to 72.0 percent for their counterparts. Other indicators like literacy rate, enrollment rate and dropout rate for the disadvantaged minorities in the age group 6-14 years is alarming and has crossed 70 percent despite all effort by the center and all state low educational attainment by the disadvantaged minorities has led to several unfilled public sector jobs, at the center and state level despite being constitutionally reserved for them in [244]
India. The reason is straightforward, low educational attainment prohibits them from achieving the minimum qualification for the reserved public sector jobs. In a nutshell the probability for a scheduled caste or scheduled tribes to be poor is higher as compared to rest of the population.

CASTE POLITICS

Mahatma Gandhi, B.R. Ambedkar and Jawaharlal Nehru had radically different approaches to caste especially over constitutional politics and the status of "untouchables". Till the mid-1970s, the politics of independent India was largely dominated by economic issues and questions of corruption. But since the 1980s, caste has emerged as a major issue in the politics of India.

The Mandal Commission was established in 1979 to "identify the socially or educationally backward". In 1980, the commission's report affirmed the affirmative action practice under India law whereby members of lower castes were given exclusive access to a certain portion of government jobs and slot in Public Universities. When V.P. Singh Government tried to implement the recommendations of the Mandal Commission in 1989, massive protests were held throughout the country. Many alleged that the politicians were trying to benefit personally from caste-based reservations for purely pragmatic electoral purposes.

[245]
SOME SOCIAL BELIEFS WHICH PREVENT THE POPULATION STABILIZATION

Population is a development issue

Population is often seen as an issue of ever growing number's of people but the fact is that growing numbers merely mirror the lack of social and economic development. Simply put, the lower the levels of socio-economic development, the greater the chances that couples in that group would have more children.

This is best seen in differences in the various states of India, for example, Uttar Pradesh has 56.3% literacy and only 14% of women receive complete antenatal care. Uttar Pradesh records an average of four children per couple, almost double the figure of two children per couple in Kerala, where almost every person is literate and every woman receives complete antenatal care and delivers in a health institution. Thus, Kerala with its advanced social development indices had reached what is called the "replacement level fertility" two decades ago while Uttar Pradesh will take another 20 years to reach that mark, as it continues to have a high fertility rate (TFR 4.4).

Preferring a male child

Indian society has a marked preference for a male child, both for perceived economic and traditional reasons. Apart from being

5 Bulletins of the Indian Historical Review (Indian Council of Historical Research). [246]
seen as the rightful and capable heir to family property and name as well as an important means to carry the line-age forward, sons are also seen as providing support to parents in their old age. A male child is also valued for the perceived final salvation of the parents through the performance of their last rites. Girls are often seen as a burden because of the social evil of dowry that requires parents to spend large amounts on their marriage. Investments in a daughter are thought to be wasteful as she leaves for her husband's some after marriage, and often cannot share earnings with her parents.

Where such a preference exists, parents tend to make investment in a male child than in the female child be it on nutrition, health, education or a career. Such discrimination, overt or covert, is bound to limit development opportunities available to the girl child which further reinforces gender bias. Preference for a male child is clearly wrong because it devalues the female child and denies her basic rights for survival, growth and development. Further, male preference takes its toll on women's lives, reinforcing male domination and making it difficult to build a fair, just and equitable society. In such a skewed situation there can be no progress in empowering women to become equal members in society⁶.

Increase in age at marriage affect population stabilization

Marriage is near universal in India. Age at marriage is directly related to the education and employment opportunities available to women, with those better educated and employed marrying later than those who are uneducated and / or unemployed.

The mean age at marriage has increased steadily from 17 years in the 1960s to 20 years in 1990s. Still, around 43% of women get married before 18 years, which is the legal age of marriage in India for women. Early marriages often lead to early pregnancies, as most women also conceive immediately because they lack knowledge and access to contraceptive services as well as face family pressure to present an heir within the first year of marriage. On the other hand, the desire to prove his 'masculinity' by siring a child prevents a man from using contraceptive methods immediately after marriage. Giving birth to a child is also seen as a means of securing the marriage as there is greater pressure on the man to take responsibility for his wife when she is the mother of his child. Infidelity and desertion are more common when the women has not had a child. Adolescent pregnancy, with in marriage or otherwise, poses a threat to the health and survival of the mother and child.
Loss of children makes the couple desire larger families. At the macro level, early marriages and early child bearing result in faster replacement of generation, impeding population stabilization even when the couples opt for one or two children.

**Some groups oppose the introduction of injectable contraceptive in India**

New contraceptive technologies such as the hormonal injectables and implants are invasive, longer acting, provider-controlled and have a high potential for abuse when they are targeted at women in developing countries. Besides, injectables also have higher associated health risks that cannot be easily addressed with the poor health infrastructure in India.

Most Indian women have poor health status and poor awareness levels, and when this segment receives invasive technology, the results can be disastrous. Screening and follow-up is the key to effective use of these technologies. Since these two cannot be ensured in a system which is hard pressed for infrastructure and human resources, many argue that it is best to keep out such methods, particularly from the public health service system. Injectable contraceptives are not a part of the public sector health and family welfare programme in India but are available in the market.
Preference for a male child an impediment to population stabilization

Son preference is a major impediment to population stabilization at it makes. Couples opt for large number of children in order to ensure at least one male child in the family. Son preference is evident in every state. However it is more pronounced in Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar, Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Orissa and Arunachal Pradesh. These are also the states with high population growth rates. The weakest son preference is found in Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka and Goa, which are also the states that have achieved or are near achieving replacement level fertility. They also have better male-female ratio and higher female literacy levels. In richer state like Punjab, Haryana and Gujarat couples are opting for smaller families but male preference leads to sex selection leading to adverse sex ratios.

The strong preference for sons is a deeply held cultural ideal based on economic roots. Sons not only assist with farm labor as they are growing up but they provide labour in times of illness and unemployment and serve as their parent's only security in old age, surveys done by the New Delhi operation research group in 1991 indicated that as many as 72 percent of rural parents continue to have
children until at least two sons are born, the preference for more than one son among urban parents was tabulated 53 percent. Once these goals have been achieved, birth control may be used or especially in agricultural areas, it may not if additional child labour, later adult labour for the family is deemed desirable.

In a vast country like India, striking regional disparities can be seen due to differences in natural resources, growth rates, initial conditions, political structure and social traditions. Assessing development and tracking its history is imperative to understand the impact of social conditions, politics and public policies on socio-economic development. In this venture, demographic development indicators like poverty level, literacy rate, fertility rate and human development index give us a good measuring stick, through which we can rank our nation on the development ladder.

**Population and poverty level**

Poverty level indicate the number of people with low purchasing power and lack of access to basic amenities like drinking water, health care, education etc. The World Bank Development indicator report (2004) estimates that roughly 1.1 bn or 1/6th of the

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world population lives in extreme poverty, earning less than $1 per
day. In India, it is estimated that about 500 million people live below
the extreme poverty line. The number of moderately poor is much
higher. From the 1950's to mid 70's the poverty level hovered around
50% and showed no clear signs of decline.

In fact, there is evidence that poverty actually increased during
the early 90's and it was only after 1998 that there was a clear
indication of declining poverty. According to an NSS survey in 2005,
about 27% of population lives below poverty line. There is
widespread regional disparity in the prevalence of poverty. Punjab
has less than 8.4% poor; whereas Orissa, Bihar, U.P. have 40% or
more below poverty line. Continued dependence on agriculture
sector, which employs a staggering 60% of the total labour force and
contributing only 20% to GDP has been cited as one of the prime
reasons for persistent poverty. The jobs created since liberalization
have been mainly in the service sector, giving little scope for the
millions of illiterate or semi-literate population to reap the benefits of
an open economy. There is mixed evidence for the effectiveness of
these schemes. Long-term poverty reduction strategies should focus
on making growth more inclusive through massive investment in

[252]
Fig. 6b: Percentage of population below poverty line
human capital and creating opportunities to tap the human resources there in.

**IMPACT OF LITERACY AND EDUCATION LEVEL ON POPULATION**

Literacy rate measures the human capital of the population. The performance of India in educating its population has been poor compared to many countries of the world. In 2001 world literacy averaged to 80%, while India remained for below the average at 66%. Large regional disparities in literacy and learning levels reflect the poor efficacy of many state educational policies. Kerala stands apart with more than 90% literate population, which is largely a result of mass campaigns by people and political action termed as the 'Kerala Model'. States like Bihar, Rajasthan and U.P. hover around 55%. Surprisingly, the economically better performing states like Karnataka and Andhra Pradesh have a literacy rate just above the national average.

One of the prime drivers of human development is female literacy. A literate female invariably takes care of her child's health, nutritional and educational needs. Higher female literacy has been linked decreased infant and maternal mortality rates, as well as a decrease in the spread of sexually transmitted diseases, including AIDS.
In 2000, Sarva Shiksha Abhyan (SSA) was launched by the NDA government with the objective of achieving universal elementary education by 2010. Along with SSA, the mid-day meal scheme was introduced nationwide in 2001. All these helped to substantially increase the enrollment in primary school to 94% (Pratham ASER Survey, 2005). The current trend shows that ensuring access to school for all is within reach and India is poised to achieve complete literacy by 2030.

**FERTILITY RATE AND GROWTH OF POPULATION**

One of the prime factors determining the population growth is the average number of children a woman bears in her lifetime - termed as the Total Fertility Rate (TFR). The population will begin to stabilize if the TFR reaches below the replacement level of 2.1. According to UN estimates (2007), the world TFR is about 2.62, while India with TFR of 2.82 is slightly above the world average.

There is so much regional diversity within India with regard to birth rate. Some states especially Kerala (1.7) and Tamil Nadu (1.0) have performed well in controlling their fertility rate. Some states like Karnataka, Maharashtra, Punjab and AP are on the verge of reaching replacement level. The BIMARU (Bihar, Madhya Pradesh,
Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh) states strikingly show very high birth rates, with all of them above 4. These states also lag behind in female literacy, which is the key driver in reducing the fertility rate.

**HUMAN DEVELOPMENT INDEX OF POPULATION**

People are the real wealth of nation. Many countries in the world have shown good social development in spite of relatively poor economic conditions; for India the opposite appears to be true. To measure the quality of life, Amartyasen and Mahbub-ul-Haq in the early 90's came up with the composite factors like literacy, education level and per capital income. India has an average HDI of 0.63 (medium) and ranks 127 in the world according to the UNDP report 2005.

**Conclusion**

India is a land of ancient civilization, with cities and villages, cultivated fields, and great work of art dating back 4,000 years. India's high population density and variety of social, economic and cultural configuration are the products of a long process of regional expansion. It is impossible to know India without understanding its religious belief and practices which have a large impact on the personal lives of most Indians and influence public life on a daily
basis. Indian religions have deep historical roots that the recollected by contemporary Indians.

Some customs and beliefs are prevail in the society like early marriage, oppose of contraceptive methods, preferring a male child etc. are the social evils that affect the population stabilization. Muslims have been discriminated against, their overall rate of population growth is higher. The last two decade in particular have seen an increased intimidation of the muslim community. The more recent 2002 Gujarat carnage is a case in point. In such an adverse situation, social reforms and progress take a back seat.

There is a need to provide an atmosphere where the all community can enjoy social and political life with security and dignity. Despite such an adverse situation, a decline in the population growth rate suggests that social workers are consciously focusing their efforts on education and progress in the community. Religion based census data can serve a better purposes, through. If this opens our eyes to the plight of a particular community and its poverty, illiteracy and insecurity and we aim to redress it as a nation, the date will be worth while. One hopes the government will take suitable remedial efforts to recognize the population control cannot be achieved without social progress and spread of literacy.

[256]