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Population Growth, Malthusian Concern and Sustainable Development - Some Key Policies and Demographic Issues in India.

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Abstract - Population size and growth continue to be the paramount issues regarding sustainable development in India, notwithstanding the fact that the Indian economy has grown by a little over 5 percent during the last two decades compared to the population growth of about 2 per cent during the same period. The reason is that the Malthusian concern has been the core of Indian policy planning thinking. This has while perpetuated the belief that population growth is the immediate culprit of high poverty and environmental degradation, demographic issues such as distribution of Population, age composition, migration and urbanization are being neglected in the planning for sustainable development. The paper highlights the lack of integration of comprehensive demographic issues with sustainable development planning in India and explores the political economy reasons for lopsided consideration of demographic issues in sustainable development planning during the last five decades since independence.

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I. INTRODUCTION

The growing realization of environmental concerns during the late 1970s culminated in the establishment of World Commission on Environment and Development by the U.N. General Assembly in 1983. The commission headed by Brundtland submitted its report entitled "Our Common Future" in 1987. The report was considered a watershed in the history of human civilization to safeguard the environment. The commission drew the attention of the world communities among others towards the rapid population growth and its link with poverty and environmental degradation in several parts of the world. It has noted that in many parts of the world the population is growing at rates that cannot be sustained by available environmental resources and argued for

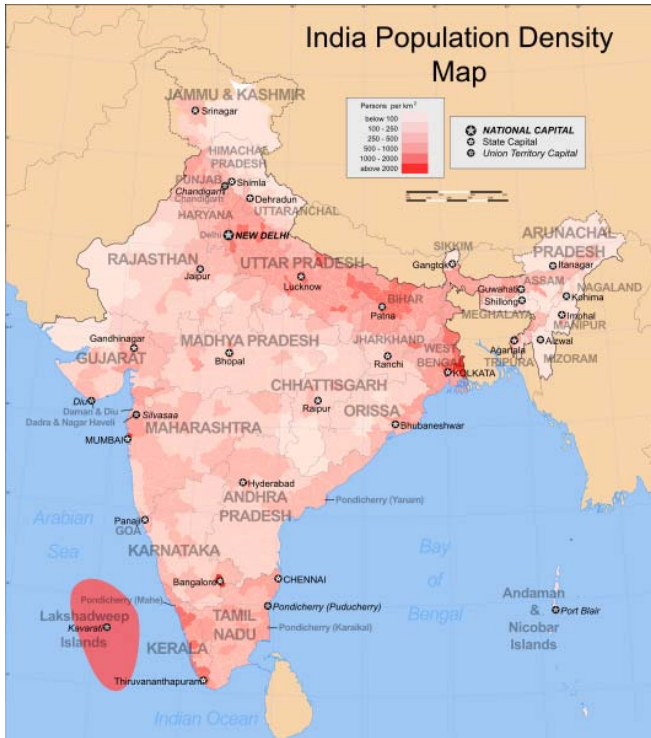
defined sustainable development as the ability to satisfy achieving sustainable development. It the needs of present generation without compromising the ability to satisfy the needs of future generation (World Commission on Environment and Development 1987). It further noted that everybody must realize that we borrowed this planet from our children, not inherited from our parents. The concept of sustainable development therefore echoes a clear concern and responsibility of the present generation towards posterity. As a sequel, a United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held during 3-14 June 1992 in Rio-de Janeiro. This conference further discussed at length the Population, economic and trade issues between the north and south influencing environmental Degradation. (United Nations 1992). The concept of sustainable development is an effort to create a new perception of development, premised on environmental preservation and the balance between man and nature-a vital component for human survival, which also recognizes the right of the next generation to have equal claim on the natural resources. As such, sustainable development is based on a new ethics of sharing resources in the present as well as in future to the extent the delicate balance of the nature is not jeopardized. It is not in conflict with human development determined by the access to the basic needs of life and the improvement in human capability defined by educational and health status. In fact, human development is the key to sustainable development. The International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994 reemphasized the crucial link between environment and sustainable development and recognized population policy and programmers as important state instruments for improving socio-economic conditions and expanding choices for individuals (Population and Development Review, 1995). The key recognition was that focusing on people -their rights, capabilities, and opportunities- would have multiple benefits for individuals, for society, and for their sustainable relationship with the environment. In fact, ICPD resolved the contradiction between two polarized stands viz. control of population

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through state policy of family planning efforts and the development as the best contraceptive which emerged after Bucharest conference in 1974 (Finkle and Crane 1975). It focused on wider issues of human life and, therefore, provided the critical input in consolidating the concept of sustainable development. It was the first UN conference in which environmental concerns had been addressed in population context (McIntosh and Finkle 1995:225). Sustainable development ultimately aims at improving human well being, particularly through alleviating poverty, increasing gender equity, and improving health, and other aspects of human resources, along with safeguard to the natural environment. The demographic knowledge is critical to achieve these goals of sustainable development. Policies and strategies that include various dimensions of population will be sound theoretically and have the chance to be realized given the political will and determination. During the last one decade, it has been increasingly realized that relationship between population, environment and development is a complex issue. Any attempt in Neo- Malthusian framework of simply dividing the volume of resources by the number of people on the globe will not suffice (Shrivastava 1992). But the Malthusian thinking has been very pervasive. In the context of India the Malthusian ideology has a deep root, closely linked with history of Great Britain where from ideology of Malthus grew and spread elsewhere (Caldwell 1998). This paper makes an attempt to assess the nature of evolution of population policy and its content historically, and highlights that the issue of population revolves around size. The other important aspects of population such as distribution and composition of population, and urbanization closely associated with sustainable development are most neglected aspect in population related policies in India. Other areas, which did not receive adequate attention in the policy circle, are the migration and concern for aging. The paper highlights the lack of integration of comprehensive demographic knowledge with sustainable development planning in India and explores the political economy reasons. A United Nations Conference on Environment and Development was held during 3-14 June 1992 in Rio-de Janeiro. This conference further discussed at length the population, economic and trade issues between the north and south influencing environmental degradation. (United Nations 1992). The concept of sustainable development is an effort to create a new perception of development, premised on environmental preservation and the balance between man and nature—a vital component for human survival, which also recognizes the right of the next generation to have equal claim on the natural resources. As such, sustainable development is based on a new ethics of sharing resources in the present as well as in future to the extent the delicate balance of the nature is not jeopardized. It is not in conflict with human

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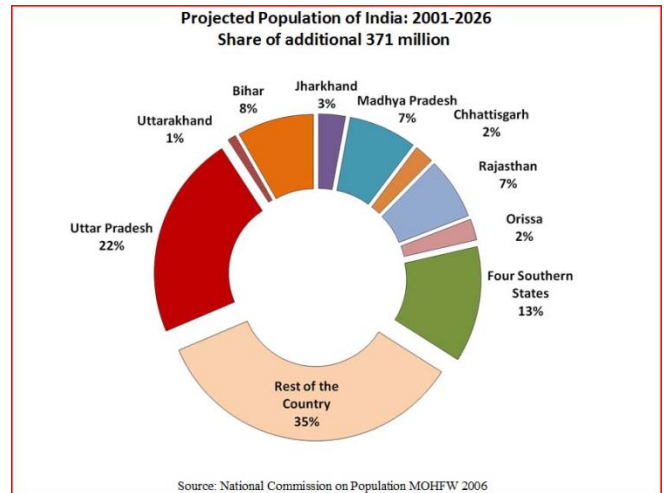
Population Growth And Environment

A research paper has outlined the effect of population on the environment. According to this research, environmental pollution is one of the serious problems faced by the people in the country. Rapid population growth, industrialization and urbanization in country are adversely affecting the environment. Though the relationship is complex, population size and growth tend to expand and accelerate these human impacts on the environment. All these in turn lead to an increase in the pollution levels. However, environmental pollution not only leads to deteriorating environmental conditions but also have adverse effects on the health of people. India is one of the most degraded environment countries in the world and it is paying heavy health and economic price for it.

According to the World Development Indicators report in 1997, 1.5 billion people live exposed to dangerous levels of air pollution, 1 billion live without clean water and 2 billion live without sanitation. The increase of population has been tending towards alarming situation. The world's population was estimated to be 6.14 billion in mid 2001 and projected 7.82 billion and 9.04 billion in the year 2025 and 2050 respectively. Contribution of India alone to this population was estimated to be 1033 millions in mid 2001 which has been projected 1363 millions and 1628 millions in 2025

and 2050 respectively. (2001 World Population Data Sheet). According to the provisional results of the Census of India 2001, the population of India on 1st March 2001 is 1027 millions. If the world population continues to multiply, the impact on environment could be devastating.

Population impacts on the environment primarily through the use of natural resources and production of wastes and is associated with environmental stresses like biodiversity, air and water pollution and increased pressure on arable land. India is the world's sixth largest and second fastest growing producer of greenhouse gases. Delhi, Mumbai and Chennai are three of the world's ten most populated cities. Two-thirds of city dwellers lack sewerage, one-third lack potable water. India grows equivalent of another New York City every year in its urban population. By the year 2000, more than 350 million Indians will live in cities. In 15 years, more than half of Indians will be urban dwellers; 1/3 will be slum dwellers and squatters



Above figure shows the glimpse of population of India in future perspective.

II. POPULATION GROWTH PUTS DENT IN NATURAL RESOURCES

"Population growth is driving all of our resource problems, including water and energy. The three are intertwined," Criss says. "The United States has over 305 million people of the 6.7 billion on the planet. We are dividing a finite resource pie among a growing number of people on Earth. We cannot expect to sustain exponential population growth matched by increased per capita use of water and energy. It's troubling. But politicians and religious leaders totally ignore the topic."

Criss specializes in hydrogeology, the geology of water and systems of water. Much of his work has an environmental slant. He investigates the transport of aqueous fluids in environments such as rivers, cool

potable groundwater systems essential to civilization, and deeper, hotter hydrothermal systems. The results may be combined with physical, chemical or geologic data to infer numerous aspects about the origin of waters and the processes that subsequently affect them.

A major focus for Criss and his associates is the origin, character and behavior of river and floodwaters in the Mississippi, Missouri and Meramec River basins. Since 1990, the mid-continent experienced floods of such severity that they would not, under normal circumstances, be expected to have all occurred in a period of less than several centuries. Criss and a colleague have proven that engineering modifications of waterways have increased the frequency and severity of floods on most Midwestern Rivers.

Population control - India will beat China by 2025.

Information collected from research articles and newspapers.

"Census of India-2001 Report: The total population of India as at 0:00 hours on 1st March 2001 stood at 1,027,015,247 persons. With this, India became only the second country in the world after China to cross the one billion mark. The population of the country rose by 21.34 % between 1991 - 2001. The sex ratio (i.e., number of females per thousand males) of population was 933, rising from 927 as at the 1991 Census. Total literacy rate was returned as 65.38%."

"At district level the North East district in Union territory Delhi has the highest population density in the country with 29395 persons per square kilometer."

"The population clock in the Union Health Ministry, Nirman Bhavan, New Delhi, now ticks at the rate of 31 persons per minute. The clock shows that about 44,640 babies are born in India everyday. "

"In the last several decades, fertility control policies in India have failed to promote a sustainable solution to the problem of overpopulation. What factors have caused these efforts to fall short? "

"Currently the sex ratio is 960 women for every 1,000 men - a statistic that the UN says reflects the lower status of women in India, who are more likely to be deprived of food, education and health services. "

"The prominence of female sterilization indicates another flaw in the India population control strategies. By targeting women instead of men, the government inadvertently opts for the more hazardous means of birth control. "

III. POPULATION AND NATURAL RESOURCES CONDITIONS

The total population of the area (Azerbaijan, Kazakhstan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kyrgyzstan, Iran, Afghanistan, Pakistan, Nepal, Bhutan,

Bangladesh, India, Sri Lanka and the Maldives) is about 1,420 million. These 15 countries are extremely heterogeneous from the demographic standpoint. Half of them are under 20 million inhabitants in size, while another is close to 1,000 million. The average population growth rate is moderately high (2.1%), but individual rates vary from 0.5% to almost 6%. The region is largely rural (71% on average) but five countries have more than 40% urban population. Rates of growth of the urban population are moderate on the whole but exceed 7% in two cases.

These diverse conditions imply that countries face very different situations with regard to the distribution of population among sources of livelihood, level and trend of population pressure on natural and investment resources, etc.

Land resources are much below the world average of 0.26 hectare per person in most countries. This is in part the consequence of unfavorable natural conditions (e.g. deserts, infertile mountainous areas) and in part that of continued population growth which has driven population densities to high levels.

Per caput forest and woodland resources are also very limited, and far below the world average of 0.75 hectare, with the sole exception of Bhutan. As a matter of fact, deforestation is widespread in the region.

The situation is very mixed with regard to water resources. With respect to the classical scale of competition for water (stress/absolute scarcity/water barrier) no country is in the danger zone - although Iran is close. Naturally, water resources being fixed, population growth gradually leads countries towards that zone. In 2025 Afghanistan and India will be in the water stress zone, and Iran will be in the absolute scarcity zone (less than 2.7 m²/person/day); Pakistan and Sri Lanka will reach the water stress stage a little later.

IV. POPULATION AND ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

The two most widespread problems are the pollution of water resources (by industrial discharges, household waste, sewage or agricultural chemicals) and deforestation (under the impact of clearing for shifting agriculture, overexploitation for fuel wood and timber collection, and overgrazing). Next come soil erosion (from overgrazing and intensive cultivation) and chemical degradation or pollution (from excessive use of agricultural chemicals.)

Other largely shared problems are water scarcity (induced by mounting population density and growing economic activity in the face of fixed resources), air pollution (mostly by industrial effluents, although urban traffic is also a growing factor), the loss of biodiversity (in shrinking forests as well as in threatened marine and wetland ecosystems) and urban

environment problems (from unplanned growth and inability to tackle waste management on the required scale).

Demographic factors are evoked by several countries in connection with their environmental problems. Iran evokes its large population and "demographic explosion". For Pakistan, "accelerating economic and demographic pressures" are one of three factors identified as responsible for the emergence of environmental problems. Bhutan notes that the population "is growing rapidly [... This] increase cannot be easily absorbed by the existing rural or urban communities." For Bangladesh, a "link exists between population, poverty and the environment. High population growth rates lead to more intense use of resources, exacerbating existing scarcities and over-exploitation". The Maldives also cite population growth as one of the factors of environmental problems.

Issues arising from growing human numbers in the face of fixed water resources are indirectly but strongly linked with population growth at the national and urban levels. Such problems are noted by several countries, but usually without explicit mention of population factors. One may also observe that population pressure under fixed or slowly changing technology is a factor in such phenomena as the extension of agriculture, with encroachment on forests or on marginal lands, which accelerates degradation (India, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka), the overexploitation of the wood cover for domestic uses (same countries) and increased pollution by domestic wastes (all 15 countries).

About half of the countries reviewed here mention population policies as a general means to alleviate problems, or more exactly to make them more tractable. Iran cites "pursuing family planning" as one of its priorities on environment and development.

India considers that "population-related issues, which are inextricably linked to the total development of India, (are) a priority [...], Development should lead to a decrease in population growth rates".

In Nepal, "a range of strategies have been put forward including expansion of family planning, [maternal] and child health services, integration of population programmes in other sectoral projects, and expansion of adult education programmes for women.". Bhutan states: "The future socio-economic balance depends on a strictly enforced family planning policy and/or new means of livelihood not directly dependent on the land". In effect, the first government measure mentioned in reaction to these concerns is: "preparing a comprehensive family planning policy".

For Bangladesh, the recommendations of the "environmental strategy for sustainable development" include a series of measures under the heading on population stabilization and poverty alleviation.

Finally, the Maldives emphasize the need to

develop "an environmentally sound national population management policy".

Many of the countries state their reliance on environmental education as one of the instruments to halt in the long run environmental degradation. These programmes deserve attention from the population IEC viewpoint, since they provide opportunities to introduce considerations on the linkages between population dynamics and environmental change: Kazakhstan notes the importance of environmental education, which "in order to be more effective, should start at early ages."

For Iran, "promoting environmental education" is one of the cited "priorities on environment and development". Afghanistan also identifies "developing materials to ensure environmental education is to be promoted" as a priority. In Pakistan, the Environment and Urban Affairs Division leads information efforts, while the Pakistan Institute for Labour Education and Resources conducts workers' training. In India, the 1986 National Policy on Education includes a Master Plan for the universal provision of facilities for environmental education, for "there is an urgent need to create widespread awareness".

In Nepal, the Government "accords priority to improving awareness in conservation of natural resources and sustainable development at all levels through formal and non-formal education". Bangladesh emphasizes "targeting women through environmental awareness, literacy and birth control campaigns" to "help break the vicious circle" of rapid population growth, poverty and environmental degradation. Finally, Sri Lanka also states its commitment to "strengthening environmental education".

V. LAND DEGRADATION AND ITS FACTORS

This part covers the eight countries of South Asia only; for five of these countries the incidence of degradation is above world average, sometimes much higher. Iran and Sri Lanka are the most affected, then India and Afghanistan.

Soil erosion under the action of water is the main form of land degradation in the countries reviewed, affecting 25% of the total area under crops and pastures. Wind erosion affects 48% of the land under crops and pasture in the dry zone (60% in Iran). Chemical degradation (Stalinization, loss of soil fertility, pollution) has a high impact in some countries, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka in particular; salinization affects more than half of all agricultural land in Iran.

Barring natural hazards, the causes of land degradation comprise direct and underlying causes. Direct causes are inappropriate land use and management practices. Underlying causes are the reasons why these inappropriate practices take place. The following direct causes of land degradation have

been considered: deforestation and removal of natural vegetation; over-exploitation of wood cover for domestic use; overgrazing; and agricultural activities.

Deforestation causes degradation when the land is steeply sloping or has shallow or easily erodible soils, and when clearance is not followed by good management. It is the dominant cause in six out of eight countries here (the exceptions are Iran and Afghanistan). If absolute annual losses were to continue at their current pace, the forests of Bangladesh would be entirely gone by 2011 and those of Pakistan by 2015.

Overcutting of vegetation to obtain timber, fuel wood and other products is frequent in semi-arid environments, where fuel wood shortages are often severe. The phenomenon is significant in three countries here; it is the leading factor in Iran.

Overgrazing causes a decrease in vegetation cover which is a leading cause of erosion. It is a significant factor in six countries, and by far the most important in Afghanistan.

Agricultural activities that cause land degradation include shifting cultivation without adequate fallow periods, absence of soil conservation measures, and cultivation of fragile lands, unbalanced fertilizer use, and a host of possible problems arising from faulty planning or management of irrigation. They are a major factor in Sri Lanka and the dominant one in Bangladesh.

The role of population factors in land degradation processes obviously occurs in the context of the underlying causes. In the region, it is indeed one of the two major basic causes of degradation along with land shortage, and land shortage itself ultimately is a consequence of continued population growth in the face of the finiteness of land resources. In the context of land shortage the growing population pressure, during 1980-1990, has led to decreases in the already small areas of agricultural land per person in six out of eight countries (14% for India and 22% for Pakistan).

Population pressure also operates through other mechanisms. Improper agricultural practices, for instance, occur only under constraints such as the saturation of good lands under population pressure which leads settlers to cultivate too shallow or too steep soils, plough fallow land before it has recovered its fertility, or attempt to obtain multiple crops by irrigating unsuitable soils.

VI. POPULATION-ENVIRONMENT LINKAGES AND POPULATION PROGRAMMES

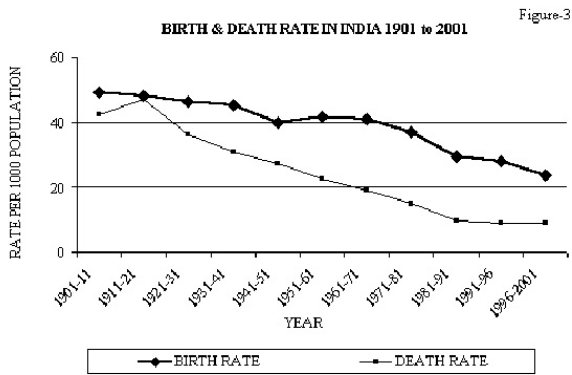
Population programmes ought to be responsive to population-environment problems and linkages. Possible activities in this context are the following:

1. Assessing the role of population dynamics and other factors with respect to prevailing trends in water

supply issues, land degradation, deforestation.

2. Assessing the impact of urban expansion on the state of natural resources (cropland, forests, and water).
3. Assessing changes in the quality of urban environment (access to water and sanitation, infrastructure, equipment) and assess their reciprocal causal relationships with the demographic dynamics of the settlements.
4. Advocacy to raise the awareness of government and civil servants regarding priority linkages of population dynamics and environmental change at the national and sub-national levels, and achieve a clear recognition of the need to develop relevant policies.
5. Based on country characteristics, identify specific environmental indicators integrating population dimensions. Look into the feasibility of spatially disaggregated indicators. Set up data collection and processing systems. Where feasible, build retrospective time series for these indicators.
6. Assess current dimensions of population pressure on water resources: count population by watershed area, assess broad patterns of use by sector.
7. Identify the vulnerable populations with regard to specific environmental issues, e.g. pollution, water supply problems, deforestation.
8. Project the impact of population change on various environmental goods (e.g. cropland, building areas, water resources, forests) under alternative scenarios of population growth, urbanization, consumption patterns.
9. Capacity building (e.g., interdisciplinary workshops with exercises in formulating environment and development strategies).
10. Support to monitoring activities, including at the methodological level (design of indicators, problems related to the collection of data on population and environment etc.).
11. IEC activities addressing the general public could derive arguments e.g. from the impact of environmental degradation on people's health. Field experiences in communication campaigns focused on such themes, built upon assessments of the people's perceptions regarding environmental change, can be utilized with profit in new contexts.

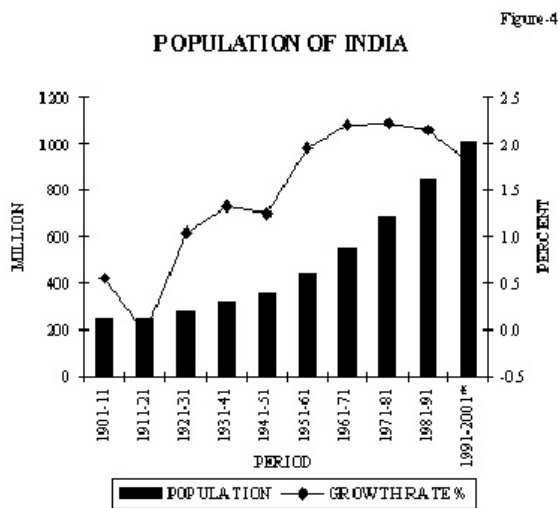
Needs for these various inputs to country policies should be systematically assessed in the context of programming at the country level.



Source:- Registrar General India

Over the last four decades there has been rapid fall in Crude Death Rate (CDR) from 25.1

steady and sustained. As a result the country was able to achieve a relatively gradual change in the population numbers and age structure. The short and long term adversconsequences of too rapid decline in birth rates and change in age structure on the social and economic development were avoided and the country was able to adapt to these changes without massive disruptions of developmental efforts.



Source:- Registrar General India

In spite of the uniform national norms set under the 100% Centrally Funded and Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS) of Family Welfare , there are substantial differences in the performance between States as assessed by IMR and CBR. Though the decline in CBR and IMR has occurred in all States, the rate of decline is slower in some States. At one end of the spectrum is Kerala with mortality and fertility rates nearly similar to those in some of the developed countries. At the other end, there are four large northern States (Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan) with high Infant Mortality Rate and Fertility Rates. Though the decline in

CBR, IMR and CDR has occurred in all States, the rate of decline was slower in some States like U.P. and Bihar. There are substantial differences in CBR and IMR not only between States but also between the districts in the same state

VII. INDIAN STATE AND THE DEMOGRAPHIC CONCERN

The Essay on Population first published in 1798 by Malthus has a great appeal among the bureaucrats and political elites. His basic idea was the growth of population taking place geometrically, whereas food supply was growing arithmetically leading to the occurrence of positive checks like starvation deaths and epidemics wiping out the additional population and establishing a new equilibrium in the society. The vices and miseries of the society are directly product of this imbalance between the population size and its subsistence level. He further believed that passions between the sexes remained undiminished in human history and requires moral restraints in wittf ^ holding the sexual urge to control the increase in population growth. The poor begets more children and further impoverish themselves and are responsible for miseries and vices of the society. It is ultimately the principle of population that arbitrates and establishes equilibrium. But the equilibrium is disturbed by the poor due to their lack of control on sexual urge. The human society, therefore, remains imperfect. On this very principle Malthus vehemently opposed the ideas of perfection of society advanced by Condorcet and the idea of political justice propounded by Godwin. He described these ideas as most Utopian without having the basis of scientific truth. Malthus opposed the poor laws of England also on the basis of the principle of population he propounded and argued about it to be futile (Malthus 1798). The impact of the ideas of Malthus has been pervasive during

The 19th century among the upper sections of society who were in command of policy making in Great Britain (Caldwell 1998:678). Although, the poor law was amended in 1834, influential successors to Malthus spelled out his message in clearest term. In 1848 John Stuart Mill concluded in his Principles OJ Political Economy: "Everyone has a right to live. We will suppose this granted. But no one has a right to bring creatures into life, to be supported by other people" (Mill 1848:252 quoted in Caldwell 1998:678). Bagehot, the editor of The Economist not only expressed similar ideas to that of the Malthus, but also applied the principles towards politically motivated goals: "The most melancholy of human reflections, perhaps, is that, on the whole, it is a question whether the benevolence of mankind does most good or harm. Great good, no doubt, philanthropy does, but then it also does great evil. It augments so much vice, it multiplies so much suffering, and it brings to life such great - population to suffer and to be vicious"

(Bagehot 1869: 188-189 quoted in Caldwell 1998:768). By the last decades of the nineteenth century, Malthusianism was deep seated in the psyche of English people and the population growth of the poor was considered dangerous (Caldwell, 1998:679). India has witnessed a number of severe famines in the nineteenth century that took heavy toll of lives. The population grew negligibly before 1921. Even there was decline of population at some times (Myrdal 1968; Bhatia 1991; Maharatna 1996). The first half of the twentieth century also saw some of the severe famines. The famous Bengal famine in 1943-44 took millions of lives. Within a span of just three months the death toll was estimated to be 2.5 to 3 million (Myrdal 1968). During this time food production in the country had also declined severely. The estimates of trend in imperial India indicates that aggregate food production 'declined by 5 million tons during the period from 1893-94 to 1945-46 and the per capita food production declined by 32 per cent during the same period (Myrdal 1968:1245). The British Government took the responsibility of direct administration of India after the great revolt of 1857. Ambirajan (1976:6) believed that recurrence of famine in the latter half of the nineteenth century converted many officials to a Malthusian. The Malthusian view in the administration affected the amount and timing of famine relief work as the Indians were blamed for this catastrophe (Ambirajan 1976). The census of India started in 1872. The census reports analyzed the population growth in relation to famine occurrence at the country and provincial levels. Census reports also tried to relate the cultivable area in different parts of India to the rate of population growth in order to explore Malthusian pressures (Caldwell and Caldwell 1986:37). Thus, the ideology of government apparatus during the first half of the twentieth century was increasingly Malthusian (Caldwell 1998:687). The Gandhian legacy also was not contrary to Malthusian view of Indian political economy. Gandhi adopted Brahmacharya in 1906 and had been candid in his opinion on population growth, which was very close to Malthusian idea of self-restraint. Gandhi was against the use of contraception in birth control and firmly believed that there should not be sex except if children are desired (Payne 1969: 463). He held the view that sexual lust was the root cause of conjugal unhappiness and even the married couple should think of each other as brother and sister (Narayan 1968:220). Gandhi considered more number of children immoral. Gandhi said to Margaret Sanger in January 13, 1936 who came to meet him in his Wardha Ashram: "People should be taught that it is immoral to have more than three or four children, and after they have had three children they should sleep separately. If people were taught this, it would harden into custom. And if the social reformers cannot impress on people, why not law" (quoted in Payne 1969:464). Thus Gandhi's ideas were very similar to that of Malthus except that

Gandhi's accusation to the poor could be derived whereas Malthus was unequivocal in his accusation to the poor. The close link of India with Britain transmitted the Malthusian tenets and attitudes from the elites of Great Britain to the newly educated elites of India. The recurrence of famines provided the fertile grounding of the Malthusian ideology among the elites of ruling congress party. The Gandhi ideology further helped promoting the Malthusian moorings. The Govt. has set up the Health and Development Committee popularly known as Bhole committee in 1943 to assess the country's health needs. The committee advocated for the deliberate limitation of families as desirable. The Congress Party's National Planning Committee agreed with the suggestions of the Bhole Committee and advocated for intervention of family planning programmes by the Government (Shah 1947). Govt. of independent India launched the family planning programme from its first five year plan began in 1952

VIII. NEGLECT OF SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES

The Malthusian influence on the socialization of India's elites and bureaucrats shaped the population policies in independent India with an overriding concern of population size allegedly thought to be hampering development. As a result, the successive policies were mainly concerned with reduction in birth rates. It is believed that reduction in fertility rates will solve some of the challenging problems like poverty, illiteracy and law and order problem in the country. This belief also suited the political elites of ruling establishment as a route to escape from being fixed for their political economic failures. It is evident from the fact that statement of National Population Policy was placed on the table of parliament in 1976 during the period of emergency imposed in the preceding year. During the period of emergency family planning was vigorously launched and sterilization was coercively followed to make it clear that Govt. was eradicating the root problem of the country. It was meant to spread the message that Govt. is serious and working. It further allowed the state government to pursue legalization of compulsory sterilization programme if the state government has the necessary infrastructure (Misra 1980; Gwatkin 1975). After the debacle of Congress party in 1977 general elections the Janata Party after assuming power initiated an immediate change in policy of government towards family planning. It was reflected in the change of family planning to family welfare and the new policy stresses its voluntary participation meant for achieving maternal and child health and the well being of the family (Government of India 1977). This change in policy did not make the population policy as much comprehensive as to include population distribution, urbanization and composition of population in an integrated manner, although such ideas existed among the marginal section

of academics and intellectual as late as 1969. It was echoed in a conference on population policy and programme in 1969 organized by Council for Social Development. The resolution of the conference states that the population policy should be regarded not only in terms of number but also in terms of its distribution, its composition and structure in relation to resources (Council for Social Development 1969). This comprehensive vision of population as an input in sustainable development was not reflected in the thinking of population policy statement of either in 1976 or in 1977 after the change in government. The Government of India has announced the most recent changes in population policy in 2000. By this time the concept of sustainable development and sustainability issues have already acquired worldwide concern. The latest policy declaration by the government is again very much concerned about the size and growth of population along with some concern for the aged population. The new strategy of population control has been devised based on women centered approach euphemistically called reproductive and child health programmes (or popularly known as RCH programmes) and it seeks to achieve replacement level of fertility (Total Fertility Rate of 2.1 i.e., approximately two live birth per woman) by the year 2010 and population stabilization (zero population growth) by the year 2045 (Govt. of India, 2000). The policy document makes it clear that the goal of population stabilization could be achieved by the enabling role of the government with active participation of civil society through the process of social change. The underlying belief is that improving women's education and empowerment will socially engineer small family. Recently several state governments have also brought out the agenda of population concern in their policy and planning, but an integrated approach linking the vital issues of poverty, land, forest and water resources is lacking. A regional perspective on population focusing on comprehensive strategy encompassing population issues is not only lacking, but the policies of the state governments are found to be at variance with the national policy. As per constitutional provisions, population and health programmes are implemented by states, and they have also the power to legislate in this area. Several states have recently come out with legislation of two-child family norm as necessary condition for contesting election at local level. The states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, and Orissa have introduced the two child norm since 1994 and Madhya Pradesh and Himachal Pradesh since 2000 as criteria for contesting local government seats (panchayats). The persons with more than two living children are debarred from contesting election or continuing in office. Most of the people having more than, two children belong to lower socioeconomic groups. On the other hand, according to the provisions of the new amendment to the

constitution, 33 per cent Seats will be reserved for women as panchayat heads and also for members of the panchayats. It also mandates quotas for weaker sections and tribals in proportion to their size. Could the state legislations debarring those having more than two children neutralize the benefits granted to the women and weaker sections of the society by the 73rd amendment to Indian constitution? This is presently debated in the academic circles (Rao, 2002; 2003; Bhat 2003). Raising the population issues in Malthusian garb are sometimes diversionary and also occasionally imbued with vested interest in the political circles. Whereas the national population policy reflects the vision of the international elites with larger concern for equity and reproductive health, the issue of sustainability does not go beyond population stabilization. The politicization of demographic issues by virtue of political disempowerment through legislations incapacitates the masses and holds them responsible for their state of affairs. On the other hand, it allows the state to be free from its responsibilities towards the underprivileged population. The demographic wisdom learned from the experience of the demographic transition in Kerala is not needed by the poorer states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Orissa and newly rich state like Haryana. The rapid decline in fertility in the state of Andhra Pradesh (TFR 2.5 in 1997) in recent years, a socio - economically average state, is stretched too far to cite an example that fertility could decline even without social and political justice. The urbanization strategy of the country is mainly concerned with decongesting the million, plus, cities by not permitting the certain categories of industries within 25 km from the city centre. Further, the urbanization strategy is more concerned with urban development, and the population size and rural-urban migration are considered undesirable and problematic for city governance. The recent housing - in and habitat policy of the government announced in 1998 also does not mention about population distribution and future urbanization strategy of the country, but raises the problem of housing shortages and suggests how this can be facilitated by the government and local bodies in augmenting the housing supply by helping the private and group initiatives. The level of urbanization is nearly 28 per cent as revealed by 2001 census, and rate of urban growth has been slowing down during the last two decades (Braga 2001). In spite of low level of urbanization, the urban population growth is seen as a problem in policy document (Planning Commission, 2001). The Malthusian specter is very much visible in the government perception of urbanization. The urban policies are directed to slowing down the urbanization Process rather than viewed as a vehicle of development. Urbanization in India is neither viewed as a vehicle of social change nor sustainable development. The issues of urban population growth and rural to urban migration



are raised and alarmed to divert the attention From the inefficiency of urban governance. The perpetuation of Malthusian view that urban problems are due to the population growth often precipitates backlash on the migrants. The national political parties after the setback of emergency in 1975 have abandoned addressing population issues explicitly in their political manifestos. However, the concern for population size and growth continues at popular level. Lack of explicit stand by political parties left the area of population for the wishful intervention by the bureaucrats who are convinced for neo-Malthusian solution to the problem. This has not allowed a proper intervention in the area of population and its integration with sustainable development. It is ironical that even the issues of environment and sustainable development are ignored in the planning process of the country. The Planning Commission has prepared approach paper to Tenth five-year plan recently. Environment does not figure in the Minimum Agenda at all. This must be rectified with explicit and independent focus on the need to infuse environmental concerns through the Entire economic planning and development process in the country (Kothari 2002: 292). Environmental impact of over population in India-

- Pollution – increase in cars and emission of greenhouse gases into atmosphere
- Deforestation – increase in paved areas to house increasing population
- Freshwater Availability – increase in waste production and contamination of water
- Natural Resources – increase burning of fossil fuels, excessive use of coal
- Global Warming – overall increase in temperature and chances of natural disasters
- Habitat Loss – change in ecosystems affecting tropic levels

IX. CONCLUSION

The Malthusian view on population has been dominating concern in India. India's repeated famines in the past and her dose link with Britain led to the genesis of the Malthusian mindset among early bureaucrats and emerging elites. This understanding has not allowed the integration of wider population issues like distribution, composition, migration and urbanization with sustainable development. This has also been diversionary to conceal inefficiency and failure in governance. The abandonment of population issues by the national political parties after 1977 has left the arena of population to be handled by the bureaucrats only. Since India is a federal country, the issues of population and sustainable development fall under the control of state governments. A comprehensive policy of population issues in relation to sustainable development is possible only at the state level, but such agenda at the policy level must begin from the national political

parties and the initiatives at the central level.

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