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The Demographic Structure of the Indian Society

Demography is the systematic study of population trends and processes. It involves collecting and analyzing data about the size, distribution, and characteristics of populations. The term 'demography' comes from the Greek words 'demos' meaning people and 'graphein' meaning to describe.

There are two main types of demography: formal demography, which focuses on statistical aspects such as birth and death rates, and social demography, which studies the social implications of population changes.

The formation of nation-states and the development of modern statistics expanded the role of the state in collecting population data. This led to the development of social statistics by the late eighteenth century, which provide numerical characteristics representing large groups.

The Malthusian Theory of Population Growth

Thomas Robert Malthus, in his 1798 Essay on Population, proposed that population grows geometrically (2, 4, 8, 16, 32...) while food production grows arithmetically (2, 4, 6, 8, 10...). This imbalance leads to poverty and famine as population outstrips resources.

Malthus identified two types of checks on population growth:

- **Positive checks:** Natural events such as famines and diseases that increase mortality.
- **Preventive checks:** Voluntary actions like postponing marriage and practicing celibacy to reduce birth rates.

The theory has been criticized and refuted by historical evidence from Europe and by Marxist and liberal scholars.

Exam Question

Q: What are the main ideas of the Malthusian Theory of Population Growth?

A: Malthus argued that population grows faster than food supply, leading to poverty. Natural events (positive checks) and voluntary actions (preventive checks) control population growth.

The Theory of Demographic Transition

This theory explains the typical pattern of population growth as societies develop through three phases:

1. Low population growth in underdeveloped societies.
2. Population explosion or rapid growth during demographic transition.
3. Low population growth in developed societies.

Exam Question

Q: What are the three phases of demographic transition?

A: The phases are low growth in underdeveloped societies, rapid growth during transition, and low growth in developed societies.

Demographic Concepts: Rates and Ratios

Key demographic rates include:

- Birth rate: Number of live births per 1,000 population.
- Death rate: Number of deaths per 1,000 population.
- Rate of natural increase: Difference between birth rate and death rate.
- Fertility rate: Number of live births per 1,000 women aged 15–49.
- Infant mortality rate: Number of infant deaths per 1,000 live births.
- Maternal mortality rate: Number of maternal deaths per 100,000 live births.

Important ratios include:

- Sex ratio: Number of females per 1,000 males.
- Dependency ratio: Ratio of dependents (young and old) to working-age population.

Exam Question

Q: Define birth rate and sex ratio.

A: Birth rate is the number of live births per 1,000 people. Sex ratio is the number of females per 1,000 males.

Life Expectancy and Age Structure

Life expectancy is the average number of years a person is expected to live. Age structure refers to the proportion of people in different age groups within the population.

India has a youthful population with a large proportion of young people, which is considered a demographic dividend—a temporary economic benefit due to a lower dependency ratio.

Exam Question

Q: What is demographic dividend?

A: Demographic dividend is the economic benefit that arises when the working-age population is larger than the dependent population.

Population Growth and Trends in India

India is the second most populous country in the world. The demographic transition phase was observed between 1921 and 1931, marked by a decline in death rates due to better medicine and sanitation, while birth rates remained high.

The sex ratio in India has been declining due to social factors such as female infanticide and sex-selective abortions, although recent data shows some improvement.

Exam Question

Q: What are the reasons for the declining sex ratio in India?

A: The declining sex ratio is due to neglect of girl children, female foeticide, infanticide, and maternal mortality.

Literacy and Its Importance

Literacy is the ability to read and write. It is crucial for empowerment and varies across regions, genders, and social groups in India. Kerala has the highest literacy rate, while states like Rajasthan and Bihar have lower rates.

Exam Question

Q: Why is literacy important in demographic studies?

A: Literacy helps improve social and economic conditions and supports population control measures.

Rural-Urban Linkage and Divisions

Most of India's population lives in rural areas, but urban population is increasing. The 2011 Census shows a rise in urban population share and a decline in rural share.

The traditional agrarian lifestyle is declining due to growth in non-farm occupations such as teaching, business, transport, and communication. Mass communication and transit systems are reducing the urban-rural gap.

Reasons for Rapid Urbanisation

- Migration from rural to urban areas in search of work.
- Decline of common property resources like ponds and forests in rural areas.
- City life offers anonymity and opportunities for oppressed groups.

Exam Question

Q: What are the main reasons for rapid urbanisation in India?

A: Rural-to-urban migration, decline of rural resources, and opportunities in cities contribute to urbanisation.

Population Policy in India

India was among the first countries to announce a population policy in 1952. The National Family Programme aimed to influence population growth through birth control, improving public health, and raising awareness.

The Family Planning Programme faced setbacks during the Emergency period (1975-76) but was later renamed the National Family Welfare Programme.

Exam Question

Q: What were the objectives of India's National Family Programme?

A: To control population growth by promoting birth control, improving health standards, and increasing public awareness.

Key Terms in Demography

- **Social Statistics:** Qualitative data on population and economy.
- **Epidemic:** Sudden increase in disease in a specific area.
- **Birth Control:** Techniques to prevent conception and birth.

- **Positive Checks:** Natural constraints on population growth like famines and epidemics.
- **Preventive Checks:** Voluntary actions to limit population growth like postponing marriage.
- **Replacement Level:** Fertility rate at which a generation replaces itself.
- **Fertility:** Ability to reproduce, measured among women aged 15-49.
- **Population Pyramid:** Graphical representation of population by age and sex.

Exam Question

Q: Define positive and preventive checks in population growth.

A: Positive checks are natural events increasing death rates; preventive checks are voluntary actions reducing birth rates.

Solved Examples

Example 1: Explain why the Malthusian theory was criticized.

Answer: The theory was criticized because historical evidence showed that population growth did not always outpace food production, and technological advances improved food supply. Also, social reforms and policies influenced population growth, which Malthus did not consider.

Example 2: What is the significance of the demographic dividend?

Answer: The demographic dividend provides an economic advantage when the working-age population is larger, leading to higher productivity and growth if properly utilized.

Practice Set

Easy

- Define demography.
- What is birth rate?
- What does sex ratio indicate?

Moderate

- Explain the three phases of demographic transition.
- List two reasons for rapid urbanisation in India.
- What are preventive checks according to Malthus?

Challenging

- Discuss the impact of declining sex ratio on Indian society.
- Analyze the role of literacy in population control.
- Explain the objectives and challenges of India's population policy.

Answer Key

- **Demography:** The study of population trends and processes.
- **Birth rate:** Number of live births per 1,000 population.
- **Sex ratio:** Number of females per 1,000 males.
- **Phases of demographic transition:** Low growth, rapid growth, low growth.
- **Reasons for urbanisation:** Migration, decline of rural resources.
- **Preventive checks:** Voluntary actions to reduce birth rate.
- **Declining sex ratio impact:** Gender imbalance, social issues.
- **Literacy role:** Empowers people, supports family planning.
- **Population policy objectives:** Control growth, improve health, raise awareness.

Quick Reference

- **Demography:** Study of population.
- **Malthusian Theory:** Population grows faster than food supply.
- **Demographic Transition:** Three phases of population growth.
- **Sex Ratio:** Females per 1,000 males.
- **Demographic Dividend:** Economic benefit from age structure.
- **Population Policy:** India's efforts to control population growth.

Glossary

Demography

The scientific study of population characteristics.

Birth Rate

Number of live births per 1,000 people in a year.

Death Rate

Number of deaths per 1,000 people in a year.

Sex Ratio

Number of females per 1,000 males.

Fertility Rate

Average number of children born to women aged 15-49.

Life Expectancy

Average number of years a person is expected to live.

Demographic Dividend

Economic growth potential from a favorable age structure.

Urbanisation

Increase in the proportion of people living in urban areas.

Population Policy

Government strategies to manage population growth.

Chronology of Demographic Events in India

Time Period / Year	Event / Change	Importance
Late 18th Century	Development of social statistics	Modern state began collecting population data

1798	Malthus publishes Essay on Population	Introduced theory of population growth
1921-1931	Demographic transition phase in India	Decline in death rate, birth rate remained high
1952	India announces first population policy	Started National Family Programme
1975-1976	Emergency period	Setback to family planning programme
2011	Census data shows urban population increase	Shift in rural-urban population distribution

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