



# VISION INDIA RESEARCH CENTRE

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## **A Report on POPULATION GROWTH AND ITS IMPACT ON SOCIO-ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN INDIA**

Vision India Research Centre (VIRC), a non-profit organization established under Bharti Education and Development Society (Regd.) Delhi, held a discussion on “Population Growth and Its Impact on Socio-Economic Development in India” on 1<sup>st</sup> September 2019 at the Civil Services Officers’ Institute, Vinay Marg, New Delhi. Former bureaucrats, academicians, research scholars, social activists and other intellectuals from different walks of life participated in the discussion. Dr. Dalbir Bharti, IPS (Retd) & Chairman of VIRC opened the subject, Prof. Suresh Kumar, Hony. Executive Director of VIRC and Dr Sanjay Kumar, Secretary of VIRC conducted the discussion, and former Ambassador V.B. Soni, IFS (Retd) and Advisor of VIRC, made the concluding remarks. The following things were observed during the discussion and the research that followed it:

India, the largest democratic country in the world covers 2.4% of the total land of the world and it has 16% of the total world’s population. Every year about 1.6 crores persons are added to its population. According to the United Nations Fund on Population Activities (UNFPA) the world population increases by about 78 crores every year. India contributes about one-fifth of this growth. India’s population was 348 million in 1950. According to 2011 census, it reached to 1.2 billion comprising 624 million males and 587 million females.<sup>i</sup> Out of this, a majority of the people are plagued by malnutrition, illiteracy, unemployment and social inequalities.

In 1992, the then Narasimha Rao government tabled the 79th Constitution Amendment Bill for making the two-child norm for being eligible to contest the Lok Sabha and Assembly elections. The Bill was tabled on 18 December 1992 but no discussion could be held on it. The Bill is reported to be pending ever since then.<sup>ii</sup>

Prime Minister of India, Mr. Narendra Modi, has acknowledged the importance of the issue of population explosion and its effects on socio-economic development of the nation. In his Independence Day speech on 15<sup>th</sup> August 2019, he said: “There is one

issue I want to highlight today: population explosion. We have to think, can we do justice to the aspirations of our children? There is a need to have greater discussion and awareness on population explosion," The Prime Minister also said that those who follow the policy of small family also contribute to the development of the nation and that it was also a form of patriotism<sup>iii</sup>.<sup>iv</sup> The present central government seems to have felt the need for controlling population growth as it has a bearing on delivery of public goods and services to the poor. It appears to be a priority for the central government that has been taking steps to make sure that every household gets clean cooking fuel, toilets, electricity, houses, clean drinking water and healthcare.

Population growth has a direct impact on per Capita Income. Large size of population in India and its rapid rate of growth adversely affect the growth in per capita income. The national income of India has grown at an average annual rate of 3.6 percent per annum. But the per capita income has grown around one percent because of the population growth at the rate of 2.5 percent.

Uncontrolled growth of population without creating suitable jobs in right proportion leads to increase unemployment. A huge number of children are produced every year, they are provided with educational facilities and trained as skill workers and professionals but there is equal number of jobs to accommodate them are not created. As a result a large number of youth fit for jobs remain idle. It causes frustration among the youth and some of them get deviated from the right path and start consuming drugs and other intoxicants. A few of such disgruntled people start indulging in crimes, practice of begging, prostitution and other illegal and immoral ways of living.

Growth of population means addition in the number of consumers of food-grains and other edible items. It puts pressure on agriculture sector to assign more land to produce food-grains, vegetables, etc by reducing the area for commercial agricultural products. It has a direct adverse impact on economic development and export of commercial agricultural products such as cotton.

Uncontrolled growth of population leads to poverty. More children means more divisions in the estate and more pressure on the family's agricultural land, housing and other resources. The people, who at one time had big and comfortable houses, enough agricultural land and other properties to earn income and enjoy life, become helpless and find it difficult to maintain even the ordinary life style of their families. As the children and grand children are added to the family without creating additional sources of income, their houses, agricultural land and other properties get divided and sub divided among

them. After a few generations the people who were once upon a time rich, their children and grand children loose the status of rich family and some of them even get pushed towards poverty. According to the latest Indian Human Development Survey, released on May 11, 2019, nearly half (47.9 per cent) the Indian households that have more than five children are severely deprived of shelter, water, sanitation, health and education as compared to 7.8 per cent of poor families without children.<sup>v</sup> According to the World Bank up to 24 per cent of the world's poor live in India, the fifth largest country by gross domestic product in 2017.<sup>vi</sup>

Population explosion gives rise to several social problems. It leads to migration of people from rural areas to urban areas in search of jobs and thus causes unplanned growth of undeveloped colonies and slums. Due to very less income, such people live in unhygienic and insanitary conditions which affect their health and productivity and lead to diseases. It compels the government to spend more resources for providing them basic amenities of water, sewerage, hospitals, etc., by diverting the funds from developmental activities. Overcrowding, traffic congestions, frequent accidents, unhygienic conditions in urban areas, high level of pollution in big cities, quarrelling with neighbours and conflicts on petty property matters are the results of unplanned and uncontrolled growth of population.

Keeping in view the above and the research conducted by many scholars and institutions of repute from time to time reveal that population growth has a direct impact on socio-economic development in India. Having realized the importance of the subject and the need of taking effective steps to control the rising population in India, the VIRC makes the following suggestions for the consideration of the people and the governments and administration.

## **SUGGESTIONS TO CONTROL POPULATION**

1. It should be emphasized that family planning means bearing of a child by will and not by chance. This message should be spread on a big level. Social consensus for small family norm should be promoted. The Indian experience shows that cultural interventions work better than the state intervention through laws and policies.
2. The Government and local administration should provide incentives and awards to the people for adopting and promoting family planning measures. The relevant information about various family planning methods and also the contraceptives should be made widely available to the people through different outlets in urban, semi-urban and rural areas.

3. Early marriages lead to uncontrolled population. The young couples start producing children at a very early age even if they are not able to arrange the basic requirements of food, shelter, health and education for their children. Therefore, delayed marriages should be encouraged and promoted through the socio-cultural intervention and awareness programmes.
4. Female education and employment should be encouraged. Female literacy is particularly wanting in the country as a significant proportion of the women are still illiterate. When compared with the rest of the world, the female literacy rate is considerably low in India at around 60 percent, which is 22 percentage points below the world average.
5. The laws regarding minimum age of marriage for males and female, education of children, prevention of child labour etc. should be strictly enforced and the guilty should be punished. Ignoring these laws has a direct bearing on population growth.
6. It is not advisable to adopt 'one child policy' in our country. If such policy is enforced in India, the conservative people with desire to have a son as their only child may find ways to kill female foetus in the womb or may even go to the extent of killing female child after birth. Therefore, instead of 'one child policy', two children policy' should be adopted and seriously enforced. The Government of Assam has already passed a law for enforcing 'two children policy' in the state. It has declared that no government jobs will be given to persons having more than two children after January 1, 2021. Similar laws should be passed by the Centre and other States.
7. Increase in the investment in health infrastructure to reduce infant and child mortality rate. While the present government aims to spend 2.5 % of the GDP on health, the current expenditure on health is only 1.28%. The Government should give more attention on the development of health infrastructure and make it a national priority.
8. Effective steps should be taken to ensure security of women so that they do not hesitate to go out for studying and working. Once there is a feeling that a girl can move freely without any fear and can develop herself as an independent person, the people who have daughter or daughters will not desire to have a son for their protection.

9. The major cause of uncontrolled population growth is the desire to have son or sons and therefore gender equality should be given top priority in family planning measures. The judgement of the Supreme Court of India, announced on 17<sup>th</sup> February 2020, allowing permanent commission and equal promotions to women in the Military is a welcome development. More and more such steps should be taken to boost the morale of girls which in turn will discourage the parents from wanting male child. This will help reducing population in a big way.
10. After the aggressive family planning measures during the national emergency in 1975 to 1977, the political parties seemed to be hesitant of taking drastic steps to reduce and control population. As a result, no drastic steps were taken during the last 40 years in this regard. Maintaining such an attitude and ignoring the responsibility of controlling rising population may have serious consequences as the uncontrolled and undesired population growth has an adverse impact on the socio-economic development in India. Therefore, all possible efforts and effective steps should be taken by the Central Government and the State Governments to reduce and control population growth.

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## NOTES AND REFERENCES

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vi *Ibid.*

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