

# Population Growth and Its Impact on Indian Economy

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**ABSTRACT** -The present paper examined the relationship of population to the environment and with growing population, poverty and urbanization the environment is degrading. The study reveals that the country's population growth is imposing an increasing burden on the country's limited and continually degrading natural resource base. The natural resources are under increasing strain, even though the majority of people survive at subsistence level. Population pressure on arable land contributes to the land degradation. The increasing population numbers and growing affluence have already resulted in rapid growth of energy production and consumption in India. The environmental effects like ground water and surface water contamination; air pollution and global warming are of growing concern owing to increasing consumption levels. The paper concludes with some policy reflections, the policy aimed at overall development should

certainly include efforts to control population and environmental pollution.

**KEYWORDS**-Population growth, Pollution, Unemployment, Poverty

**INTRODUCTION** -The rapid population growth and economic development in country are degrading the environment through the uncontrolled growth of urbanization and industrialization, expansion and intensification of agriculture, and the destruction of natural habitats. One of the major causes of environmental degradation in India could be attributed to rapid growth of population, which is adversely affecting the natural resources and environment. The growing population and the environmental deterioration face the challenge of sustained development without environmental damage. The existence or the absence of favorable natural resources can facilitate or retard the process of economic development. The growing trends of population and

consequent demand for food, energy, and housing have considerably altered land-use practices and severely degraded India's forest vis-à-vis environment also. The growing population put immense pressure on land extensification at cost of forests and grazing lands because the demand of food could not increase substantially to population. Thus, horizontal extension of land has fewer scopes and relies mostly on vertical improvement that is supported by technical development in the field of agriculture i.e. HYV seeds, Fertilizers, Pesticides, Herbicides, and agricultural implements. All these practices causing degradation and depletion of environment with multiplying ratio.

### **POPULATION GROWTH IN INDIA**

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### **EFFECTS OF POPULATION GROWTH ON ENVIRONMENT**

**1. POVERTY**-Poverty is said to be both cause and effect of environment degradation. Poorer people, who cannot meet their subsistence needs through purchase, are forced to use common property resources such as forests for food and fuel, pastures for fodder, and ponds and rivers for water. It also contributes to environmental degradation through over exploitation of natural resources like land, air and water. Population pressure driven overexploitation of the surface and underground water resources by the poor has resulted into contamination and exhaustion of the water resources. Urban population is also using rivers to dispose of untreated sewage and industrial effluent. The result is that health of those dependents on untreated water resources is increasing at risk.

**2. PRESSURE ON LAND** -India faces the most acute pressure on agricultural land. Today every million hectares of land supports 7.27 million people. Forty three percent of the land is under cultivation, one of the highest in the world. A change in land utilization pattern implies an increase or decrease in the proportion of area under different land uses at a point in two or more time periods.

**3. LAND/SOIL DEGRADATION** -Direct impacts of agricultural development on the environment arise from farming activities, which contribute to soil erosion, land salination and loss of nutrients. The spread of green revolution has been accompanied by over exploitation of land and water resources and use of fertilizers and pesticides have increased many folds. Shifting cultivation has also been an important cause of land degradation. Leaching from extensive use of pesticides and fertilizers is an important source of contamination of water bodies.

**4. FOREST RESOURCES** -With less than 2 percent of the world's total forest area, the country supports 18 percent of its population. The total area under forests was 675.54 thousand square kilometers in 2001,

which was 21 percent of the total geographical area, as against the National Forest Policy 1988 stipulation of a target of 33 percent. Even within this recorded area, only 416.81 thousand square kilometers, or only 12.68 percent of country's total land area, comprises dense forest with a crown density of more than 40 percent, thus reflecting a qualitative decline of forests in the country.

#### **5. DECLINING PER CAPITA FOREST LAND AND AGRICULTURAL LAND -**

The population growth has resulted in a downward trend in per capita availability of forest and agricultural land since the 1950s. Per capita availability of forests in India is much lower than the world average.

#### **6. CHANGING CONSUMPTION PATTERNS-**

The economic and industrial development is inevitably accompanied by changing patterns of consumption. The number of registered motor vehicles in India provides one useful indicator of expanding consumption and economic growth. The increasing vehicles in country, producing more air pollution, fuel consumption, traffic jams and demands for road construction- often at the cost of agricultural land.

**7. RISING DEMAND FOR ENERGY-** The environmental effects due to increasing consumption levels of fuels like coal; lignite, oil and nuclear etc. are of growing concern to various researchers. The combustion of these fuels in industries has been a major source of pollution. Coal production through open cast mining; its supply to and consumption in power stations and industrial boilers leads to particulate and gaseous pollution, which can cause pneumoconiosis, bronchitis and respiratory diseases.

**8. PROBLEM OF INVESTMENT REQUIREMENT-** Indian population is growing at a rate of 1.8 percent per annum. In order to achieve a given rate of increase in per capita income, larger investment is needed. This adversely affects the growth rate of the economy. In India, annual growth rate of population is 1.8 percent and capital output ratio is 4:1. It means that in order to stabilize the existing economic growth rate  $(4 \times 1.8) = 7.2$  percent of national income must be invested.

**9. PROBLEM OF CAPITAL FORMATION-** Composition of population in India hampers the increase in capital formation. High birth rate and low

expectancy of life means large number of dependents in the total population. In India 35 percent of population is composed of persons less than 14 years of age. Most of these people depend on others for subsistence. They are unproductive consumers. The burden of dependents reduces the capacity of the people to save. So the rate of capital formation falls.

**10. EFFECT ON PER CAPITA INCOME-** Large size of population in India and its rapid rate of growth results into low per capita availability of capital. From 1950-51 to 1980-81. India's national income grew at an average annual rate of 3.6 percent per annum. But per capita income had risen around one percent. It is due the fact that population growth has increased by 2.5 percent.

**11. EFFECT ON FOOD PROBLEM-** Rapid rate of growth of population has been the root cause of food problem.

**Shortage of food grains hampers economic development in two ways:**

(a) People do not get sufficient quantity of food due low availability of food which affects their health and productivity. Low productivity causes low per capita income and thus poverty.

(b) Shortage of food-grains obliges the under-developed countries to import food grains from abroad. So a large part of foreign exchange is spent on it. So development work suffers. So rise in population causes food problem.

#### **12. PROBLEM OF UNEMPLOYMENT-**

Large size of population results in large army of labour force. But due to shortage of capital resources it becomes difficult to provide gainful employment to the entire working population. Disguised unemployment in rural areas and open unemployment in urban areas are the normal features of an under developed country like India.

**13. LOW STANDARD OF LIVING-**Rapid growth of population accounts for low standard of living in India. Even the bare necessities of life are not available adequately. According to Dr. Chander Shekhar population in India increases by about 1.60 crore. It requires 121 lakh tonnes of food grains, 1.9 lakh metres of cloth and 2.6 lakh houses and 52 lakh additional jobs.

**14. BURDEN OF UNPRODUCTIVE CONSUMERS-** In India, a large number of children are dependent. Old persons above the age of 60 and many more in the age

group of 15-59 do not find employment. In 2001, working population was 39.2 percent while 60.8 percent are unproductive workers. This high degree of dependency is due to high rate of dependent children. This dependency adversely affects effective saving.

#### **15. POPULATION AND SOCIAL PROBLEMS-**

Population explosion gives rise to a number of social problems. It leads to migration of people from rural areas to the urban areas causing the growth of slum areas. People live in most unhygienic and insanitary conditions. Unemployment and poverty lead to frustration and anger among the educated youth. This leads to robbery, beggary, prostitution and murder etc. The terrorist activities that we find today in various parts of the country are the reflection of frustration among educated unemployed youth. Overcrowding, traffic congestions, frequent accidents and pollution in big cities are the direct result of over-population.

**16. MORE PRESSURE ON LAND-**Rising rate of population growth exerts pressure on land. On the one hand, per capita availability of land goes on diminishing and on the other, the problem of sub-division and fragmentation of holdings goes on

increasing. It adversely affects the economic development of the country.

**17. IMPACT ON MATERNITY WELFARE-** In India, population explosion is the result of high birth rate. High birth rate reduces health and welfare of women. Frequent pregnancy without having a gap is hazardous to the health of the mother and the child. This leads to high death rate among women in the reproductive age due to early marriage. Hence to improve the welfare and status of women in our society, we have to reduce the birth rate.

**18. PRESSURE ON ENVIRONMENT-** Population explosion leads to environmental degradation. Higher birth rate brings more pollution, more toxic wastes and damage to biosphere. Briefly speaking, population explosion hinders the economic development. It should be controlled effectively.

**CONCLUSION-** The outcomes of high population growth rates are increasing number of people below poverty line, an increasing population density, and pressure on natural resources. The study reveals that the country's population growth and poverty is imposing an increasing burden on the country's limited and continually degrading natural resource base. The natural resources

are under increasing strain, even though the majority of people survive at subsistence level. It will be increasingly difficult to satisfy the basic needs of a growing population even at present levels of consumption, and the situation will deteriorate progressively as the per capita consumption of resources increases. Population pressure on arable land contributes to the land degradation, thus affecting the productive resource base of the economy. The increasing population numbers and growing affluence have already resulted in rapid growth of energy production and consumption in India and this trend can only be expected to accelerate in the future. The environmental effects like air pollution and global warming are of growing concern owing to increasing consumption levels. However, environmental pollution not only leads to deteriorating environmental conditions but also have adverse effects on the sustainable development and health of people. The considerable amount of both ground water and surface water contamination due to chemical fertilizers and insecticides in the country leads to various water borne diseases. The growth of population is a fundamental factor in its relationship to

natural resources, environment and technology. To sum up, there is an urgent need to control population and poverty, conserve and protect natural resources and the environment for healthy human beings.

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