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ANALYTICAL STUDY ON POLICIES OF POPULATION CONTROL IN INDIA

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Analytical Study on Policies of Population Control in India

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Abstract – Population growth has long been a concern of the government, and India has a lengthy history of explicit population policy. In the 1950s, the government began, in a modest way, one of the earliest national, government-sponsored family planning efforts in the developing world. The annual population growth rate in the previous decade (1941 to 1951) had been below 1.3 percent, and government planners optimistically believed that the population would continue to grow at roughly the same rate.

Implicitly, the government believed that India could repeat the experience of the developed nations where industrialization and a rise in the standard of living had been accompanied by a drop in the population growth rate. This paper discussed the policies of population and its control in Indian context.

Keywords: Policy, Government, Population, Literacy

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INTRODUCTION

The Registrar-General of India recently disclosed the population figures that should frighten us all. By 2016, less than 20 years from now, the population will be 1.26 billion making India the most populous country. If the mass literacy program go on at the present dismal pace, half the population will be illiterate and more than 380 million unemployed. To quote Tavleen singh, columnist, "our Country will be reduced to the metaphorical equivalent of a garbage heap crawling with millions of illiterate undernourished, people."

Should we not be demanding a special ministry for population control and a separate education ministry taken away from the amalgam of Human Resource Development? Should not these two Ministries be given the same importance as Defense or External Affairs?

The population and literacy problems are restricted to – Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh. While Andhra Pradesh, Kerala and Tamil Nadu have already achieved the target birth rate or 21 per 1,000 the four States will take between 50 and 100 years to achieve it; Bihar in 2039, Rajasthan in 2048, Madhya Pradesh in 2060 and Uttar Pradesh in 2100 [4 -10].

REVIEW OF LITERATURES:

The population of a country is both an asset and liability. And hence, its place in the economic

development is significant. The empirical evidence of various countries has shown that the population growth of a region and its economic development are closely related [11-12].

India has been a victim of population growth. Although the country has achieved progress in the economic field, the population growth has eroded the growth potential. The population nearly quadrupled in 90 years, from 238.3 million in 1901 to 840 million in 1991 [16].

The need to check the population growth was realized by a section of the intellectual elite even before independence. Birth control was accepted by this group but implementation was restricted to the Westernized minority in the cities. When the country attained independence and planning was launched, population control became one of the important items on the agenda of development. The draft outline of the First Five Year Plan said, "The increasing pressure of population on natural resources retards economic progress and limits seriously the rate of extension of social services, so essential to civilized existence. A population policy is therefore essential to planning." This policy emphasized three components: fertility, mortality and migration. The policy incorporates programs for reducing mortality. Even for migration, we have policies. But it is the fertility change which contributes to a spectacular population change [1] [16].

The First Five Year Plan also emphasized the reduction in fertility and gave it the top slot in the

Family Planning program. India, in fact was one of the earliest countries to implement a full-fledged family planning program launched by the state. The planning commission called for all steps to promote family planning [3]. It was acknowledged that progress depended on creating a sufficiently strong motivation in favor of family planning in the minds of the people and on providing advice and service through acceptable, efficient, harmless and economic methods. With this end in view, the plan set out these objectives [16].

- To obtain an accurate picture of the factors which contribute to a rapid increase of population;
- To gain a fuller understanding of human fertility and the means of regulating it;
- To devise speedy ways of education of the public; and
- To make family planning counseling an integral part of the services in hospitals and health centers.

In order to achieve these objectives, Rs 15 lakhs was earmarked in the plan and a Research and Program Committee appointed [16].

The committee comprised two sub-committees, one on socio-economics and cultural studies and the other on biological and qualitative aspects of population. As many as 126 urban and 21 rural family planning clinics were set up [2].

The Second Five Year Plan gave an even more prominent place to population assessment. A national program launched had four main components:

- Education to create the background of contraceptive acceptance;
- Service through rural and urban centers, including the provision of sterilization facilities;
- Training of personnel; and
- Research.

The Third, Fourth and Fifth plans also laid emphasis on the population policy and its implementation through family planning. The expenditure on population control in the Second Plan was Rs. 2.16 crores, in the Third Rs.284 crores and rose to Rs.497 crores in the Fifth [16].

By family planning, we mean Planned Parenthood which is nothing but a conscious limitation or spacing of children within the economic limits of the family in order to create happy homes. The program seeks to promote responsible parenthood, with a two-child

norm, through an independent choice of the family planning method best suited to the acceptor.

The important aspects of the program are:

First, it is voluntary. It is promoted as a people's movement in keeping with the democratic traditions of the country. The people should be persuaded and not compelled to adopt the small family norm.

Secondly, in course of time, Family planning became Family Welfare.

Thirdly, various methods of birth control have been advocated by the Government. Mention may be made of sterilization, IUCD, conventional contraceptive, of which Nirodh formed a major part. Free facilities are made available in all health centers.

Fourthly, financial incentives are given for accepting Family planning. These include cash given to the acceptors and an advance increment to government employees.

Fifthly, medical personnel and public health workers have been specifically trained.

The total number of acceptors increased from 7,153 in 1956 to 1, 68, and 30,000. A similar trend can be seen in the case of sterilization, IUCD and CC users. The targets were also achieved during the Eighties. Thus, the family planning program has done a good job of controlling the population growth. Over 58 million couples [41.9 per cent of those in the reproductive age group 15-44] were protected against conception as on March 31, 1989. Consequently the number of deaths averted has been on the increase [16].

The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act was passed in 1972 on the basis of the recommendations made by the B.Shantilal Shah committee. An event of great significance is the declaration by the United Nations of 1974 as the World Population Year and the United Nations World Population Conference at Bucharest, Romania. The major theme that emerged from the Bucharest meeting was that population policy and program must be pursued in the context of development and that population growth and development were integrated. This idea was reflected in the National Population Policy of India [1976], whose important components were:

1. The Government proposed legislation to rise the minimum age of marriage. The child marriage Restraint Act 1921, [popularly known as the Sharda Act] prescribed 15 as the minimum age for girls and 18 for boys. This Act was amended and the age of marriage was raised to 18 and 21. The policy provided that if this provision was violated, severe punishment would be awarded by an officer not below the rank of sub-divisional magistrate. The question of making the

registration of marriages compulsory was also considered.

2. Sterilization was compulsory but it was left to the States to have their own legislation. The upper limit of a family was three children, applicable to all citizens without distinction of caste, creed or religion.
3. Family planning had a political impact also. A fall in population reduced the number of seats in parliament. This affected the interests of the States, which were not keen to implement the program. The population policy stipulated that the representation in the Lok Sabha be frozen on the basis of the 1971 population till 2001. This meant that the census of 1981 and 1991 would not be considered for the adjustment of the Lok Sabha seats. Constitutional amendments were made for this purpose.
4. Central Government assistance to the States was linked to the population of 1971 for the next 25 years. This inspired the State Governments to effectively implement family planning programmes. According to the formula, 60 percent of the plan assistance was given on the basis of the population of 1971. Eight percent of the Central assistance was specifically set aside for performance in family planning.
5. The monetary compensation for sterilization was raised to Rs. 150 if performed after two children, Rs.100 after three children and Rs.70 after four or more.
6. The Government announced special measures to raise the level of the women's education in all States.
7. Group incentives to medical practitioners, teachers at various levels, co-operative societies and zilla and panchayat samithis were proposed. In order to rope in voluntary agencies, a rebate was given in income tax for amounts donated for family planning to the local bodies or any registered voluntary organization approved for this purpose. The population policy sought to make necessary changes in the service and conduct rules of Central Government employees to make them adopt the small family norm.

The sixth plan which incorporated all these features said the population policy should reflect concern for the individual as well as the community's dignity, needs and aspirations and should be such as would deal with overall development issues and not merely

population control. High priority was given to progress involving social restructuring [16].

Another significant [land] mark is the report of the Planning Commission Working Group on the population policy in 1980. The group laid down a long-term goal of a Net Reproductive Rate [NRR] of one on an average for the whole country by 1996 and in all States by 2001. The group suggested these strategies: (1) Developing the necessary level of demand and (2) Provisions of the supply of services of all kinds needed by the people. The group identified that health care, education, water supply, employment, per capita income, and urbanization be linked to fertility control. It also highlighted the need for the creation of an extensive data base and a comprehensive health information system [16].

The Government reviewed the policy and laid down these guidelines for future implementation.

- Adoption of the 'small family norm' would continue to be promoted entirely on a voluntary basis.
- Intensified efforts would be made to spread awareness and information of this concept by effective and imaginative use of multimedia and interpersonal communication strategies.
- Couples could choose whatever method was suitable to them.
- Services would be extended as close to the doorstep as possible.
- The program would continue to be an integral part of health care and socio-economic development efforts.
- Facilities and efforts for rapid increase in female literacy would be intensified and expanded.
- Population education would be extended to all youth-both students and non-students. It would be introduced in all the workers' education curriculum and training program conducted by Government agencies\department and by the organized sector.
- Elected representatives at all levels would be closely associated with the program and given all encouragement and support.
- Link with the Ministers and departments would be strengthened.

- Laws relating to the minimum age at marriage would be effectively enforced.
- Maintenance of records of all marriages at the village or community level would be under taken.
- Since there are differences in situations and achievements among the various States and areas, a selective "area-specific" approach would be followed with special attention to West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Madhya Pradesh.
- Close monitoring and follow-up would be ensured at all levels. Steps would be taken in consultation with the State Governments, to tune up the administrative machinery and improve motivation and accountability of staff at the field level [16].

The concern of the Government to control population growth deserves appreciation. Its concerted efforts were responsible for reducing the population growth to some extent. Perhaps, the population of today would have exceeded that of China. The Government has created the infrastructure for family planning and set up institutions for training and research. Thanks to its efforts, the whole country today is aware of family planning. There has been an appreciable fall in the birth rate also. The new National Population Policy of 1976 is a comprehensive statement and it integrates all the essential aspects of population growth. As J.R.Rele and Asha Bhende observed, "it was probably for the first time that any country in the World has made a population policy statement which was fairly comprehensive [13-14, 16]."

National Population Policy of India - It was long before procuring our Independence even that several discussion benches saw the onset of population policy. Much before Independence; in the year 1938 only a Sub Committee on population was set up by the National Planning Committee appointed by the Interim Government. The National Planning Committee passed a resolution in 1940 that stated the need for the state to adopt family planning and welfare policies in order to bring about a harmonious order of social economy. The resolution also stressed the need of limitation of children [17].

April, 1951 recorded further enhancements in this policy formulation as the First Five Year Plan labeled for an overt population policy and adjudged family planning as a pragmatic and essential step towards improvement in health of mothers and children. It was because in the plan, family planning was treated as a part of the health program and received a 100% funding from the centre government. And with each passing year, the amount of these funds has increased. The success of this family planning agenda was so dear to the heart of the government that even a separate department coined as Department of Family

Planning was carved out in the Ministry of Health in the year 1966. This was done with an objective to reinforce the population control program.

This National Population Policy was further modified and re announced in 1977. In this new policy, what was reinforced was education and health. The latter component of the reformulated policy included the general as well as maternal and child health both. A voluntary family planning was also introduced here on. This also saw the change of the phrase from Family Planning to Family Welfare program that is maintained till date [17].

CONCLUSION:

The shift in the policy towards an integrated approach is also appreciable. The dramatic solutions offered by the new policy are in the right direction. The policy has evoked the support of intellectuals, demographers and politicians all over the country. However, the policy has slipped somewhere. Its impact on the ultimate objective of reducing the birth rate has been rather insignificant which only shows the limited effect of the family planning program. The program has not received whole-hearted community support and participation. Poverty and illiteracy have neutralized the measures of the Government. The eluding issues have not been taken up for research.

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3. The earlier population policy statements presented to Parliament in 1976 and 1977 were not really discussed and adopted by Parliament. In a sense, this is a narrow technical interpretation. The adoption and implementation of a family planning/welfare program since 1952 or at least since 1966 cannot be said to be without a policy. As mentioned before, programs usually follow the adoption of policies. However, the recent national population policy, to be approved by the NDC and the Parliament, is seen as a means to strengthen the family welfare program by evolving a broad political consensus.

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