

## Role of Population Education in India's Transition from Population Explosion to Stabilization

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### Abstract

*India has now entered a late expanding stage of demographic transition and gradually moving towards the stabilization stage. Population education must play a crucial role in this transitional phase. Population education in India and the world emerged in the response to population explosion. The objectives of population education, in that period, were to develop awareness about the rapidly increasing population and its economic, social, cultural, and environmental effects at micro and macro levels. The annual population growth rate in India has reduced to 0.6 % and the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) has come down to 2.0 which is below the replacement level of 2.1. Thus, population education should focus on the demographic changes now taking place in India. Some of them are decreasing the TFR to 2.0 and within a decade it is expected to come down to 1.3. The aging population is another issue that population education must focus on. The mean age at marriage in India is increasing for males it has reached 24.8 and for females 19.2 years. The desire to have children is rapidly decreasing in India now 22.7% of women and 31.6% of men who have one living child don't want any more children. A single child is another alarming issue of demographic changes. Now is the right time for India to become rich by reaping the benefits of the demographic dividend. The pace of urbanization in India is very slow only 35.4% population is residing in urban areas. Women's inclusion in economic activities in India is very poor as per the World Economic Forum Gender gap report 2021 India ranked 140 among 156 countries. There is a need to increase and enrolment rate in higher education which is presently 26.3 need to be raised up to 50% by 2035. Keeping in view all the above-mentioned demographic changes population education needs to be restructured and reorganized as per the needs of the present Indian context.*

**Keywords:** Population Education, Total Fertility Rate (TFR), Aging Population, Demographic Dividend, Urbanization, Economic Inclusion of Women

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### Introduction

As per the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs Policy, brief No 153, (2023) in April 2023 India's population is expected to reach 1,425,775,850 people, matching, and then surpassing the population of mainland China. It is an alarming report for India, but this news needs to be analysed from a different perspective. Blacker (1947) has identified five phases of demographic transition namely high stationery, early expanding, late

expanding, low stationery, and declining phase. India has now entered the late expanding phase. In this phase, both anti-natalist and anti-mortality policies are contributing to bringing down the death rates to low and birth rates to very low levels. The birth rates are now low but still more than the death rates. Therefore, the population is increasing at a slow pace in India. The country will enter the population stabilization phase within one or two decades. As per Population Reference Bureau World Population Data Sheet (2022) Indian population is increasing by 1% per annum a 150 percent decline in growth rate has been recorded in the last four decades. Population education emerged in response to the population explosion in Europe and America in the middle of the 20th century. Elva Myrdal (1941) first advocated the need of studying population in education. Hauser (1962) first coined the term population education. Objectives of population education in Europe and America were focused on controlling the population explosion. In 1798 and 1803 Thomas Robert Malthus published two articles and propounded the Malthusian Theory of Population. This theory was criticized widely but his thoughts were haunting the minds of educationists, economists, and policymakers. They were afraid of the consequences of the population explosion. Therefore, at that time population education aimed at improving the quality of life by curbing the Rapid population growth. After independence, especially from 1961 to 1991 India also witnessed a population explosion. Therefore, population education became a key issue at the time. Various seminars, workshops, and conferences were organized in India during this period such as National Seminar on Population Education, Mumbai (1969), National Workshop on Population Education for Teachers, Allahabad (1973), Four Regional Workshops Cum Seminars (1979), National Population Education Project (1980) were the significant efforts made in population education in India. NCERT played a lead role in the institutionalization of population education in India. In 1976 the first time National Population Policy was formulated and adopted by the Indian Parliament on 16<sup>th</sup> April 1976. In 1977 the National Policy on Family Welfare was announced by the Government of India. On February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2000, National Population Policy was accepted by the Central Cabinet of Ministers, and the National Population Commission was constituted under the Chairmanship of the then Prime Minister Shri Atal Bihari Vajpayee. All these developments took place due to high population growth in India during the second half of the 20th century.

The aims and objectives of population education, as specified by NCERT (1971) and the then population educators were focusing on developing awareness about the rapidly growing population and its relationship with economic, social, educational, environmental,

health, and family welfare aspects of the population. India, like other developing countries, has gone through various quantitative and qualitative demographic changes like size, distribution, and composition of the population and socio-economic development etc. Objectives of population education are changeable according to the social, economic, and demographic conditions and cultural background of the country. They differ from country to country, culture to culture, economy to economy, and time to time, but the aim of population education is to improve the quality of life (Chandel and Nand, 2011). India has witnessed a sharp decline in population growth rate in the recent past.

Below given are UNO projections of Indian population growth.

**Table 1**

*Projected Population and Annual Growth Rate of India as per United Nations projections (2022)*

Year	Size of Population	Increase from Last Year
2023 (April)*	1,425,775,850	0.61%
2022	1,417,173,173	0.68%
2021	1,407,563,842	0.80%
2020	1,396,387,127	0.96 %
2019	1,383,112,050	1.03%

\*As per the United Nations Department of Economics and Social Affairs Policy, Brief No 153, (2023)

Statistics about the Indian population reveal that India is now moving slowly towards the stabilization of its population. The TFR of India is 2.00 which is below the replacement level (2.1). India is now not able to replace its population, and this will lead to many challenges which India has to face in the future. So, population education now must play a different role in this transitional period. So that the consequences of present demographic changes may be minimized. Following are some aspects on which population education should focus to develop the desired attitude and behavioural changes among masses in general and young minds in specific.

**1. Decreasing Total Fertility Rate (TFR):** TFR in India is decreasing sharply and the present TFR. As per NFHS (2019-20) it is 2.0 which is 0.3 points lesser than that of TFR in 2015. If the same trend continues India's TFR will decline by 0.6 to 0.7 points in the next 10 years and will enter in the lowest low category of TFR. Increasing TFR is more challenging than decreasing, it. Most of the developed countries of the world failed to increase it resulting in their increased dependency on migrated population. Now population education should develop awareness about the decreasing TFR and its social, economic, cultural, and political consequences.

**2. Ageing Population:** Aging population is another major challenge before India. The aging population is mainly caused by anti-motility factors. According to SRS 2020 8.1% of the Indian population is aged 60+ whereas as per Census 1991, it was 6.8%. Though the rate of increase in percentage is very less, it is going to be a big issue in the future due to changes in the family institution. Now old parents are not being taken care of by their children and grandchildren Therefore one should have a proper plan for his or her graceful aging. Population education must develop awareness about the aging population.

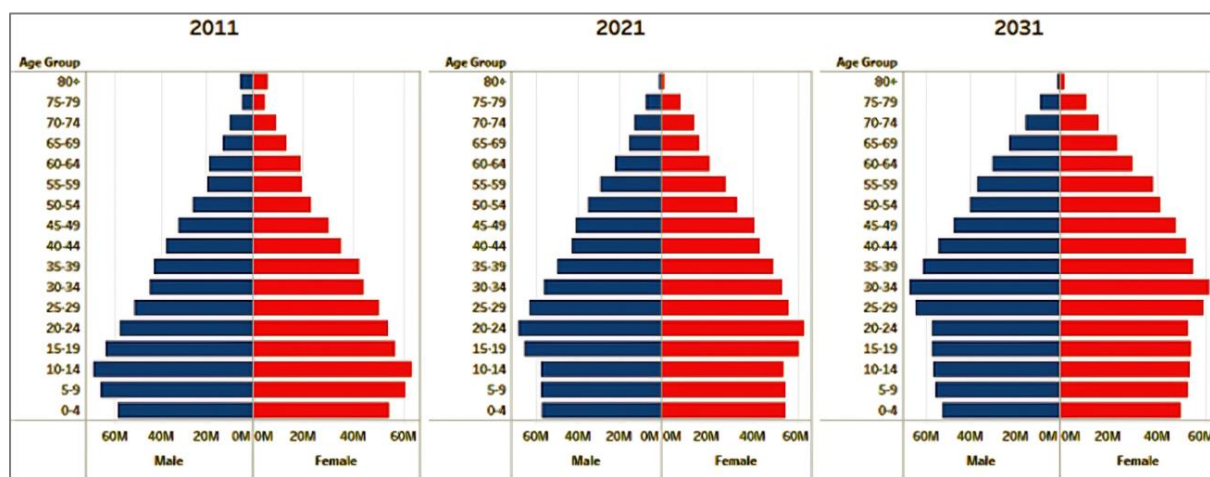
**3. Mean Age at Marriage:** Mean age at marriage in India as per the 5th National Family Health Survey (2019-20) for men has reached 24.8 years and for women it is 19.2. The mean age at marriage for men has reached a point above which will have adverse effects on fertility rate. The mean age at marriage for women is still far lower than that of men. Social, economic, legal, and educational empowerment of women will help in increasing their mean age at marriage.

**4. Desire to Have Children:** A trend of having zero or single children is increasing among the young population. It is extremely alarming that 4.7% of women and 36.3% of men among those who have no children want to have no more children. 22.7 percent of women and 31.6 of men who have one living child want no more children (National Family Health Survey 2019 -21) this data is a big challenge in the way of maintaining the TFR at replacement level. In the future, this will result in reducing fertility rates to the lowest level. On average, if men and women aged 15 and 49 were given a chance to choose family size, they would both want to have 2.1 children. Population education must include the consequences of no desire to have children in the curriculum so that men and women of reproductive age develop a desire to have children.

**5. Demographic Dividend:** Observation of Population Pyramids of the Indian population from 2011 to 2031 (Shivkumar, 2017) reveals that the base of the population pyramid is narrowing down, and the demographic peak is shifting toward the age group of 15 to 34 years. This shows that the Indian population is running in the phase of demographic dividend. The percentage of the working population 15 to 64 years is highest at present and will remain high till 2031. This is the right time for India to become rich. India can reap demographic dividend only by improving the quality of human resources and investing in human capital. Investing in education and skilling of human resources will help us in reaping the benefits of demographic dividend.

**Figure 1**

*Population Pyramid of India 2011, 2021 and 2031 (Shivkumar, 2017)*



**6. Only Child will be a Lonely Adult:** Indians' bonding with their families and relatives and the joint family system is universally appreciated. This will be continued only when one has relatives and family. If there is only one child then he or she will not have brothers and sisters and when this child will become a parent and he/she also have only one child then this child will not have brother, sister, *chacha*, *tau*, *bu*, *mama*, *mausi* etc. He or she will have only a maximum of parents, or grandparents as his/ her relatives. When these children become adults and get married, they will have the responsibility of two parents of his/ her own and two of his/her spouses. They will have their own children and may also have some grandparents as their dependents. How will this III generation of the only child will be able to take care of these long lists of old and young dependents? Thus, population education must include this type of problem in its curriculum.

**7. Availability of Work Force and Taxpayers:** The discussion done in point five above about only children will lead to the problem of availability of workforce and taxpayers. When these single children become adults and join the working population group, they will have parents and their own children as their dependents. Simply low fertility will lead to a low supply of workforce and a lesser percentage of the working population in taxpayers. As per the World Population data sheet of the population reference Bureau (2022), 20% of the population of the developed world is aged 65 or above. 7% of the Indian population is aged 65 plus and 25% of the Indian population is below 15 years of age.

**8. Slow Pace of Urbanisation:** Below given is some data on urbanization in India .

**Table 2**

*Urban population in India in Percentage Urban*

Year	1961	1971	1981	1991	2001	2011	2021
Urban population	17.97	19.91	23.34	25.72	27.86	31.1	35.4
In Percentage Urban							

Source; For data from 1961 to 2011 Census of India and for 2021 World Population Data Sheet, (2022), Population Reference Bureau, Washington, DC.

As evident from Table 2 India is urbanizing at a slow pace. In 1961 17.9% of the population was urbanized and in 2021 only 35.4% of the population was urban. This shows that urbanization in India is increasing at a very slow pace. Still, 2 out of 3 Indians are living in villages. The pace of urbanization needs to be accelerated as there are so many benefits of urbanization. India is targeting to become a developed country by 2047, urbanization is the basic requirement to become a developed country as urbanization provides basic amenities like entertainment, health, communication, transportation, and other infrastructure required for development.

**8. Economic Inclusion of Women:** In the World Economic Forum Gender Gap Report, 2021 India was ranked 140 out of 150 countries. A study by Mach Kingsley Global Institute, 2017 reveals that if women's participation in economic activities comes at par with men the GDP of the country would increase by 60% by 2025. According to the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) 2020, only 18.6% of working-age women in India are participating in the labour force. This is three times lower than men. Low women participation in the labour

force in India is alarmingly low. It has decreased in India. No country can become a developed country without the active participation of women. Therefore, population education must develop awareness among men and women about gender equity and the economic inclusion of women.

**9. Increasing Gross Enrolment Rate:** National Education Policy (2020) aims at increasing the gross enrolment rate in higher education from 26.3% in 2018 to 50% by 2035. Higher education plays an extremely important role in promoting the social and economic well-being of people. As per OECD (2018), the top 10 countries whose residents aged 25 to 64 years who have completed some form of tertiary education for two years or 4 years of degree or vocational programmes are Canada 56.2%, Japan 50.5%, Israel 49.9%, South Korea 46.8%, United Kingdom 45.9% USA 45.6% Australia 43.7 Finland 43.6% Norway 43.0% and Luxembourg 42.8%. Data shows that all these countries are developed. If India aims to become a developed country by 2047 the Gross Enrolment Rate at higher education should reach up to 50% by that time. So, population education must develop a strong desire to have higher education among the young population.

**10. Restructuring and Reorganising Population Education:** The curriculum and objectives of population education, presently, in India lay emphasis on curbing the population explosion, reducing the birth rate, consequences of growing population on social economic development, education, health, environment, quality of life, the standard of living, etc. Now population education curriculum and objectives need to be restructured and reorganized. Now population education should include the topics like the decline in TFR, the aging population, marriage, the desire of having children, change in the demography, age and sex composition, the pace of urbanization, etc.

All discussions in this paper lead to the conclusion that population educators should not be afraid of population explosion and its consequences on mankind but think beyond the mere statistics of the growing size of the population. Young men and women must be aware of the long-term consequences of demographic changes taking place in the recent past. India must learn from the experiences of the developed world and should prepare itself to face and overcome the challenges caused by the demographic transition of India from population explosion to population stabilization.

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