

Overpopulation in India with Special Reference to Two Child Policy

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Abstract: The aim is to shed light on overpopulation issue of India and examine whether 2 Child policy will help or not. First, the crucial demographic conditions and where India stands by numbers is demonstrated. Then it strives to illuminate that growth rate of India is not the factor of its overpopulation rather India started with an unequal base. China's One Child and 2 Child Policy are discussed in detail to find loopholes. Religion is also lugged into the picture in India but consequently it is shown that, it is not a matter of religion rather region. Causes which are the substantive reason behind overpopulation are examined as they are often overlooked altogether. Countries with Underpopulation are scrutinized, as a result of which we get inputs on how to control our population. There after, it is presented that why every time overpopulation control policy fails miserably, deriving from that it is examined that 2 child policy will be no different rather it will be worse off. Consequently, some solutions to the problem are suggested. Government is looked from a critical lens as the government can easily bring in positive solutions but then why does it choose to waste money on unnecessary policies which do more harm than good. Therefore, this study attempts to answer many such questions.

Keywords: Overpopulation, Two Child Policy, Underpopulation, Government, Religion

1. Introduction

Overpopulation is the elephant in the room that no one wants to talk about and in India, overpopulation is not a recent phenomenon. Before going into the topic it shall be interesting to define the term 'Overpopulation' a term, that has been the root cause of so many problems in India since times immemorial. At first instance we may restrict the utilization of the word 'overpopulation' because of its regular exchangeable attribution. The dictionary meaning of the term is "a country or city, etc that has too many people for the amount of food, materials, and space available there [1]. Having more people than the available resources available creates problem of unemployment which in turn results in poverty and poverty in turn results in backwardness.

As we know China is the world's most populous country followed by India. China has been the world's most populous country for a long time: back in 1750, it had a population of 225 million, around 28% of the world population. By 2016, China had a population of 1.4 billion. But China is soon to be overtaken by India. The projections – made by the UN's

Population Division – suggest that by 2024, India will surpass China to become the world's most populous country [2]. Earlier it was predicted that India is likely to overtake China and become world's most populous country by 2028 but the rate at which India's population is growing this is likely to happen 4 years early and this is not a good thing.

2. Historical Background

Whenever there is any discussion regarding overpopulation we tend to think that it is because the Population growth rate of India is more so that is the reason why population of India is growing at such a fast pace. But it is not the truth as the Growth rate of India is 1.14% and stands at 92 rank in the world whereas that of Syria is 7.37% which is highest in the world [3]. So, it is very much clear that growth rate is not the ultimate reason behind over population because if we go by growth rate then Syria would have been the world's most populous country and not China and India.

In old days the kingdom of Kalinga had a very dense

population and on the other hand, Col. Tod, the author of the history of Rajasthan records the very surprising fact that the few hundred families of Rathore clan of the Rajputs multiplied so rapidly that the population over there grew at a fast pace and Therefore, the evidences clearly prove that from the earliest times India has been a well- populated country [4]. It can be said that it appears as if countries like India and China are especially favored by nature for propagation of human race [5]. As these regions are quite fertile and have plenty of material resources. *Therefore, it can be said that we started with an unequal base and this inequality can still be seen and India was densely populated since ancient times and so overpopulation is not completely a recent phenomenon* In India, some states had implemented 2 child policy as a way to tackle the problem of overpopulation but later scrapped it and some states like Assam plan to implement it soon. Two child policy is not a original idea of India to tackle the problem of overpopulation rather it is a borrowed idea from China. China earlier had one child policy in their country. Everyone knows about China's one child policy but very few people know that it was a big failure. After being implemented for 32 years it was finally scrapped. Even though the government of China claims that the policy has helped the country achieve 400 million fewer births during the past 30 years. But this has come at a painful cost [6]. It resulted in millions of forced sterilizations, abortions, infanticide, and marital misery [7]. We can regard One child policy as a failure not because it was unable to reduce the population of china but because it had very bad negative consequences like. People in China started preferring male child over female child as their society is also gender biased and recorded one of the worst sex ratio in the world (120 men: 100 females) [8]. This gender biasness led to a practice called *Bride Price* and men paid a price to marry females [9]. India is already a gender biased society so we can not even think of implementing this policy otherwise it would be a failure, like China. Finally in the year 2016, China introduced Two child policy because of disparity in sex ratio and also to counter problems like dwindling workforce as the population of people in old age was far more than people who were productive and young. Though Two child policy has failed to make an impact on China's low birth rate [10].

Whenever we think of Two child policy in India, we think of Assam where it will come into effect from 1st January 2021 but it is not the first state to do so rather 12 other states like Rajasthan (The Rajasthan Panchayati Raj Act, 1994), Madhya Pradesh (2001), Telangana and Andhra Pradesh (1994), Gujarat (2005), Maharashtra (2005), Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Odisha, Haryana had earlier implemented this policy but later scrapped it because it had negative consequences and turned out to be a big failure [11]. Therefore, Two child policy that will be implemented in Assam is not at all a new concept, neither for the world nor for India.

Is Religion a Factor in Population Growth?

In India, whenever there is any discussion regarding anything, religion always comes into the picture and instead

of finding solution to a problem, a whole new blame game starts and same is there in the case of overpopulation.

In a controversial statement, Union minister of state Giriraj Singh had said that one particular community is responsible for increasing the population of the country and curbing the nations development, it was claimed that the community, has "sworn" to continue doing it to get majority in the country [12]. Here the Union Minister was particularly targeting the Muslim community so as to inflame feeling of hatred among Hindus towards Muslims by showing that Muslims are the reason for our growing population and hence, the backwardness of the country.

One of the fear-mongering that higher fertility among Muslims can increase their share in India's population—and bring down the share of Hindus. New evidence from the latest *National Family Health Survey (NFHS)*, conducted in 2015-16, suggests that such fear-mongering is without any basis. The survey data shows that the fertility gap between Hindus and Muslims has narrowed and there is only a difference of half a birth on average per woman, even both communities are having fewer children than before. The fertility rate of all the religions is going down and, the lowest fertility rate is of *Sikhs* not because they have very less children as compared to other communities rather it has a direct link with socio -economic factors [13]. As we know the population of Sikhs is concentrated in Punjab and Punjab is a highly developed state in terms of economy because of Green revolution so because of this, the average of Sikhs is pulled down, whereas States like Bihar and U.P. are not so developed and the population of Hindus and Muslims is high in these states as compared to Sikhs, and the fertility rate of Muslims is more than Hindus especially in UP and Bihar and hence, states like these take average high of Muslims. In fact, in states like Tamil Nadu and Chattisgarh, the Muslim fertility rate is way less than Hindus [14]. Even though historically, the fertility rate of some religions is always high. *But the fact that is very clear is that when development happens then Fertility Rate automatically goes down and growth rate not religion specific rather region specific.*

Why this Baby Boom? (Causes of Overpopulation)

One of the most obvious cause of Overpopulation in India is *Lack of Sex education*, it is important not just to avoid STD but also for population control, as there are many myths, that if you use contraception, you will have problems getting pregnant later in life. Women also feel so ashamed to ask their husbands to use a condom because they believe he won't get any pleasure. In the end, women only access services when they're pregnant and sometimes they are unable to get access to services and this leads to unwanted pregnancy [15]. Some people also think that because of imparting sex education, people will go in for sex before marriage but do not realize that this many times lead there children into problem and the population of country goes on increasing.

As we know India is a gender biased society and prefer to have a male child in the family. In 1994, the Parliament of India enacted the Pre-Conception and Pre-Natal Diagnostic

Techniques (PCPNDT) Act also known as the *Prohibition of Sex Selection Act*. As per the Act, it is illegal to use any technique to identify the sex of a foetus after conception. This came into action to prevent the abortion of female fetuses [16]. No doubt that it was a good step taken by government of India but it had negative consequence too and that is, till the time a couple doesn't have a boy child they keep on having children, no matter how many girl child they have already given birth to, as they have this mindset that it will be the male child who will support them in old age and this paralysed thinking results in unwanted rise in population of the country.

We live in a society where *having a kid is still considered the most logical and predictable step after a couple ties the knot*. But my having a child is something very intimate to a couple. But that is not so in Indian societies, as couple who do not have kids are looked down by the society and the difficult part is dealing with family. What follows are endless suggestions about going to temples, performing holy rituals, going to various doctors, and trying alternative medicine [17]. Therefore, many couples are forced to have children if even they are not ready for it, so this results in increase in population even though it can be avoided, if our society stops having this paralysed mindset.

There is a link between *Per Capita Income and fertility rate* as people who are quite well off have 2 children or less than that but it is the poor who have more children because they think that more hands means more money but fail to realize that more children also mean more mouth to feed.

Development, The Pathway To Stability

Most European countries have what's called a "Universal Child Benefit" or a basic income going only to families with children and these benefits are accessible no matter if they plan to spend the money on child care or whatever they want. This program is designed largely to encourage childbearing, and so only kicks in for families with two or more children [18]. Most of the developed countries are facing the problem of Underpopulation because just like overpopulation, Underpopulation also comes with many bad consequences but the important point here is that, *there is a direct link between Development and Population* and that is the reason why most of the Developed countries have low population. And same is true for Indian states, as Uttar Pradesh which has a population equal to that of Brazil, the state is highly under developed as education rate is low and crime rate is very high. *Therefore, if there is development then population will automatically come in control.*

Dark Reality of Sterilization in India

IN 1976, MORE THAN 6 MILLION MEN IN INDIA WERE COERCED INTO STERILIZATION. Sterilization at that time was not a choice, it was a mandate. A year earlier, Prime Minister *Indira Gandhi* had declared National Emergency. She was happy, to share authority with *Sanjay Gandhi*, who despite having little knowledge of how the government functioned, played a critical role in the mass sterilization campaign that would lead many to regard the

emergency period as "The Dark Age of Indian Democracy." Soon, some states began implementing Gandhi's sterilization policy. Since they were all located in the northern part of the country, the region came to be known as the "vasectomy belt." This proved to be highly ineffective to control population rather it had many negative consequences like more than thousand. People died because of the diseases that they catch because of sterilization [19].

India again carried out nearly 4 million sterilisations (mostly women) during 2013-2014. More than 700 deaths were reported due to botched surgeries. There were 356 reported cases of complications arising out of the surgeries. 11 women died after Sterilisation in Chattisgarh because of faulty surgeries [20].

This is, Therefore, is very much clear that we can not control our population by forcing policies like sterilisation on people because it has more negative consequences and negligible positive consequences and also forcing people to sterilise is ethically wrong as reproduction is a very basic right of the humans.

Is two child policy a ray of hope for india?

Some states like Assam are planning to implement Two child policy though it had been a failure in my states of India. At central level also there are plans to bring up Population Regulation Bill and it was tabled in Rajya Sabha also in this it was proposed that two child policy should be implemented nation wide. Under this proposal it is proposed that people with more than two children will not be given government jobs and they won't be able to avail the benefits of government subsidies and schemes [21]. Some people like Baba Ramdev propose to take voting rights of people with more than two children [22]. But is it a right way to control population?

In India people think more in terms of religion than in terms of country as a whole and so Hindus who are a majority in the country think that population of Muslims is growing at a very fast rate and will soon become majority in the country. So, Hindu religious leaders are asking Hindu women to reproduce more. According to Shankaracharya "It is because of Hindus' unity that Modi has become Prime Minister. In order to maintain their majority status, every Hindu family should give birth to 10 kids" [23]. This shows that people instead of thinking of having less children are planning to have more children.

So, two child policy would definitely be a failure in India because people are thinking or rather provoked to have more children and are made to think more in terms of safeguarding their religion. Therefore, to implement two child policy, first the mindset of people need to be changed. Also, India is a democracy unlikely China, where democracy is just for the sake of name, so government cannot force people to do something as in a democracy people have more rights and as we have seen in the case of forcefully Sterilisation, that forcing people to do something will have more negative consequences than positive.

Some of the possible negative outcomes could be:-It will have bad effect on women, for example a politician who

would have planned to contest elections will abandon or give divorce to his wife if she gives birth to third child (which may happen because of having poor knowledge of contraceptive devices or any other issue) and in this way the women would have to take care of her children all alone without the support of his husband. This can easily happen because the thirst for power can make anyone do anything

In India *Sex determination is illegal* so the couples who are gender biased and want at least one male child might *abandon their children if both are girl child*.

Infringe the individual and reproductive rights of people and these are basic rights of the human.

It will *make poor even more poor and rich more richer* because it is the poor who usually have more than two children so instead of uplifting them from poverty the government is planing to not give them jobs and subsidies as stated under one of the provisions of two child policy.

If two child policy is implemented by government then probably after a few years we are likely to see that there is an *increase in Old people* who are dependent population and the young which is independent population will *have to bear more burden* as they will have to contribute towards nation building and also take care of old population who will be way more than there population.

Analysis and My Solutions to the Problem

2.1 is the replacement fertility rate and if we reach this rate then population will become stable and if this rate falls down then population will also fall down. The total fertility rate of India in general is going down at a steady rate since last 10-20 years and the country is on track to reach replacement levels of fertility as soon as 2020, most of the Indian states have already reached this fertility rate but that doesn't mean that population will stabilize instantly, rather it is expected that by 2050-60 India's population will peak and then it will fall steady [24].

Overpopulation is the the dark reality of India. It is very much observable from our past experiences that Government has brought a lot of schemes to control our population but all of them turned out to be a big failure and above all government spends a lot of money on these schemes and their promotion. So, it is very much clear that forcing people to do something whether Two Child Policy or Sterilisation is not the solution as it has negative consequences and the amount of money government spend on these policies goes in vain. Therefore, India does not need Two child policy and it is better NOT to implement it.

So, does that mean it is impossible to stabilise our population?

The answer is very simple, YES it is possible to stabilise our population and instead of having negative consequences, we will have positive consequences by using following methods:-

There is a direct link between *Fertility rate and Literacy rate*, like in Kerala, female literacy rate is highest the country and stands at 65% and here Total Fertility Rate is lowest in India and stands at 3.4, whereas in Bihar, female literacy rate is one of the lowest in the country (13%) and here Total

Fertility rate is one of the highest in the country (5.2). Therefore, it can be clearly made out that Education is a tool to tackle the problem of overpopulation in India and also it will be beneficial in long term and instead of having negative consequences it will have positive consequences and also it is better to spend on education then spend on useless policies.

There is also a link between *Infant Mortality rate and fertility rate*. By experience and data available it can be seen that states where health care facilities are good there less children die at birth and there fertility rate is automatically less. Like in Kerala the infant mortality rate is the lowest in the country. i.e. 56 deaths per 1000 births and Kerala has the lowest Total Fertility rate whereas in Uttar Pradesh, Infant mortality is one the highest (150/1000) and there total fertility rate is lowest (5.9). Therefore, improving health care facilities will bring the fertility rate automatically down and hence, the population. So, again spending on health facilities won't have any negative consequences.

Government via 2 child policy in a way is doing bad to people who have more children instead the government should focus on the positive side and give Prize to those who have 1-2 children, though it may not necessarily be monetary benefits and if it is monetary than more benefits should be given to couples with just 1 girl child as in this way people won't be forced rather will be persuaded to have less children.

Another way is that the government should encourage adoption and make sure that people are made to think, that instead of giving birth to children it is better to take care of the children who are orphans as they will also get a decent lifestyle and will help the nation as a whole and for this adoption should be widely advertised with advertisements that counter the very mindset of the people.

Therefore, as Nelson Mandela said "Education is the most powerful weapon which can be used to change the world", So, Education can definitely be used as a tool to change India and control population. In the same way government should adopt other steps stated above to control population instead to implementing 2 child policy which has already been a disaster in China and some states of India.

3. Conclusion and Food for Thought

So, coming towards the end it can be concluded that Overpopulation seems to be a curse on Indian society and there is a urgent need to free ourselves from this curse as soon as possible. In long term as Isaac Asimov says, "Democracy cannot survive overpopulation. Human dignity cannot survive it. As you put more and more people into the world, the value not only declines, but it disappears. It doesn't matter if someone dies."

We can easily control our overpopulation via Education and health care facilities but our government keeps on bringing new new policies which are forcefully just thrown on people and in long term it has more negative consequences then positive consequences and moreover money spend on these policies just go in vain even though it

can be used in the right direction especially after learning from the past experiences of their own and from that of other countries like China.

Now the thing is whether our government is just being ignorant and ignoring the experiences of other countries and their own or can there be something deeper that is hidden?

Government can develop education and health care facilities very easily like Arvind Kejriwal has done in Delhi in just the time span of 5 years but at central level in 2019-20 only 3.4% was allocated to education which is way too less and especially after knowing that education is the solution to most of our problems like overpopulation and same is true for health care facilities, rather they are spending huge amount of money on building statues and stuff and on useless policies and some people like Union minister Giriraj, are putting blame on a particular community (Muslims) as the cause of our growing population and are talking about countering Muslims and so in a way they are attracting Hindus to look up to their party as a way to help the country to progress. So, in a way government could be doing all this for their vote bank as the government very-well knows what to do but it is not doing.

Therefore, India does not need two child policy rather it is the government which should take adequate steps in the right direction.

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