

**DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE OF INDIA: OPPORTUNITY OR THREAT?****Aparna Ajith***PhD Research Scholar Central University of Rajasthan***Abstract**

Demography or the scientific study of human population encompasses the study of the readily observable human phenomena such as the change in population size, its composition and distribution in space. India has a distinct comparative factor advantage as a vast reservoir of skilled manpower. Demographic transition in India is opening up new avenues especially in the economic sector. The rapid advancements in the field of science and technology have elevated the status of India to a new global buzzword. The economic growth and the betterment of the living standard of the people go hand in hand when we ponder over the relevance of demographic profile. For India, growth is an oft repeated query. Demographic change may provide a boost to economic growth, but appropriate policies are needed to allow this to happen. Policy choices can potentiate India's realization of economic benefits stemming from demographic change. A country may instead find itself with large numbers of unemployed or underemployed working-age individuals devoid of these policies. This scenario would rather become a "demographic disaster" than demographic dividend, in some instances promoting state fragility and failure, potentially with adverse political, social, economic, and ecological spillovers to other countries. The paper attempts to analyse the policies that would enable India to optimize these emerging opportunities and how as a nation we can turn out to be winners and not losers.

Keywords: *demography, economic growth, sustainable development, health, youth.*

Demography or the scientific study of human population encompasses the study of the readily observable human phenomena such as the change in population size, its composition and distribution in space. India has a distinct comparative factor advantage as a vast reservoir of skilled manpower. Demographic transition in India is opening up new avenues especially in the economic sector. The rapid advancements in the field of science and technology have elevated the status of India to a new global buzzword. The economy enhancing at a phenomenal rate, combined with a flourishing democracy is making people sit up and take notice across the world blurring its boundaries. The economic growth and the betterment of the living standard of the people go hand in hand when we ponder over the relevance of demographic profile. The factors comprising fertility, mortality, marriage, migration and social mobility play a crucial role in the demography of any nation. As in many countries, declining infant and child mortality helped to spark lower fertility, effectively resulting in a

temporary baby boom. As this cohort moves into working ages, India finds itself with a potentially higher share of workers as compared with dependents. If working-age people can be productively employed, India's economic growth stands to accelerate. For India, growth is an oft repeated query. To be counted as a major economic powerhouse by the end of this century's first quarter, India needs to accelerate its economic growth beyond the existing rates. Inclusive Growth is the mantra that has been envisioned and frequently charted by the policy makers, academicians, planners and the industry captains so as to bring forth sustainable development as well as growth to all arenas of the society. Albeit it is a challenging task, it is quintessential for the equitable distribution of wealth and prosperity. The demographic differentials reveal that over the next 20-30 years, India has distinct advantages in a population profile concentrated in the younger age group, where many new opportunities can be fully optimized. However, demography is not destiny; growth of the working-age share of the population does not automatically lead to an acceleration of economic growth. Demographic change may provide a boost to economic growth, but appropriate policies are needed to allow this to happen. Policy choices can potentiate India's realization of economic benefits stemming from demographic change. A country may instead find itself with large numbers of unemployed or underemployed working-age individuals devoid of these policies. This scenario would rather become a "demographic disaster" than demographic dividend, in some instances promoting state fragility and failure, potentially with adverse political, social, economic, and ecological spillovers to other countries. Let's analyse and have a glance at the policies that would enable India to optimize these emerging opportunities and how as a nation we can turn out to be winners and not losers.

The Inclusive growth implies an equitable allocation of resources with benefits accruing to all strata of society. This growth process yields broad based benefits and ensures equality of opportunity for all. This inclusiveness involves four attributes namely opportunity, capability, access and security. The best way to achieve inclusive growth is by developing people's skills. The Indian economy, which has over the last six decades passed through various phases of growth, is now all set to enter an altogether different orbit: one marked by a high rate of expansion, combined with 'inclusive growth.' In the last few years, inclusive growth has been at the forefront of studies sponsored by multilateral aid agencies, such as the United Nations, the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and several nongovernmental organizations (NGOs). Successive governments have initiated several projects, such as Jawahar Rozgar Yojna, Integrated Rural Development Program, Rural Housing Scheme, Swarnjayanti Gram Swarozgar Yojana and Mahatama Gandhi National Rural Employment

Guarantee Act to promote inclusive growth. It aims at poverty reduction, human development, health, provision of opportunity to work etc. While speaking at Plenary of 104th session of ILC, 2015 in Geneva on 12th June, Shri Bandaru Dattatreya, the Minister of State for Labour and Employment stressed on the inevitability of securing inclusive growth and thereby leading India to sustainable development and usher in a governance of transparency and accountability. The earlier GDP growth rate of less than 5% has now reached to 7.4% in one year. This hints on the fact that India is one of the fastest growing nations of the world. India believes that poverty eradication and job creation are the primary objectives to achieve inclusive growth under the ambit of Sustainable Development Goals in United Nations Framework. The flagship initiatives like 'Make in India', 'Skill India', 'Digital India', 'Beti Bechao, beti padao' and 'smart cities' project taken under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi deserves mention in this credit. The youngsters are the backbone of any nation and they have to be trained properly and qualitatively. The very destiny of a nation is dependent on their hands in order to make a country attain success at its zenith. 'Make in India' is a unique opportunity for job creation for our youth. Its primary objective lies in skilling India particularly youth to correct and match the demand for skill sets. Youngsters are higher in number in India and so they have to be skilled accordingly to bring them to the limelight. When we have adequate and skilled labour force, it will not create an economic burden. Inclusive growth varies in different fields and different parts of country as well as the world. This throws light on the notion of political demography. In USA, European countries and neo liberal states, they have a far sighted planning approach and policy which enable them to have a concern for the posterity. Though we are far better than any other nation in the theoretical framework, we fail to implement things. Our political consciousness is not complementary to the highly skilled people. For instance, a country like Japan does a work better with collective endeavour than India. Their team spirit elevates their energy to synergy where as in India it curtails the energy. When our people try to become heroes individually, it a matter of pity that they are collectively zeroes. So we must inculcate a coordinating cum cooperative mentality for the effective utilization of proper human resources and the powerful brains.

Growth is not uniform across sectors; and large cross- sections of the populace remain outside its purview. Several social, political and economic factors need to be tackled for sustaining a high rate of growth, as well as to make this growth inclusive. Elimination of child labour, women empowerment, removal of caste barriers and an improvement in work culture are the pivotal things India needs to introspect on. The government is following a

multi prolonged strategy to handle the problem of child labour comprising of statutory and legislative measures, rescue and rehabilitation, universal education along with social protection, poverty alleviation and employment generation schemes. Health infrastructure has to be developed so as to alleviate poverty, malnutrition and stunted growth. Lack of proper education has an adverse effect on the inclusive growth and school drop outs are rampant these days. India has more people than Europe, more than Africa, more than the entire Western Hemisphere. India's population will exceed that of China before 2030 to become the world's most populous country, a distinction it will almost certainly never lose. It is heavily concentrated in the broad fertile northern plains. Historically higher birth rates in the northern states continue to shift a larger share of India's population growth northward. Four northern states- Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh often referred to as the "BIMARU" states have very low sex ratio. The situation is not different in other states also like Haryana where female foeticide happen in large numbers. The well known adage deserves significance here- "if you teach a boy, you educate an individual; but if you teach a girl, you educate a community". Hence it is necessary to improve and empower women along with their counterpart. Efforts to stem the practice of sex- selective abortion include a broader campaign to improve the status of women and to encourage parents to value daughters as well as sons. Male and female sex ratios must be given due significance or else it can influence demographic dividend in a negative manner. The rapid increase in the number of old age people in the population raises various social, economic and health issues. The strengthening of primary health care services and establishment of geriatric care units for elders are required. Efforts should be made for income generation to support themselves and their families. Health serves as a driving force for economic growth. Kerala which now stands as the state with largest female sex ratio and literacy rate was once a backward state even in its GDP. Now the state has advanced a lot because they adopted many policies for upliftment like nutrition programmes, public health initiatives including mid day meal scheme in schools, female education, human resource development and so on. If a state like Kerala can implement and make these steps practical, it is possible to adopt in other states as well. Failure to take advantage of the opportunities inherent in demographic change can lead to economic stagnation. We must be aware of our innate potentials and how we can make use of them effectively. It is the dire need of the hour to lead India towards the path of economic development. Rapid growth in the rural economy, well planned and targeted urban growth, infrastructure development, reforms in education, ensuring future energy needs, a healthy public- private partnership, intent to secure inclusivity, making all sections of society equal

stakeholders in growth, and above all good governance will make India achieve what it deserves.

Demographic change can boost the economic growth of the country depending on the appropriate policies. Population statistics like size, density, sex ratio, dependency ratio and vital statistics like birth rate, death rate, growth rate, mortality and fertility rate should be given priority for the proper development of human resources. The demographic profile can become a threat if the opportunities are not taken care of and utilized efficiently and effectively. If left unchecked, a population will outgrow its resources, leading to a host of problems. Let this theory propounded by Malthus not befall in the context of India. Robert F.Kennedy has rightly said “if the society cannot help the many who are poor, it cannot save the few who are rich”. This is true in the case of India with two faces. A “shining India” which captivated the attention of the fourth estate and world is competing internationally and benefiting from the forces of globalization, technological change etc. On the other hand, we have a “suffering India” with poor and vulnerable population without out the glories of publicity and they are far away from the ivory towers of madding crowds. Our aim is the overall development of India by merging these two faces which at the same time stand as a beacon of hope and image of despair. It can be said undoubtedly that the demographic profile of India will definitely be an opportunity provided there is a farsighted policy and planning approach. The theoretical frameworks for inclusive growth should not fail when it comes to the spectrum of implementation. The caliber and potential of our youngsters must be utilized for the development of nation at its pinnacle. The proper utilization of human resources is required for a healthier and wealthier nation. Health which is the central imperative of the entire global development community also adds to the economic growth. India needs youngsters brimming with the vitality of coordination and cooperative spirit to make a “Better India- A Skilled India”. Let’s hope that the passage of time, effective resources, and manpower and development policies will frame the demographic profile to an opportunity.

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