

**S.S. COLLEGE, JEHANABAD
(GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT)**

B.A. PART - 3 (POPULATION GEOGRAPHY : PAPER - 7)

TOPIC : PATTERNS OF POPULATION DISTRIBUTION IN THE WORLD

- Prof. KUMARINISHA RANI

Patterns of population distribution and density help us to understand the demographic characteristics of any area. The term population distribution refers to the way people are spaced over the earth's surface. Broadly, 90 per cent of the world population lives in about 10 per cent of its land area. The 10 most populous countries of the world contribute about 60 per cent of the world's population. Of these 10 countries, 6 are located in Asia.

FACTORS INFLUENCING THE DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION

A. Geographical Factors

- (i) **Availability of water:** It is the most important factor for life. So, people prefer to live in areas where fresh water is easily available. Water is used for drinking, bathing and cooking – and also for cattle, crops, industries and navigation. It is because of this that river valleys are among the most densely populated areas of the world.
- (ii) **Landforms:** People prefer living on flat plains and gentle slopes. This is because such areas are favourable for the production of crops and to build roads and industries. The mountainous and hilly areas hinder the development of transport network and hence initially do not favour agricultural and industrial development. So, these areas tend to be less

populated. The Ganga plains are among the most densely populated areas of the world while the mountains zones in the Himalayas are scarcely populated.

- (iii) **Climate:** An extreme climate such as very hot or cold deserts are uncomfortable for human habitation. Areas with a comfortable climate, where there is not much seasonal variation attract more people. Areas with very heavy rainfall or extreme and harsh climates have low population. Mediterranean regions were inhabited from early periods in history due to their pleasant climate.
- (iv) **Soils:** Fertile soils are important for agricultural and allied activities. Therefore, areas which have fertile loamy soils have more people living on them as these can support intensive agriculture.

B. Economic Factors

- (i) **Minerals:** Areas with mineral deposits attract industries. Mining and industrial activities generate employment. So, skilled and semi-skilled workers move to these areas and make them densely populated. Katanga Zambia copper belt in Africa is one such good example.
- (ii) **Urbanisation:** Cities offer better employment opportunities, educational and medical facilities, better means of transport and communication. Good civic amenities and the attraction of city life draw people to the cities. It leads to rural to urban migration.
- (iii) **Industrialisation:** Industrial belts provide job opportunities and attract large numbers of people. These include not just factory workers but also

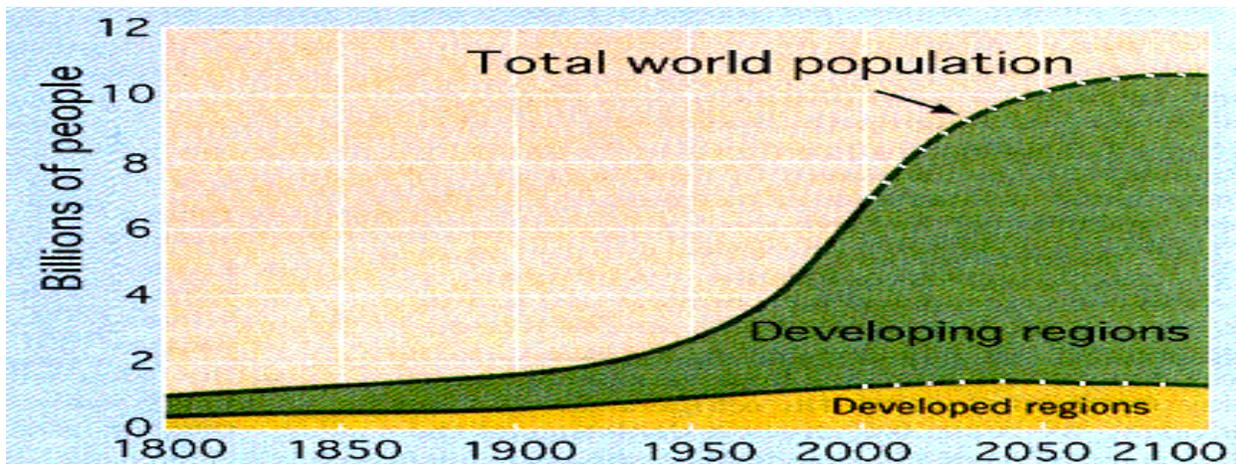
transport operators, shopkeepers, bank employees, doctors, teachers and other service providers. The Kobe-Osaka region of Japan is thickly populated because of the presence of a number of industries.

III. Social and Cultural Factors :

Some places attract more people because they have religious or cultural significance. In the same way – people tend to move away from places where there is social and political unrest. Many a times governments offer incentives to people to live in sparsely populated areas or move away from overcrowded places. And cities grow in size. Mega cities of the world continue to attract large number of migrants every year.

POPULATION GROWTH

The population growth or population change refers to the change in number of inhabitants of a territory during a specific period of time. This change may be positive as well as negative. It can be expressed either in terms of absolute numbers or in terms of percentage. Population change in an area is an important indicator of economic development, social upliftment and historical and cultural background of the region.



DENSITY OF POPULATION

Population density is a measurement of the number of people in an area. It is an average number. Population density is calculated by dividing the number of people by area. Population density is usually shown as the number of people per square kilometer.

Factors Affecting Population Density

There are a range of human and natural factors that affect population density. The tables below illustrate this.

Physical Factors	High Density	Low Density
Relief (shape and height of land)	Low land which is flat e.g. Ganges Valley in India	High land that is mountainous e.g. Himalayas
Resources	Areas rich in resources (e.g. coal, oil, wood, fishing etc.) tend to be densely populated e.g. Western Europe	Areas with few resources tend to be sparsely populated e.g. The Sahel
Climate	Areas with temperate climates tend to be densely populated as there is enough rain and heat to grow crops e.g. UK	Areas with extreme climates of hot and cold tend to be sparsely populated e.g. the Sahara Desert

Human Factors	High Density	Low Density
Political	Countries with stable governments tend to have a high population density e.g. Singapore	Unstable countries tend to have lower population densities as people migrate e.g. Afghanistan.
Social	Groups of people want to live close to each other for security e.g. USA	Other groups of people prefer to be isolated e.g. Scandinavians
Economic	Good job opportunities encourage high population densities, particularly in large cities in MEDCs and LEDCs around the world.	Limited job opportunities cause some areas to be sparsely populated e.g. Amazon Rainforest

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