

Theories of Population

The real aim of population policy is, however, not to avoid starvation but to eliminate poverty so as to raise output per head in an accelerated manner. Thus the Malthusian theory is fully applicable to underdeveloped countries like India. Walker was right when he wrote: **“The Malthusian theory is applicable to all communities without any consideration of colour and place. Malthusianism has stood un-shattered, impregnable amid all the controversy that has raged around it.”**

The Optimum Theory of Population:

The optimum theory of population was propounded by Edwin Cannan in his book *Wealth* published in 1924 and popularized by Robbins, Dalton and Carr-Saunders. Unlike the Malthusian theory, the optimum theory does not establish relationship between population growth and food supply. Rather, it is concerned with the relation between the size of population and production of wealth.

The Malthusian theory is a general theory which studies the population problem of a country in keeping with its economic conditions. Thus the optimum theory is more realistic than the Malthusian theory of population.

Definitions:

But what is optimum population? The optimum population is the ideal population which combined with the other available resources or means of production of the country will yield the maximum returns or income per head.

The concept of optimum population has been defined differently by Robbins, Carr- Saunders and Dalton. Robbins defines it as “the population which just makes the maximum returns possible is the optimum population or the best possible population.” Carr-Saunders defines it as “that population which produces maximum economic welfare”. To Dalton, “Optimum population is that which gives the maximum income per head.” If we were to examine these views, we find that Dalton’s view is more scientific and realistic which we follow.

