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Matric:18/sms06/001

Level: 200

Course Code: TEM 206

CONCEPT OF DEMOCRACY

Demography is the study of human populations – their size, composition and distribution across space and the process through which populations change. A population's composition may be described in terms of basic demographic features like age, sex, family and household status, features of the population's social and economic context like language, education, occupation, ethnicity, religion, income and wealth. The distribution of populations can be defined at multiple levels (local, regional, national, global) and with different types of boundaries (political, economic, geographic).

Demographic data collection comes from different sources like

- Census
 - Vital registration
 - Sample surveys
- and some other sources like
- Population register
 - Demographic Surveillance System (DSS)

Each having its own unique method of conducting research to acquire population data.

The theory propounded by Malthus can be summed up and explained in the following propositions:

1. Food is necessary to the life of man and, therefore, exercises a strong check on population. In other words, population is necessarily limited by the means of subsistence (i.e., food).

This first proposition is that the population of a country is limited by the means of subsistence. In other words, the size of population is determined by the availability of food. The greater the food production, the greater the size of the population which can be sustained. The check of deaths caused by want of food and poverty would limit the maximum possible population.

2. Population increases faster than food production. Whereas population increases in geometric progression, food production increases in arithmetic progression.

This second proposition states that the growth of population will out-run the increase in food production. Malthus thought that man's sexual urge to bear offspring knows no bounds. He seemed to think that there was no limit to the fertility of man. But the power of land to produce food is limited. Malthus thought that the law of diminishing returns operated in the field of agriculture and that the operation of this law prevented food production from increasing in proportion to labour and capital invested in land. In fact, Malthus observed that population would tend to increase at a geometric rate (2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, etc.), but food supply would tend to increase at an arithmetic rate (2, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12). Thus, at the end of two hundred years

“population would be to the means of subsistence as 259 to 9; in three centuries as 4,096 to 13, and in two thousand years the difference would be incalculable.” Therefore, Malthus asserted that population would ultimately outstrip food supply.

3. Population always increases when the means of subsistence increase, unless prevented by some powerful checks.

According to this third proposition, as the food supply in a country increases, the people will produce more children and would have larger families. This would increase the demand for food and food per person will again diminish. Therefore, according to Malthus, the standard of living of the people cannot rise permanently.

4. There are two types of checks which can keep the population on a level with the means of subsistence. They are preventive and a positive check.

As regards to this fourth proposition, Malthus pointed out that there were two possible checks which could limit the growth of population: (a) Preventive checks, and (b) Positive checks.

- a) Preventive checks exercise their influence on the growth of population by bringing down the birth rate. Preventive checks are those checks which are applied by man. Preventive checks arise from man's fore-sight which enables him to see distant consequences. He sees the distress which frequently visits those who have large families.
- b) Positive checks exercise their influence on the growth of population by increasing the death rate. They are applied by nature. The positive checks to the population are various and include every cause, whether arising from vice or misery, which in any degree contributes to shortening the natural duration of human life.

However, though the gloomy conclusions of Malthus have not turned out to be true due to several factors which have made their appearance only in recent times, yet the essentials of the theory have not been demolished. He said that unless preventive checks were exercised, positive checks would operate. This is true even today.