

A Geography of Population

by R. C. CHANDNA

Kalyani Publishers, New Delhi, 1992, pp. 331, price Rs. 80/-.

Chandna's book is one of the few comprehensive texts in population geography to combine all the three aspects of the subject, conceptual, topical and spatial in a single volume. In this revised edition, published in 1992, the author has thoroughly revised the text, incorporating the latest 1991 census data. This greatly enhances its utility to students appearing at the UPSC, UGC and other competitive examinations, besides catering to the needs of those offering population geography at the college and university.

The introductory chapter on conceptual framework and historical development has received fuller treatment in the revised version so also the chapters on Theories of Population and Population Policies, which have been updated. While describing the various theories of population, inclusion of a brief review of the contributions of the various schools could have served to acquaint the students with the general thinking on population issues over the ages. Similarly, while discussing population policies, the complexity of the problem in the context of a society as diverse as India, in terms of population attributes needs to be highlighted by providing suitable quotes and illustrations from real world situations where such policies have met with either success or failure. This would not only help impart education on population planning and control, but bring home the enormity of the problem facing countries with rapidly growing population.

Briefly highlighting the scope of the book : In the first chapter, the author while tracing the historical development of the subject, presents a brief resume of the growth of population

geography by recording each important milestone in its evolution. Seminal works which have shaped the course and content of the subject have been accorded due recognition, while the reader is familiarised with the contributions made by Indian geographers who deserve credit for popularising the subject in Indian Universities.

Chapter two focuses on the basic sources of population data and the problems which confront the researcher while collecting reliable statistics on population. A review of the history of census enumeration, the quality of census data, its changing scope over the decades, as well as the limitations of modern censuses, all help to provide the necessary background for those embarking on population studies/ research. Chapter three deals exclusively with the spatial pattern of population distribution and density. The various measures of population distribution have been outlined with a brief reference to the different types of densities and their significance in interpreting the relationship between population and resources. The chapter concludes with a general account of the world pattern of population distribution, and a more detailed statewise pattern of density and distribution for India. Chapters four and five, deal with the dynamic aspects of population. Both population change (natural increase) and migration have been discussed and analysed in some detail. With pressure of population in several LDC's having already reached crisis proportions, Chandna points out 'the significance of undertaking process studies, of the twin elements of population growth, through variations in mortality and fertility trends, in

area specific situations. In fact, several authors have already cautioned against the indiscriminate use of ideas from the demographic transition model, without a proper understanding of the situational context. The varying experience of different types of countries has further demonstrated the limitations of cultural transferability of the model.

The other demographic attributes, viz., population composition, literacy and urbanisation have been analysed in the next three chapters. In all cases, the world trends have been presented alongside a thorough description of the Indian Context. The Chapter on population and resources is a welcome addi-

tion, as it serves to focus attention on the deteriorating population resource situation, in the face of mounting population pressure. A regeneralisation scheme of population resource regimes following Ackerman is presented here.

In the overall analysis, going over Chandna's book leaves one more than satisfied. It fulfils the Indian student's requirement for a compact low priced reader, replete with examples and illustrations from India and other developing countries. Its simple and concise style makes it easily comprehensible and highly readable to a wide cross section of readers. It is highly recommended to those whose interest lies in population studies.

Population Growth, Environment and Development : Issues, Impacts and Responses

Edited by K. N. SINGH AND D. N. SINGH

Published by Environment and Development Study Circle, BHU 1991. pp. 375, Price Rs. 350/-.

The collection of papers edited by K. N. Singh and D. N. Singh is the outcome of two seminars : one national and the other international, held at the Department of Geography, Banaras Hindu University, in the summer of 1988 and 1989, respectively. The sweep of the papers cover a wide spectrum of issues related to population growth, environment and development.

Examining the contents of the volume in some detail, the twenty-odd papers have been arranged in four sections, each devoted to specific issues of rapid population growth in developing countries.

Section I, the prologue, introduces the reader to the various dimensions and significance of problems related to unabated and rapid

population growth, its many ramifications and the repercussions for developing countries. The first paper in this section by Dinanath Singh is in the nature of a review of the various views on the subject in which the basic issues as well as certain paradoxical situations in the context of rapid population growth have been outlined. Here, Singh makes a strong plea for adopting a multi-dimensional approach, arguing that 'population variables are not only complex, but their interrelatedness require an inter-disciplinary perspective for a better understanding of the growth processes to emerge. Ambika Singh in the following paper, quoting extensively from the flood of alarmist literature, believes that modern technology has a great role to play in meeting the challenges posed by rapid population growth.