

THE NEED OF A SAMPLE SURVEY OF THE GROWTH OF POPULATION IN INDIA

Two things have emerged from the above discussion.

(1) The actual growth of population in India will most probably be large in the present decennium (1931-41) and possibly in the next (1941-51).

(2) Necessary material for the study of the Reproduction Rate for India is not available but is urgently needed for a proper appreciation of the dynamical aspects of growth of population.

Long period forecasts regarding populations are not reliable and of little practical value, for the statistical stability required for valid extrapolation in time does not probably exist in the present case. But the question of growth of population in the immediate future is of supreme importance to national welfare. Unfortunately material available for studying population problems in India is meagre.

We do not know whether the standard of living (or the supply of food) has been maintained proportionally, or has deteriorated relatively, with the increase in population during the last 50 years. We do not know whether the size of the family increases, remains constant, or decreases with an increase in the income of the family. We do not know whether there is any differential fertility between different communities, or different occupational groups, or different economic strata. We do not know what has been the effect of the increase of population on the standard of health and physique.

It is imperative that Government should take immediate action to enable a scientific study of population problems being made in their various aspects. The recording of the age of the mother at registration of birth, and the improvement of the primary vital statistics in other ways are questions of routine administration which should be taken up without delay.

A Census (or complete enumeration) method of studying differential fertility is impracticable in India owing to vast numbers. Recourse to a sample survey method is therefore inevitable. Fortunately owing to recent developments in the statistical theory of representative and stratified random sampling, the efficiency of this method has increased very appreciably. The cost also is not prohibitive.

There are great advantages in conducting such a sampling survey along with the general Census as this will enable a large number of external checks being used with confidence. There can be no two opinions about the desirability of such a sampling survey being undertaken at the time of the next Indian Census in 1941.

Very careful preparation is necessary to draw up an adequate and satisfactory scheme of the sample survey. Small scale field experiments will also be needed for this purpose, besides a great deal of spade work in the way of drawing up of specifications, definitions, forms and schedules, and the preparation of the sampling technique and programme. If the scheme is to be ready in time for the 1941 Census, the preliminary work should be started immediately.

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