S.S. COLLEGE, JEHANABAD
(GEOGRAPHY DEPARTMENT)

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

TOPIC : DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSITION THEORY

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Population growth is determined by births and deaths and every country has seen very substantial changes in both: In our overview on how health has changed over the long run you find the data on the dramatic decline of child mortality that has been achieved in all parts of the world. And in our coverage of fertility you find the data and research on how modern socio-economic changes – most importantly structural changes to the economy and a rise of the status and opportunities for women – contributed to a very substantial reduction of the number of children that couples have.

But declining mortality rates and declining fertility rates alone would not explain why the population increases. If they happened at the same time the growth rate of the population would not change in this transition. What is crucial here is the *timing* at which mortality and fertility changes.

The model that explains why rapid population growth happens is called the 'demographic transition'. It is shown in the schematic figure. It is a beautifully simple model that describes the observed pattern in countries around the world and is one of the great insights of demography.

The demographic transition is a sequence of five stages:

- **STAGE 1**

High Mortality And High Birth Rates. In the long time before rapid population growth the birth rate in a population is high, but since the death rate is also high we observe no or only very small population growth. This describes the reality through most of our history. Societies around the world remained in stage 1 for many millennia as the long-run perspective on extremely slow population growth highlighted. At this stage the population pyramid is broad at the base but since the mortality rate is high across all ages – and the risk of death is particularly high for children – the pyramid gets much narrower towards the top.

- **STAGE 2**

Mortality Falls But Birth Rates Still High. In the second phase the health of the population slowly starts to improve and the death rate starts to fall. Since the health of the population has already improved, but fertility still remains as high as before, this is the stage of the transition at which the size of the population starts to grow rapidly. Historically it is the exceptional time at which the extended family with many (surviving) children is common.

- **STAGE 3**

Mortality Low And Birth Rates Fall. Later the birth rate starts to fall and consequentially the rate at which the population grows begins to decline as well. Why the fertility rate falls is a question that we answer here. But to summarize the main points: When the mortality of children is not as high as it once was parents adapt to the healthier environment and choose to have fewer children; the economy is

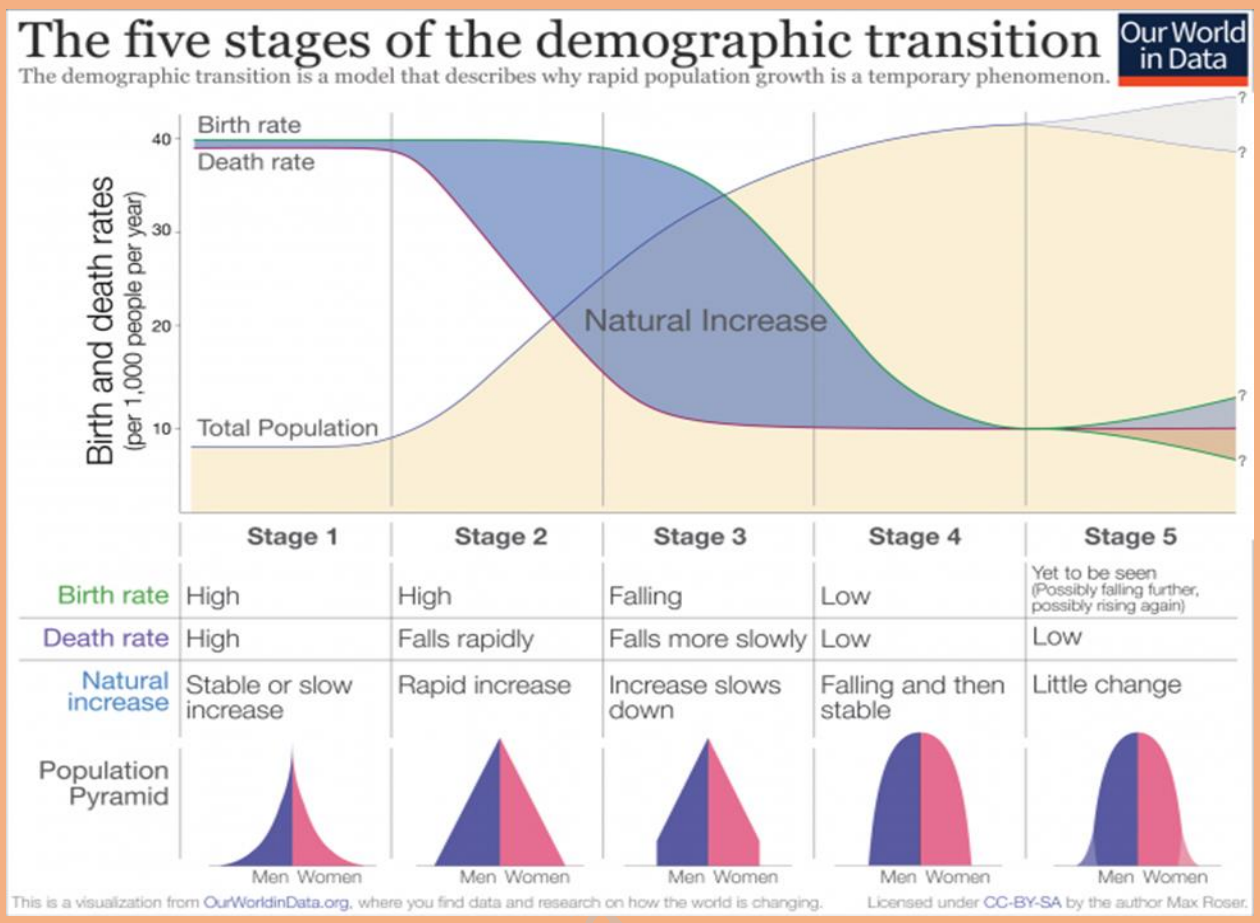
undergoing structural changes that makes children less economically valuable; and women are empowered socially and within partnerships and have fewer children than before.

- **STAGE 4**

Mortality Low And Birth Rates Low. Rapid population growth comes to an end in stage 4 as the birth rate falls to a similar level as the already low mortality rate. The population pyramid is now box shaped; as the mortality rate at young ages is now very low the younger cohorts are now very similar in size and only at an old age the cohorts get smaller very rapidly.

- **STAGE 5**

Mortality Low And Some Evidence Of Rising Fertility. The demographic transition describes changes over the course of socio-economic modernization. What happens at a very high level of development is not a question we can answer with certainty since only few societies have reached this stage. But we do have some good evidence – which we review here – that at very high levels of development fertility is rising again. Not to the very high levels of pre-modern times, but to a fertility rate that gets close to 2 children per woman. What level exactly the fertility rate will reach is crucial for the question of what happens to population growth in the long run. If the fertility rate stays below 2 children per woman then we will see a decline of the population size in the long run. If indeed the fertility rate will rise above 2 children per woman, we will see a slow long-run increase of the population size.


The five stages of the demographic transition
Our World in Data
The demographic transition is a model that describes why rapid population growth is a temporary phenomenon.
Birth and death rates (per 1,000 people per year)
40
30
20
10
Birth rate
Death rate
Natural Increase
Total Population
?
?
?
?
Stage 1
Stage 2
Stage 3
Stage 4
Stage 5
Birth rate
High
High
Falling
Low
Yet to be seen (Possibly falling further, possibly rising again)
Death rate
High
Falls rapidly
Falls more slowly
Low
Low
Natural increase
Stable or slow increase
Rapid increase
Increase slows down
Falling and then stable
Little change
Population Pyramid
Men Women
Men Women
Men Women
Men Women
Men Women
This is a visualization from OurWorldinData.org, where you find data and research on how the world is changing.
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