

**Inaugural Address – National Symposium on “2011
Demographic Characteristics – A Road to Development”
Loyola College on 20th January,2012**

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Prof. T. Eugene (Head, Department of Economics),

Ms. S. Neeta (Conference Secretary),

Faculty members,

Distinguished participants,

Research Scholars and friends.

It is my privilege and honour to be invited to
inaugurate the National Symposium on **“2011
Demographic Characteristics – A Road to
Development”**.

I am proud to share with you that Loyola College is one of the top educational institutions in the country, delivering quality education to the youth. It is a forerunner in imparting discipline, values and social concern among its students.

Organizing symposiums of this kind lays down a platform for sharing different perceptions and analysis about the topic in concern. It is highly commendable for the Economics Department of Loyola College to identify such a contemporary issue for a deep insight. I am sure that the discussions on this floor and the contents of the papers that are presented would definitely add new ideas to the policy makers to tap the productive capacities of human resources.

Population of a country is an asset. The citizens make a nation great and strong. Human resource plays a vital role in the development of a country. All the natural resources cannot be fully exploited in a sparsely populated country. In case population is more than the optimum, economic progress is hampered.

As far as the size of population is concerned, India ranks second in the world next only to China. If China's population stood at 1331 million in 2009, India's population was 1210 million as per latest census (2011). India possesses 2.4% of the total land area of the world but its population was nearly 17% of the world population and the national income of the country presently accounts for just 2.4% of the total world income in the year 2009. Indeed the

pressure of population on land in the country is high and unarguably this is a pressing problem for the nation.

Census 2011 highlights the following advantages that may be tapped by India:

- i) Demographic change in India is opening up new economic opportunities. Declining Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) and Child Mortality Rate (CMR) has resulted in temporary Baby Boom increasing the scope of supply of more work force for the future.

- ii) India has a higher share of workers as compared with dependents. Engaging the working age population in productive employments will accelerate the economic

growth of India. Around 50 percent of India's 1.2 billion people are below 25 years of age which has inflated the country's demographic dividend.

Ladies and Gentlemen, the serious concerns about the population growth are not ruled out at all. The high incidence of nutritional deprivation in India, excessive pressure on environment and social infrastructure are some of the implications of the large size and rapid expansion of the population. That is why, Government of India has followed multipronged strategies to deal with this problem. In addition to economic measures like boost to the industrial sector, creation of employment opportunities in rural areas through National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), provision of

basic amenities in urban areas for urban poor through Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM) are some of the steps which need special mention.

Most of the economists are convinced now that education alone can change the attitudes of the people towards marriage, family planning and birth of a child. You too will agree that so long as the mass of the population remains illiterate, it cannot be exposed to rational ideas and the level of consciousness will remain what it is. Undeniably, education is the most critical input for the implementation of affirmative growth, and also for empowering people with skills and knowledge and giving them access to productive employment in future. Improvements in education can enhance

efficiency and augment the overall quality of life. That is why, the 12th Plan places the highest priority on education as a central instrument for achieving rapid and inclusive growth. It presents a comprehensive strategy for strengthening the education sector covering all segments of the education pyramid.

Elementary education is the foundation of the pyramid in the education system and received a major push in the Tenth Plan through the Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan (SSA). The major benefits of schemes of elementary education sector during Tenth Plan like District Primary Education Programme (DPEP), Mid-Day meal scheme, Teachers Education scheme and Kasturba Gandhi Balika Vidyalaya Scheme will definitely be experienced

across board in due course of time. Saakshar Bharat Mission, centrally sponsored scheme of Department of School Education and Literacy (DSEL), Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), Government of India (GOI), is helping in improving the female literacy rate which in turn is expected to reduce total fertility rate. Of course, all the above-referred programmes and schemes will play an instrumental role in changing the reproductive behaviour of the people.

We have adopted a neo-liberal approach to expansion of education in recent years. In higher education, we have been following a multi-pronged strategy – strengthening existing institutions of higher learning along with a massive expansion plan by way of setting up a large number of public funded

institutions – keeping in view the aim of doubling the access ratio to higher education. We have also undertaken a number of new initiatives. Besides setting up of new institutions of higher learning both in basic and applied areas of study, we have also decided to create some national level resource institutions such as:

- National Commission for Higher Education and Research.
- National Authority for Regulation in Accreditation of Higher Education Institutions.
- Educational Tribunals.

We are fully hopeful that the implementation of comprehensive policy measures covering all segments of education and aiming at increasing

knowledge, skills and capacities of the people will enable India to enjoy '**demographic dividend**'.

We should explore the scope of using the exploding population in India as an asset for fostering economic growth and development. This can be best tapped only through a joint effort by politicians, administrators, educational institutions and employers. Let me once again say that I am really very much honoured to be invited to inaugurate the symposium. With these words let me thank you once again and wish the symposium all success.

Thank you, Jai Hind.