

## Book Review

*Population Geography: A Systematic Exposition*, by Mohammad Izhar Hassan. Routledge, London and New York, 2020, pp. xvi+349: 56 B/W Illustrations, ISBN: 978-0-367-44066-4.

Any book on population geography must begin with a reference to Trewartha's case for the sub discipline. The present book is also not an exception to it. G.T. Trewartha made a very forceful case for population geography in his presidential address in the 49<sup>th</sup> annual meeting of the Association of American Geographers held in 1953. It is obvious from the title of his presidential address that the population dimension was rarely given due attention in geographical studies till then. Therefore, while making a strong case for population geography, he said 'the study of population is the logically the single most important approach to geography and the only one in which the regional concept has the broadest application'. This brought about a significant change in the mind-set of geographers towards the study of population in geography, and many geographers started researching population phenomena and writing books on population geography in carrying forward the legacy of Trewartha. Prof. Hassan's book 'Population Geography: A Systematic Exposition' can be viewed as an outstanding contribution to the field of population geography. Of course, Prof. Hassan has incorporated many new concepts, theories and methods that were not in vogue at the time Trewartha made his forceful appeal. Certainly, human kinds acquire new knowledge, develop new perspectives and formulate new hypothesis with changing time and experiences and technologies. Population geography as a sub-discipline has too enriched in its content and method with the inputs from scholars lived at different places at different points of time. The present book published in 2020 by Routledge, exactly at a time when the deadly COVID-19 grappled the world, will have a reputable place in the field of population geography.

This book is a concise, lucid, authoritative introduction to population geography. With fifteen chapters, this book deals with the theoretical as well as technical aspects of the study of population with geographical lenses. The beauty of this book lies in the fact that it not only exposes the readers to the major concepts in population geography but also provides a fantastic account of the trends and patterns of demographic events in the world, with a particular focus on India. Apart from issues that are general in nature, such as size, distribution and growth of population, components of population change, salient socio-economic and demographic characteristics of population, the inclusion of separate chapters on population-development-environment interrelations, population policies and population theories is an indication of author's concern for both 'pattern oriented' and 'process oriented' approaches to study population through geographical gaze. As a geographer, the author has augmented the discussion with statistical tables and neatly drawn figures and maps. A glossary of terms used in population studies and demography appended in the book will be extremely beneficial for the readers as well as instructors.

The author has given due attention to fertility and mortality that have remained somehow neglected in traditional population geography books. In this connection, the author, in the preface of the book, mentions that the absence of reliable data on vital events at lower administrative levels in the country is the cause behind the general neglect of fertility and mortality in research and teachings in population geography. However, there has been an appreciable improvement in quality of data on fertility and mortality in India. Further, one can make use of the regional and district level data made available through the sample registration systems and the national family health surveys. Further, population geographers

cannot shy away from learning and teaching of techniques needed for geographical analysis. While quantitative revolution in geography started as early as 1950s, population geographers' indifferent attitude towards the teaching and learning of demographic techniques and modelling is a matter of concern. To my mind, a sound knowledge of such tools and techniques along with the expertise in geospatial technologies like remote sensing and GIS will help population geographers to unfold the spatial processes involved in demographic change and its links with socioeconomic transformation and environmental change. Author's attempt to include life table in the mortality chapter indicates his concern for the need of advanced demographic techniques for strengthening the study of population in geographical perspective. Needless to say, a specialised discipline in the name of 'spatial demography' or 'geo-demography' is making a big breakthrough in recent times. Therefore, there is an urgent need of upgrading the population geography syllabus in Indian universities, in order to make the sub-discipline more relevant and visible. To this end, Prof. Hassan's book can be seen as an initial attempt as it throws some light on concepts, tools as well as techniques which otherwise have been neglected by the mainstream population geographers in India. This book seems to be the outcome of a well-meaning attempt to provide students and instructors a lucidly written, yet comprehensive text on population geography. Writing a book like the one under review is a strenuous task and I also feel that it is really difficult to cover all aspects of population geography in a single book. However, I feel the absence of any discussion on population projection and applications of new technologies such as remote sensing and geographic information system in demographic studies from the book. It would be really nice if the author can consider including separate sections on these aspects in the next edition of the book. Nevertheless, this book will definitely serve as a key text for students, researchers and academicians having interest in population studies. I must say this book will be an indispensable read for population geographers in India.

**Sibabrata Das**

Professor of Geography  
Gangadhar Meher University, Sambalpur  
(on *Lien* from Ravenshaw University, Cuttack)  
Email: sibabrata2007@gmail.com