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Falling fertility rate

- The fertility rate is the average number of children a woman can have in her lifetime.
- A 2021 study by the Global Burden of Disease Organization estimated that the fertility rate in India, which was 6.18 in 1950, had declined to 1.9 in 2021 and could fall to 1.04 by 2100.

Reasons

- In India, while ongoing programs like family planning have contributed to the decline in fertility rates, the main reason for the decline in fertility rates is the progress women have made in education and labor force participation over the past 10 years.
- Social views on marriage and having children are changing.
- Working women, in particular, prioritize achieving economic self-sufficiency over marriage and motherhood.
- Due to the economic burden of rising inflation, caring for a child becomes a major challenge when both husband and wife go to work.
- To deal with this problem, many people end up postponing having children or thinking that one child is enough.
- Next, young people who go abroad for higher studies are interested in obtaining citizenship there. So migration is also a major reason for the declining fertility rate in India. Doctors say that the childlessness rate has increased due to health problems among married men and women due to changes in diet and lifestyle.

Status in India

- Fertility rate in India is gradually declining. According to the fourth National Family Health Survey conducted in 2015-16, the fertility rate was 2.2. This number dropped to 2.0 in 2019-21.
- To maintain a stable population of a state, new births are needed in line with the number of deaths. This is what we call replacement level fertility.
- Accordingly, the replacement fertility rate in the states of Bihar(3.0), Meghalaya(2.9), Uttar Pradesh(2.3), Jharkhand(2.2) and Manipur(2.1) is higher than expected.
- South Indian states have suffered a decline in this regard. South Indian states have been performing well in terms of replacement fertility rate over time. Kerala in particular achieved the target of replacement fertility rate in the 1980s, Tamil Nadu in 1903, and other South Indian states in 2000.
- But there has been a change in the fertility rate in the last 10 years. In the states of Kerala, Tamil Nadu, Telangana,

Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka, the fertility rate has gone up to 1.6. In Tamil Nadu, the fertility rate is 1.4.

- For this reason, the Andhra Pradesh government is urging people to have more children. It was noted that Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister Chandrababu Naidu had announced that only those with more than two children would be able to contest local body elections, thereby preventing population decline.

Impacts

- A country's declining fertility rate will have an impact on various levels, including society, politics, and economics. Declining fertility rates are leading to population decline in South India.
- As the number of young people declines and the number of elderly people increases, there is an increasing need for states to strengthen their health and social systems accordingly.
- Apart from that, states like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar may get additional seats based on population in the parliamentary constituency reshuffle.
- On the other hand, there is a fear that states like Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh, and Kerala, which have smaller populations, may lose their seats in Parliament.
- Furthermore, when funds are allocated based on population, southern Indian states may face a financial deficit. These states will not be able to act independently when formulating policies for the welfare of the state.

Is it possible to increase?

- The decline in fertility rates has been largely irreversible. However, South Korea is now providing an example of how positive measures can increase low fertility rates.
- The fertility rate in South Korea fell from 0.78 in 2022 to 0.72 in 2023.
- The South Korean government has taken emergency measures to increase the fertility rate and announced various financial incentives for the population. As a result, the country announced that the birth rate increased by 3% in 2024 compared to 2023.
- The United Nations Population Fund has said that the elderly population in India will increase to 20 percent by 2050. Accordingly, the government should take the initiative in formulating socio-economic policies for health care and a fulfilling life.

