

COURSE- B.A. GEOGRAPHY

PART -III

TOPIC-MALTHUSIAN THEORY OF POPULATION

By

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INTRODUCTION

- Thomas Robert Malthus(1766-1834), a British economist was first to appreciate the close relationship between the population growth and food supply.
- His book **Essays on the Principle of Population as it Affects the future improvement of society** published in 1798 enunciated his view.

- ⦿ Malthus was a pessimist and said that the pressure on increasing population on the food supply would destroy the balance.
- ⦿ He was criticised for his viewpoint.
- ⦿ He gathered data to support his thesis.
- ⦿ He incorporated his researches in the second edition of his essay published in 1803.

THE THEORY

- ◎ The theory is based on three postulates:
 1. Food is essential for man's existence.
 2. The passion between the sexes is essential and it will remain in the present state.
 3. The law of diminishing returns operate in agriculture.

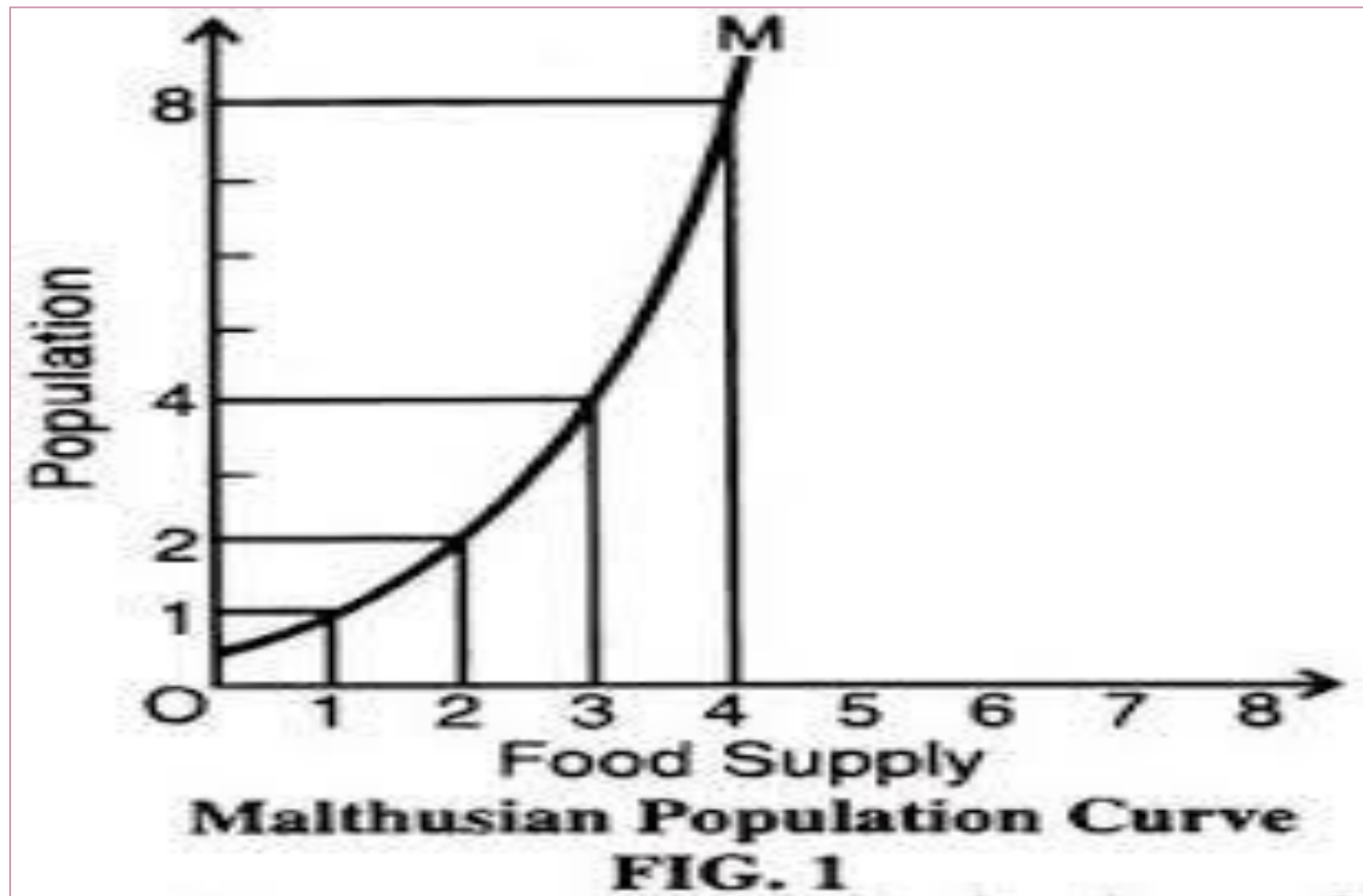
- ⦿ He deduced the power of population is indefinitely greater than the power in earth to produce subsistence (food) for men.
- ⦿ If population is unchecked by preventive check, it will lead to vice or misery.

MALTHUSIAN DOCTRINE

1. There is a natural sex instinct in human beings to increase at a fast rate.
2. Population increases in geometrical progression and if unchecked doubles itself in every 25 years.
3. Thus starting with 1, population in successive period of 25 years will be 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256 (after 200 years).

- On the other hand, food supply increases in a slow arithmetical progression due to operation of law of diminishing returns based on the supposition that the supply of land is constant.
- Thus the food supply in successive similar period will be 1,2,3,4,5, 6, 7,8,9 (after 200 years).
- He wrote the additions that could yearly be made must be gradually and regularly diminishing.

- Population would increase 256 times in its original size in 200 years, while subsistence would increase only 9 times of its original amount.
- Since population increases in geometrical progression and the food supply in arithmetical progression, population tends to outrun food supply.
- Thus, an imbalance is created which leads to over-population.



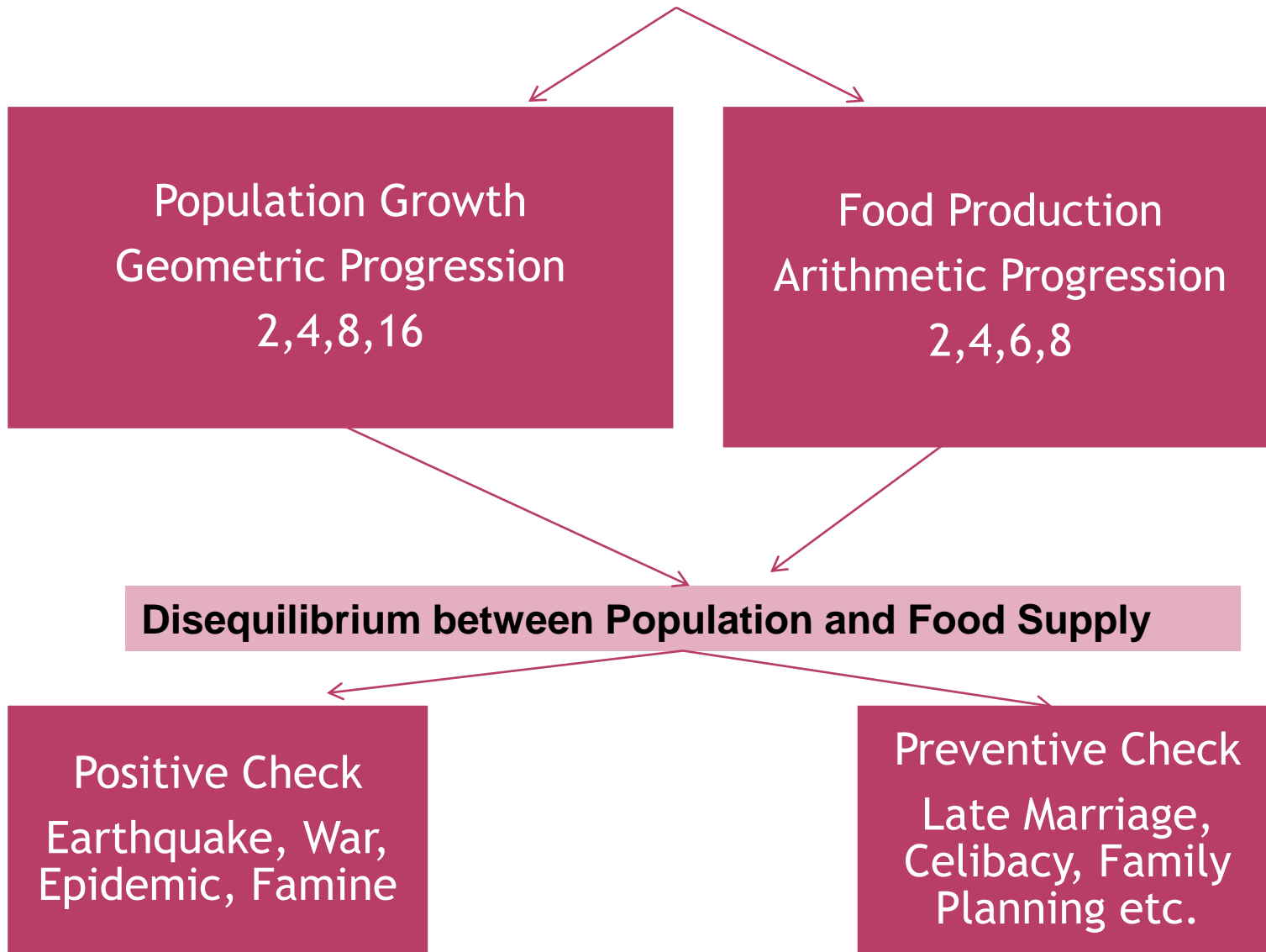
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- ◉ With increasing population pressure on resources will increase.
- ◉ Society will be divided into riches and the poor.
- ◉ It would give rise to capitalistic society.
- ◉ The rich will be richer and the poor will be poorer.

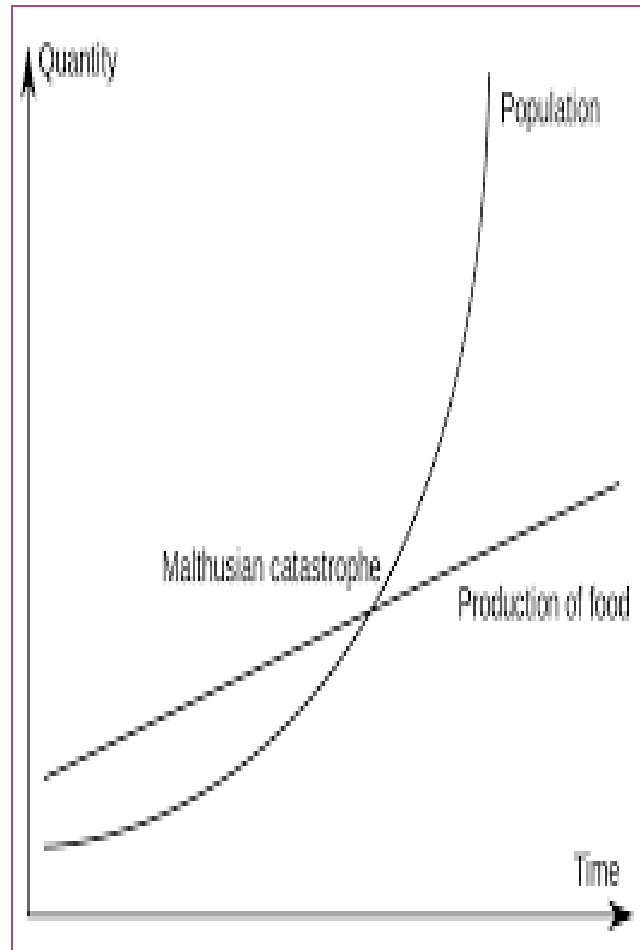
- ◉ To control overpopulation, Malthus suggested preventive checks and positive checks.
- ◉ The preventive checks are applied by man to control the birth rate.
- ◉ They are foresight, late marriage, celibacy, moral restraints etc.
- ◉ Malthus was against artificial method of population control.

- If people fail to check the population by the adoption of preventive checks, positive checks operate in the form of vice, misery, famine, war, disease, flood and other natural calamities which tend to reduce population and thereby bring a balance.
- Preventive checks are always in operation in a civilized society compared to crude positive checks.

SCHEMATIC DIAGRAM OF MALTHUSIAN THEORY OF POPULATION



- Malthus appealed the countrymen to adopt preventive checks in order to avoid vice or misery resulting from positive checks.



Source of Figure: Google Image

CRITICAL ANALYSIS

- The Malthusian theory of population was widely criticized during 19th and early 20th century.
 1. Mathematical Form of theory is wrong.
 2. Failed to foresee the opening up of the new area.
 3. Applied a Static Economic Law to a period of time.
 4. Neglected the manpower aspect of population.

- Population not related to food supply but to total wealth.
- Importance given to foodgrains for livelihoods.
- Increase in population is the result of declining death rate.
- Empirical evidence proves the theory wrong.
- Preventive checks do not pertain to moral restraints
- Difference between sexual desire and desire for children.
- Not relevant in modern World.

APPLICABILITY

- ◉ Despite these weakness, Malthusian theory contains much truth.
- ◉ People of Europe become wiser , started controlling population.
- ◉ The concept of Neo-Malthusian theory become popular after that.
- ◉ Neo-Malthusian theory favoured artificial measure of birth control.
- ◉ Mrs. Margaret Sanger in America and Mrs. Mary Stopes in England were the main exponents

Thank You