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Topic -. Malthusian theory of Population
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Malthusian Theory of Population

The Malthusian Theory of Population is the theory of exponential population and arithmetic food supply growth. The theory was proposed by Thomas Robert Malthus. He believed that a balance between population growth and food supply can be established through preventive and positive checks.

Major Elements of the Malthusian Theory:

Population and Food Supply

The Malthusian theory explained that the population grows in a geometrical fashion.

The population would double (by **geometric progression**) in 25 years at this rate. However, the food supply grows in an **arithmetic progression**. Food supply increases at a slower rate than the population. That is, the food supply will be limited in a few years. The shortage of food supply indicates an increasing population.

Checks on Population

When the increasing population rate is greater than the food supply, disequilibrium exists. As a result, people will not get enough food even for survival. People will die due to lack of food supply. Adversities such as epidemics, wars, starvation, famines and other natural calamities will crop up which are named as positive checks by Malthus. On the contrary, there are man-made checks known as preventive checks.

Positive Checks

Nature has its own ways of keeping a check on the increasing population. It brings the population level to the level of the available food supply. The positive checks include famines, earthquakes, flood, epidemics, wars, etc. Nature plays up when the population growth goes out of hand.

Preventive Checks

The preventive measures such as late marriage, self-control, simple living, help to balance the population growth and food supply. These measures not only check the population growth, but can also prevent the catastrophic effects of the positive checks.

Criticism of Malthusian Theory of Population

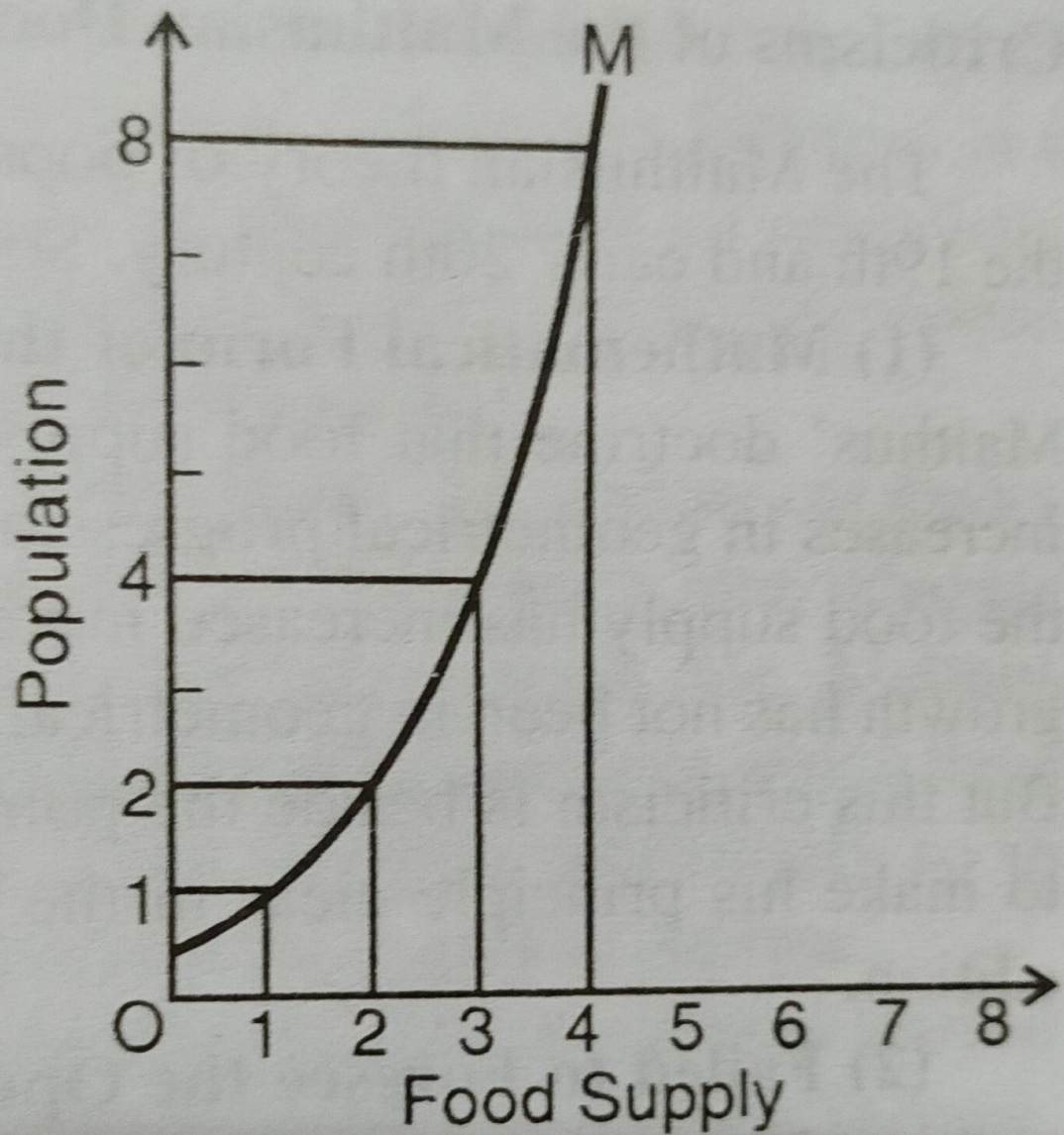
The Malthusian theory was criticised based on the following observations:

In Western Europe, the population was rising at a rapid rate. At the same time, the food supply had also increased due to technological developments.

Many times, food production had increased more than the population. For eg., 2% of the total population is working in the agricultural sector in the US. Still, the total GDP is more than 14 trillion dollars.

Malthus theory stated that one of the reasons for limited food supply is non-availability of land. However, the amount of food supply in various countries has increased due to increased globalization.

The estimations for the geometric growth of population and arithmetic growth of population were not provided by Malthus. It was stated that the rate of growth is not consistent with Malthus' theory.



Malthusian Population Curve

Malthusian Theory of Population

