

KNOWLEDGE AND PRACTICE OF CONTRACEPTION IN INDIA: A SURVEY OF SOME RECENT STUDIES

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INFORMATION on the level of knowledge and practice of contraception is essential for the effective planning, execution and extension of family planning programmes. The available data in this regard in India are patchy. They largely emanate from the demographic inquiries that have been carried out, evidently with varying degrees of statistical accuracy, in a few selected parts of the country by different organisations and agencies. The collection of data for the country as a whole is, obviously a difficult task. Efforts are, however, being made for the collection of some basic information on family planning on an all-India scale through the medium of the National Sample Survey (NSS) Organisation. In the sixteenth round of the NSS (1960-61) there is provision for the collection of certain items of information of family planning, but the scope of the inquiry had to be restricted to cover only the urban areas. Even in the USA where the application of sampling to human populations has been widely accepted, the first representative inquiry — that of Freedman, Whelpton and Campbell¹ — was undertaken in 1955. In Europe there is still considerable reluctance to probe into the intimate aspects of fertility behaviour except in a doctor-patient situation. That was one of the reasons why the comprehensive inquiry by Lewis-Faning² was confined to women in hospitals. Since then two studies³ were reported to have been carried out in Britain in 1959 and 1960. If even in these countries the attitude of the people to this question is in general reticent, it would be all the more difficult to obtain reasonably adequate and acceptable statistics regarding contraception from our population. Thus, a correct assessment of the present status of family planning in the country is by no means an easy task. However, in view of the innumerable difficulties in obtaining comprehensive data and also in view of the priority assigned to this subject in the programme of national development,

¹ Freedman, R., Whelpton, P.K., and Campbell, A.A., *Family Planning, Sterility and Population Growth*, McGraw-Hill Book Company Inc., New York, (1959).

² Lewis-Faning, E., 'Report on an enquiry into family limitations and its influence on human fertility during the past 50 years,' *Papers of the Royal Commission on Population*, Vol. 1, London, (1949).

³ Glass, D.V., *Family limitation in Europe: A survey of recent studies*, Conference on Research in Family Planning, New York, (1960).