

DEMOGRAPHIC EFFECTS OF A LARGE-SCALE STERILIZATION POLICY*

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THE emphasis given to policy for large-scale surgical sterilization of men and women in India today arises from her demographic predicament. The population of India has been growing at an annual rate of over two per cent during the period 1951-61 and it has been estimated that if the birth rate is not reduced, the population will increase to 492 million by 1966 and 555 million by 1971. Experience during the last few years has shown that sterilization as a method of fertility control has gained wide acceptance in both the urban and rural areas of India and in a number of states especially Madras, Maharashtra, Gujarat and Kerala, the state Governments attach great importance to large-scale sterilization campaigns. The effectiveness of such campaigns will depend not only on the number of sterilizations done, but also on the ages of the persons sterilized as age has a bearing on future reproduction. At present there is no uniformity in the procedures followed in the different states. Our interest is to assess theoretically the effect, which different sterilization policies are likely to have on future population growth. In this paper attention is confined to the study of the demographic effects of a policy advocated by Shri R. A. Gopaldaswami which he describes as follows:

"Considering a typical local community of 1,000 persons, there would be 180 married couples in the child-bearing stage of their married life. Among them, there would be 70 married couples with wives in the age group 25-34. If every married couple decided to have either vasectomy or salpingectomy at some stage in the ten-year period, the average annual number required to be sterilized would be one-tenth of 70, that is 7. Among these women, it may be assumed that two would be able to limit the family by other methods throughout their child-bearing period. In every community of 1,000 people, it is to be expected that there would be 5 married couples who would need sterilization every year".¹

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¹ Gopaldaswami, R.A., "Administrative Implementation of Family Planning Policy", Government of Madras, 1959.