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THE SIGNIFICANCE OF
CULTURAL TRADITION FOR
CONTRACEPTIVE CHANGE:
A STUDY OF RURAL INDIAN WOMEN

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**THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CULTURAL TRADITION
FOR CONTRACEPTIVE CHANGE:
A STUDY OF RURAL INDIAN WOMEN**

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SUBMITTED TO THE
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PREFACE

A central question in modern demographic literature is whether family planning programs can be expected to succeed prior to other basic changes in society. This study provides a partial answer to this question by an intensive investigation of rural Indian society. The findings allow us to assess the relationships between cultural factors, fertility and contraception, and to predict the possible success of motivational family planning campaigns in a situation where notable social change has not yet taken place. The present work focuses upon women in Gove, a village in Satara District, Maharashtra, and involves all currently married women in the fertile age group. The main question to be answered is what effect cultural traditions, which dictate the woman's role and orientation in society, have upon fertility and contraceptive behaviour.

A special contribution of this study is that it adds to our knowledge of rural Indian female attitudes concerning modernization. Much of the research on the relationship between cultural values and fertility has dealt with men, mainly because men are more accessible to researchers, especially in developing countries, and more open to new ideas. Recently, however, demographers have pointed out that the dearth of literature on females is a serious shortcoming for

an understanding of the impact of modernization on fertility. It is now recognized that women with modern ideas can be very influential in the process of social change as mothers, participants in the labour force, and in the general social structure. Hence this study is timely in that it augments our knowledge of the role of rural females in the development process.

My work in Poona began in January 1975. The first nine months were spent in designing the study, selection of the survey village and in learning the Marathi language. During the next nine months, I lived in Gove, the village chosen for the research, surveying all households and eligible women within these households. The remaining phases included data processing at the Physical Research Laboratory in Ahmedabad and the writing of the thesis in Poona.

There has been no attempt to hide the name of the village studied since it has been useful to compare our findings with earlier Gokhale Institute surveys in which village names were mentioned. However, care has been taken to conceal the names of survey respondents and other informants.

It gives me pleasure to acknowledge the assistance of those persons and institutions which made this study possible. I would first like to thank my guide, Professor Kumudini Dandekar, for her invaluable advice, encouragement and supervision throughout the entire research. Without her

unfailing dedication and patience, this work would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank Professor V. M. Dandekar, Director of the Gokhale Institute of Politics and Economics, for generously providing the facilities and access to local resources necessary for this research. I am also very grateful to Mr. D. P. Apte, Registrar of the Gokhale Institute, for his advice and encouragement throughout my doctoral work.

I wish to thank Dr. J. R. Rele of the International Institute for Population Studies for giving me full use of the Institute's facilities, and to him and his staff for their helpful suggestions and interest in my project. In this connection I am especially grateful to Dr. Asha Bhende and Mrs. Sumati Kulkarni. I also wish to acknowledge the cooperation of the Physical Research Laboratory, Ahmedabad, in allowing me to utilize its computer facilities.

It is impossible to mention here all the hospitable people in Gove who made my stay there the most memorable phase of my Ph.D. work. I am especially indebted to K. M. Gadgil and his family for providing living quarters and for accepting me into their home almost as a family member. Secondly, I wish to thank my close friend and assistant, Anjali Jadhav, for her enthusiasm and unwavering dedication to the work, and also her father "Shahir" Bhosle, for his hospitality and help on so many occasions. This research could not have been done without the understanding assistance of the village leaders,

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