CHAPTER - VIII
SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

We commenced this enquiry by tracing the evolution and growth of the family planning programme in India. Starting modestly in the first Five Year Plan with a Clinic Approach, the programme took wing in the Third Five Year Plan, when the Clinic Approach was abandoned in favour of the Extension Education Approach. Even as the Extension Education Approach was being consolidated, at the instance of U.N. agencies and international experts, the strategy was altered with the emphasis now being placed on I.U.C.D. Appropriate changes were introduced in organisation and manpower.

The euphoria generated by the I.U.C.D., however, was short-lived as the programme performance soon baulked. The strategy was again modified in favour of vasectomy, in what was called the Camp Approach, during the Fourth Plan period. The Camp Approach, however, proved difficult to sustain; and towards the end of the Fourth Plan period, the programme again faltered. Vasectomy continued to be the favoured strategy, and was carried out in the Fifth Plan period, at times with coercion, thereby leading to its failure. Concerns in family planning had by now come to dominate and contour health policy. In the Sixth Plan period, the strategy was altered towards family welfare -- although in practice, the programme relied almost entirely on female sterilisation. Towards the end of the Seventh Plan, it was increasingly, albeit grudgingly, being realised that the colossal programme had reached a dead end.

The family planning programme in India is one programme which has not been afflicted with lack of political will. Nor is there a dearth of funds and expertise: it has been remarked that "perhaps in no other project has so much foreign 'expertise' been available as in the family planning programme."(1) Yet it is clear that the programme has, quite simply, failed to take off. A major factor responsible, we suggested, was in the manner in which the "problem" had been defined and understood -- a manner in essence Neo-Malthusian.
Briefly exploring the Malthusian doctrine of the relationship between population and resources, we encountered fundamental problems, both conceptual and methodological. The historical experience of the West in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, when a surge of population growth was accompanied by rapid increases in standards of living, undermined the credibility of Malthusianism. But more than a century later, due to a number of complex factors which we considered briefly, the doctrine again assumed respectability: as Neo-Malthusianism, which continues to dominate most discussions on the population question. Examining the basis of Neo-Malthusianism, we encountered similar conceptual and methodological problems. Empirical evidence again highlights the limitations of this understanding of the population issue.

A fundamental consequence of Neo-Malthusianism is the conceptualisation of a community as a homogenous entity, an agglomeration of individuals. This colours most research in the field of family planning -- an area, perhaps, in which most research in the health field have been conducted. As a result, that the factors which mould fertility and behaviour could be different among different sections of the population, does not obtain the attention it deserves. We therefore come upon the ironic fact that an author, after surveying all the research in the area, wonders if there are social differences in fertility.(2)

Surveying literature, we find that while there is no dearth of material on the impact of a large number of factors on fertility -- and thus the response to family planning, there is a singular lack of material on the spread, behaviour and impact of these factors in different classes within the population. What, for example, is the experience of infant and child mortality among different classes? How does this differential bear on family size? Is there differential access to health and family welfare services? These were some of the issues we set out to explore in this study.

Stratification of the study population, especially in a primarily agrarian population, was of critical importance. The criterion that we selected for stratification along class lines was the comprehensive index evolved by Patnaik called the Labour Exploitation Ratio. The Labour Exploitation Ratio measures the extent
of hiring in or out of labour in relation to family labour in self-employment. On the basis of this index, it is possible to classify agrarian populations as landlords, rich peasants, middle peasants, small peasants, poor peasants and landless labourers. The first two classes are primarily exploiters of labour; the middle peasants and the small peasants are primarily self-exploited; and the poor peasants and landless labourers are primarily exploited.

The study was conducted in Mandya district of Karnataka, commonly known as the Punjab of South India for the advances made in agriculture. The study villages were selected on the basis of the following criteria:

- that the population is primarily agrarian in an area of assured irrigation;
- that P.H.C. facilities are easily available;
- that the P.H.C. is of average performance in the family planning programme; and
- that the P.H.C. staff are in position.

The study population comprised 584 households. In class terms, there were 41 households of landlords, 229 households of rich peasants, 61 households of middle peasants, 24 households of small peasants, 96 households of landless labourers, and 24 households of non-peasants. The total population covered by the study was 3238 in three villages.

The study population, then, was primarily agrarian. What is more pertinent is that in this area of advanced agriculture, there has indeed occurred a polarisation of classes. Rich peasants constituted the largest category of households, followed by landless labourers and poor peasants. The data on class by landholding categories revealed that Patnaik's assertion, of the inadequacy of landholding as a criterion for stratification, is entirely justified -- for each landholding category comprised households of diverse class categories. The data also indicated the extreme concentration of land: the majority of households held miniscule holdings or were landless. In caste terms, the largest number of households belonged to the peasant caste of vokkaliga who formed almost 60 per cent of the households. The second
largest caste group was of the Scheduled Caste of adikarnataka, who formed 19 per cent of the households. What the caste and class data also suggests is that along with the polarisation on class lines, there exists a caste polarisation. The peasant castes, who form 60 per cent of the households, are represented by 36 per cent in the lowest class rung; whereas the Scheduled Castes, who form 23 per cent of the households, constitute 34 per cent in this rung. In other words, the peasant castes are relatively over-represented in the upper class rung, while the dalits are relatively over-represented in the lowest class rung.

Caste groups, however, are not homogenous entities. The data presented also reveals sharply the class differences within each caste group, with marked stratification in all of them. Caste has, however, undergone profound changes in the study population as the qualitative data presented indicate.

Coming now to the demographic findings, the data on household size indicated that in all the classes -- with the notable exception of the landless -- the most frequent household size comprised five to nine individuals. Among the landless labourers, however, the most frequent household size was of one to four individuals. A larger household size is associated with a higher class position. We found also that the household size is positively associated with landholding. The landlord class had the largest mean household size of 6.59, while the landless labourers had the smallest mean household size of 5.11. The difference is statistically significant.

The data on family size in these classes is equally revealing. Among the landlords and the rich peasants, a family size of five to nine individuals was the most frequent; while in the other classes, a family size of one to four individuals is the more frequent. As we go down the class ladder from the small peasant class, there is an unambiguous shift to a smaller family size. The largest proportion of families with one to four individuals is among the non-peasants, followed by the landless labourers; the smallest proportion is among landlords followed by rich peasants. In other words, with declining class status is associated a smaller family size. The landlord class had the largest mean family size of 5.02, followed by the rich peasants with a mean family size of 4.76. The landless labourer class had the smallest mean
family size of 4.33, followed, among the peasantry, by the poor peasants with a mean family size of 4.42. The non-peasants had a mean family size of 4.38, smaller than all the peasant classes, with the exception of the landless labour class.

The data on the type of families revealed that the proportion of nuclear families was highest in the landless labour class, and lowest in the landlord class. The proportion of extended nuclear families was highest in the landlord class; it was the least in the landless labour class. The proportion of joint families, on the other hand, was highest in the middle peasant class, followed by the landlord class. In the study population as a whole, the proportion of nuclear families was close to 60 per cent. The data confirm Mencher’s finding(3) that the nucleation of families is positively associated with landlessness.

The distribution of families by birth order reveals that in the study population, the maximum number of families fell into the category of three to four births per woman. Women in a considerable number of families, however, had had more than four births. The highest proportion of families where the women had three to four births is among the landlord class, followed by the rich peasant class. The largest proportion of families where the women had one to two births is in the small peasant class, followed by the non-peasants. Grouping the classes, we find that the largest proportion of families with three to four, five to six and seven to eight births per woman is in the classes primarily exploiting labour. The largest proportion of families with one to two births alone is among the classes primarily self-exploited; and the lowest among the classes primarily exploiting labour.

Data on the mean number of births in each class reveals interesting findings. It is curious to note that the mean number of births is highest in the rich peasant class, followed by the landlord class. That the rich peasant class has a larger mean number of births, and yet a smaller family size than the landlord class, implies a heavier mortality load in the rich peasant class. Similarly, the poor peasant class has a lower mean number of births in comparison to the landless labour class, and yet has a larger family size. This again implies a larger mortality borne by the landless labour class. The mean number of births among the non-peasants is lower than that
in the peasantry as a whole.

Grouping the classes, we find that the mean number of births per woman is highest at 3.23 in the classes primarily exploiting labour. It declines to 3.10 among the classes primarily self-exploited, and to 3 among the classes primarily exploited. The poorest, comprising the landless labourers and the poor peasants, thus have a lower fertility than the other groups among the peasantry. The non-peasants have the lowest fertility; the mean number of births per woman among them is 2.85.

Coming now to the experience of infant mortality, of the 670 families in the study, 75.2 per cent had not experienced an infant death. That close to a quarter of the families in this agriculturally dynamic and relatively prosperous area should have suffered the death of an infant is in itself significant. But how is this load of infant mortality distributed among the classes?

The largest proportion of families not experiencing an infant's death is among the landlord class; the lowest proportion is among the landless labourers. In the rich peasant class, the proportion of families experiencing no infant death is surprisingly higher than in the middle peasant, small peasant and even the poor peasant classes. The highest proportion of one infant death per family is among the rich peasants; while the highest proportion of two infant deaths per family is among the landless labourers. Grouping the classes, however, we find that the mean deaths per family is least in the classes primarily exploiting labour; it increases among the primarily self-exploited and is the highest among the primarily exploited. The lowest mean infant death is among the non-peasants. The mean infant death per family is 0.36 among the classes primarily exploiting labour; it increases to 0.39 among the classes primarily self-exploited, and to 0.45 among the classes primarily exploited. It is 0.27 among the non-peasants.

In the study population, 614 families, representing 91.6 per cent, had been spared the experience of the death of a child in the family. However, a not inconsiderable 56 families, representing 8.4 per cent, had a child in the family die. Of these, 47 families, representing seven per cent, had lost one child; seven families, representing one per cent, had lost two children; while in two families, representing
0.3 per cent, there had been three child deaths. The highest proportion of families not to have suffered a child's death is in the small peasant class, followed by the landlord class. The lowest proportion is in the landless labour class, followed, among the peasantry, by the poor peasant class.

Grouping the classes, we find that the child mortality experience is most favourable among the classes primarily self-exploited. The classes primarily exploited bore a larger brunt of child mortality than the other classes; a little more than one in ten families in this group had lost a child. Although the numbers involved are small and therefore subject to the influence of random variations, the child mortality among non-peasants is surprising, especially as this group had the most favourable experience of infant mortality.

In order to understand the plausible reasons for the unexpected child mortality experience among the non-peasants and the rich peasants -- who also had a rather high infant mortality load -- we considered the age structure of the women in the reproductive age group. In a region with a secular decline of mortality, it could be expected that the mortality load would be higher among cohorts of women in the older age groups than in the younger. We found the highest proportion of mothers in the age group 16 to 25 years was in the small peasant class, followed by the middle peasant class. It is possible that these classes, by virtue of their age composition, have obtained the most benefit from the declines in mortality; while conversely, the non-peasants and the rich peasants -- who have the largest proportion of mothers in the age group 26 to 35 years -- have not so benefitted.

We considered next women's work participation among the different classes. In the total sample, in 242 families, representing 36.11 per cent, the women considered themselves housewives. The women in 208 families, representing 31.04 per cent, were primarily employed on their own lands. In 205 families, representing 30.05 per cent, the women were primarily agricultural labourers, and in 15 families, representing 2.23 per cent, the employment status was "others". The classwise data reveals the enormous range of women's work participation. Any generalisation about rural women's work participation would, therefore, be facile since each class is so
unique. The proportion of women considering themselves housewives ranges from a high of 97.87 per cent among landlords, to 12.06 per cent among the class of landless labourers. The highest proportion of women primarily employed on their own farms is among the middle peasants, and the lowest among the poor peasants. What is also striking is the extent of involvement of women in the labour market. Women in 14.10 per cent of families in the middle peasant class hire out their labour. The proportion progressively increases to 85.34 per cent in the landless labour class. The total figure blurs out these classwise distinctions. Equally striking is that there has been so little diversification of employment opportunities for women. The vast majority of women who have entered the labour market continue to be tied to agriculture with the utterly negligible proportion of "others".

It is generally considered that women’s employment has necessarily favourable demographic consequences. Our data suggests that this understanding, rather simplistic at best, does not apply in agriculture -- where women's employment is seen to be associated with a higher infant and child mortality load, even as it is associated with a smaller family size.

The data on the age at marriage of women shows that the largest proportion of women getting married at the relatively early age range of 16 to 20 years is among the classes primarily self-exploited, followed by the classes primarily exploiting labour. The lowest proportion is among the non-peasants. The largest proportion of women getting married at the relatively later age of 21 to 25 years is among the non­-peasants, followed by the classes primarily exploited. What our data also reveals is that although there are classwise differences in the age at marriage of women, they are not marked enough to be statistically significant. This raises the interesting question of whether the importance of the age at marriage of women is exaggerated in literature.

Before considering the quantitative data on the economic activities of children, and parental perception of children as economic assets and as sources of security in old age, we presented qualitative data which indicated that there have been profound changes in all these aspects. We then considered the quantitative data.
For our purposes we defined children as being between five and fifteen years of age and considered the data on boys and girls separately. In the study population we do not find significant involvement of male children in agricultural activities on their own lands. The farm work participation of sons is least among the landlord class; it is highest in the small peasant class, followed by the poor peasant class. The involvement of daughters in agricultural farm labour is even less widespread. It is only among the poor peasants that there is some amount of involvement of female children in farm work. The involvement of sons in wage labour is even less prevalent in this population. It is only among the poor peasants and the landless labourers that we find a few families hiring out the labour of their male children in agricultural work. This is true of the involvement of daughters in wage labour also. The data indicate that in the study population, the expectation of an income stream from a child would not be borne out, for we find very few families -- in the poor peasant class and the landless labour class -- with their sons earning in the non agricultural sector also.

It is frequently maintained that in agricultural economies, children who may not participate in income earning activities nevertheless contribute to the family economy, by undertaking tasks that will free adults in the family to generate incomes. We therefore obtained data on the participation of children in grazing animals, fetching water, collecting firewood, helping with household work and the care of siblings.

In the population as a whole, in 587 families, representing 87.6 per cent, sons are not involved in grazing animals, and in 644 families, representing 96.1 per cent, daughters are not involved in grazing animals. In the case of male children, the proportion grazing animals in the rich peasant class is higher than in other classes; while in the case of female children, the proportion in the poor peasant class is higher than in other classes. In this context, it is relevant to mention that grazing animals is not an important economic activity since the region has also witnessed what has been referred to as the white revolution. Milch animals, therefore, belong to species
which are stall fed and cared for by adults.

In the study population, in 95.1 per cent of families no male child, and in 93.4 per cent of families, no female child, is involved in collecting firewood or other fuel for the family. The involvement of children in the primarily exploited classes is slightly higher than in the others, although the participation of children in fuel gathering is not very significant in the study population. As in the case of grazing animals, no child in the landlord class and among the non-peasants is involved in collecting firewood.

In only 34 families, representing 5.07 per cent, are male children involved in fetching water for the needs of the family. For female children, on the other hand, this is an important activity with girls in 151 families, representing 22.53 per cent, fetching water. Fetching water is an arduous task, but in the vast majority of families, children do not help with this chore. While there certainly are class differentials in work participation, what is more significant is the gender differences.

We defined housework as involvement in cleaning the home, washing clothes and dishes, helping in the preparation of food and in cooking. In the population as a whole, in only 29 families, representing 4.32 per cent, do male children help with housework. In marked contrast, in 167 families, representing 24.92 per cent, female children help in household chores. The children in the primarily exploited classes participate the most in housework, while the children in the landlord class and among the non-peasants do the least.

Hardly any male children relieve the burden of the care of younger siblings. And in only 58 families, representing 8.65 per cent, do female children help with sibling care. The proportion of female children helping with sibling care is highest among the non-peasants and the rich peasants.

The data, then, indicate that the role of children in the home economies of this population is very marginal indeed. The economic role of children appears to have been transformed fundamentally in this population. The quantitative data substantiates the findings of the qualitative data.
What is the parental perception of children as sources of security in old age, the insurance motive for children? In the total population, parents in 373 families, representing 55.7 per cent, perceive their children as providers of security in old age. Considering the population is primarily agrarian, it is surprising that this proportion is not considerably higher. In as many as 203 families, representing a substantial 30.3 per cent, the parents categorically do not consider children as a source of security in old age. In 13 families, representing 1.9 per cent, parents considered sons alone as providers of security; while in 81 families, representing 12 per cent, they were uncertain.

But how is this perception shared between the classes? In the landlord class, 57.44 per cent of parents perceive their children as sources of security in old age. In the rich peasant class, the proportion increases to 68.58 per cent. In the middle peasant class, the proportion comes down to 65.38 per cent. From the small peasant class onwards, there is an unambiguous shift: in the small peasant class, the proportion perceiving their children as a source of security in old age declines to 48.27 per cent. In the poor peasant class, this proportion is 44.24 per cent, while in the landless labour class, it is 30.17 per cent. The vast majority of parents in this class do not perceive their children as a source of security in old age. Among the non-peasants, 65.38 per cent of parents view children as a source of security in old age.

This data, showing striking variations among the classes, highlights the heterogeneity within the peasantry. It forcefully underlines the fact that a theoretical construct like "rural mass" is largely chimerical. Each class has a distinct identity even when it comes to shaping parental perception of children as sources of security in old age. As we move down the hierarchy of classes in the peasantry, the proportion of parents perceiving children as sources of security declines; while conversely, that of those not doing so increases.

Do the parents perceive their children as economic assets? In the population as a whole, 293 families, representing 43.7 per cent, felt children were not economic assets. In 197 families, representing 29.4 per cent, parents felt that children were,
in fact, economic assets; while in 52 families, representing 7.8 per cent, parents felt that sons alone were economic assets to the family. In 128 families, representing 19.1 per cent, they were ambiguous.

In the landlord class, 44.68 per cent of parents felt children were not economic assets, while 29.78 per cent felt they were. In the rich peasant class, on the other hand, 27.58 per cent felt children were not economic assets, while 41.76 per cent felt they were. Among the middle peasants, 28.20 per cent of parents felt they were not assets, while 42.30 per cent felt they were. In the small peasant class, 48.27 per cent of parents did not perceive children as economic assets, while 31.03 per cent did. In the poor peasant class, 66.37 per cent of parents did not perceive children as economic assets, while 18.58 per cent did. Among the landless labourers, 62.06 per cent of parents did not think children were economic assets, while only 8.62 per cent thought they were. Among the non-peasants, parents in 65.38 per cent of families felt they were not economic assets, while in 3.84 per cent of families they felt they were.

What is most striking about this data, again, is the almost unique response in each class. This indeed lends credence to Patnaik's assertion that agrarian populations cannot legitimately be viewed bereft of class characteristics.

All these factors together contribute to what the idealised family would comprise. What then is the desired family size? In the population as a whole, parents in 203 families, representing 30.23 per cent, thought a desired family comprised two children, a boy and a girl. In 244 families, representing 36.41 per cent, they felt an ideal family should comprise three children, two boys and a girl. In as many as 164 families, representing 24.5 per cent, parents felt a family must have four children, two boys and two girls. Parents in the other families gave other responses.

In the landlord class, parents in 31.97 per cent of families, opined that a desired family would comprise two children, a son and a daughter. Parents in 34.04 per cent of families felt an ideal family would comprise two sons and a daughter. In 29.78 per cent of families they felt a desired family would have two boys and two
In the rich peasant class, parents in a lower proportion of families, 21.45 per cent, idealised a family of two children, a boy and a girl. In 42.52 per cent of families they felt a desirable family would comprise two sons and a daughter, and in 29.88 per cent of families, two sons and two daughters.

In the middle peasant class, parents in 35.89 per cent of families felt a desirable family would comprise two children, a son and a daughter; while in 28.20 per cent of families they thought it was three children, two sons and a daughter. In 26.92 per cent of families they idealised a family of two sons and two daughters.

In the small peasant class, parents in 20.68 per cent of families felt a desirable family would comprise two children, one son and a daughter. In 41.37 per cent of families, the parents felt a desired family would have two sons and a daughter, and in 24.13 per cent of families, two sons and two daughters.

In the poor peasant class, parents in 36.28 per cent of families opined that a desired family would be of two children, one son and a daughter. In 30.97 per cent of families, they felt a desirable family would comprise two sons and a daughter; and in 25.66 per cent of families, two sons and two daughters.

In the landless labour class, parents in 36.20 per cent of families felt a desired family would comprise two children, a son and a daughter. In 32.75 per cent of families they felt it would consist of two sons and one daughter, and in only 12.93 per cent of families, two sons and two daughters. Among the non-peasants, 57.69 per cent of parents idealised a family of two children, a son and a daughter, and in 38.46 per cent of families, two sons and a daughter.

In general, the peasants idealised a larger family than the non-peasants. What is also striking is that in all families, an ideal family includes a daughter. In sum, the rich peasants and the middle peasants idealised a larger family; while the poor peasants and the landless labourers did not. With the exception of the landless labourers, substantial sections of the peasantry idealised a family of four children, two boys and two girls.

A large number of factors that we have studied, among others, together condition and create differential needs for health and family welfare services. We
then explored the response of the primary health centre to these differential needs.

We first studied the data on the utilisation of P.H.C. services. In the study population as a whole, 66 per cent of families utilise the P.H.C., while a significant 27 per cent do not. There were, of course, class differentials in the utilisation of the P.H.C. It was maximum among the middle peasants, followed by the landlord class; it was the least among the non-peasants, followed by the small peasants. Among the poor peasants, the proportion utilising the P.H.C. is lower than among the landlord, rich peasant and middle peasant classes, although higher than in the small peasant class. Among the landless labourers, the proportion utilising the P.H.C. was higher than in the poor peasant class.

Hardly any of the families utilise the P.H.C. because they have a positive image of it. The majority of families, nearly 60 per cent, do so because it is conveniently located. About five per cent of families utilise the P.H.C. for the treatment of minor ailments alone. Close to 18 per cent of families do not utilise the P.H.C. as they perceive it as useless. About eight per cent of families do not utilise the P.H.C., favouring better services provided elsewhere.

Among the landlords, the proportion not utilising the P.H.C. because they obtain better services elsewhere, is significantly higher than in the population as a whole. This proportion is lower in the rich peasant class, although it is higher than in the other classes. In the small peasant and poor peasant classes, significant proportions of families do not utilise the P.H.C. as it is perceived as useless. Again, among the non-peasants, a substantial proportion of families avoided the P.H.C. in favour of better services provided elsewhere. What clearly emerges from the data is the overall negative image of the P.H.C. and of the services offered; those who can afford to, tend to obtain better services elsewhere.

Looking at the data on domiciliary visits carried out by the A.N.M., we found that in the landlord, rich peasant and middle peasant classes, larger proportions of families had received home visits than among the small peasants and landless labourers. Among the landless labourers, the majority of families had not been visited by the A.N.M.
The B.H.W. had visited a larger proportion of families than the A.N.M. The highest proportion of families receiving domiciliary visits is in the landlord class, followed by the middle peasant and rich peasant classes. The lowest proportion is in the small peasant class, followed by the landless labour and poor peasant classes. Again, among the non-peasants, a larger proportion of families had been favoured by home visits.

The B.H.W., essentially carrying out malaria surveillance activities, made more widespread home visits than the A.N.M., who was essentially carrying out family welfare activities. But what is most striking is that both the A.N.M. and the B.H.W. favoured the upper classes among the peasants and the non-peasants with their home visits. They visit more families in the better off sections; and these visits are also more frequent.

The purpose of the home visits by the health workers as perceived by the study population offers interesting insights. Forty per cent were unaware of the purpose of home visits. Close to 30 per cent stated that the purpose was the treatment of minor ailments. About 10 per cent stated that the purpose was anti-malaria work, while an almost similar proportion stated that it was due to family planning work. About nine per cent felt that it was merely to mark their attendance. Only 3.7 per cent of the families stated that the purpose was related to M.C.H. activities. There were, however, significant differentials in perception among the different classes.

Among the landlords, rich peasants and middle peasants, the proportion of families perceiving the reason for domiciliary visits as the treatment of minor ailments is higher than in the other classes in the peasantry. Among the small peasants, the poor peasants and the landless labourers, larger proportions were either unaware of the reason for home visits, or cynically stated that the purpose was merely to mark attendance. The proportion of families attributing the purpose of home visits to family planning work is the highest in the landless labour class, which also has the lowest proportion attributing the reason to M.C.H. activities.
Reflecting the priorities of the health system, in 56.7 per cent of the families, women had been asked to undergo tubectomy. In close to six per cent of families, pressure had been applied on the women to accept sterilisation. Although the women in a substantial number of families had been offered sterilisation, the proportions in the upper classes was higher. In the landless labour class, the proportion of families wherein pressure had been brought to bear to accept tubectomy, was substantially higher than in the other classes.

The coverage with other methods of family planning is so abysmally low that class comparisons are redundant; although we do find that vasectomy has been offered almost exclusively in the poor peasant and landless labour classes. In only 2.8 per cent of families in the population as a whole had the women been offered an I.U.C.D, and in 1.8 per cent, the oral pill. Condoms had been offered to men in 0.3 per cent of families.

In the study population, about 45 per cent of the families had accepted family planning, while it had been rejected in about 15 per cent of families. The decision had been postponed by 27 per cent. The acceptance of family planning had been the highest in the landlord class; it was the least in the peasantry among the landless labourers. Significantly, however, the largest proportion of families where acceptance was obtained through coercion was in the landless labour class. Acceptance of family planning was astonishingly low among the non-peasants.

Ante-natal care had been provided to women in 36.5 per cent of families. Compared to the coverage with family planning services, the coverage with family welfare services -- as exemplified by ante-natal care -- is indeed poor, and reflects the skewed priorities of the health system. What is more significant is that the over-all figure of coverage, poor as it is, masks the differential coverage between the classes in the study population. Ironically, the classes which have a higher infant mortality load are seen to obtain less coverage with ante-natal care, compared to the better off classes which have a lower load of infant mortality.

The data on the preferred place of delivery shows that the vast majority of women -- close to 76 per cent -- preferred home delivery provided the pregnancy was
normal. In only six per cent of families did the women prefer to have the delivery conducted at the P.H.C.; and in 2.2 per cent, a government hospital. In 6.9 per cent of families the women preferred to have their deliveries conducted at private hospitals, and in 1.5 per cent, a Christian hospital. Again, there are striking differentials among the various classes. In the landlord class, the proportion preferring institutional delivery was significantly higher than in the other classes. The proportion preferring delivery in hospitals in the private sector is also significantly higher in this class. The largest proportion of women preferring delivery in the P.H.C. is in the landless labour class. The proportions among the non-peasants and the rich peasants preferring institutional delivery in the private sector is also higher than in the other classes.

The quantitative data presented in this section substantiate the finding of the qualitative data. Precisely in those classes with a higher infant and child mortality load are family welfare services neglected; while the better off classes corner whatever services are provided.

Academics as much as planners have not paid adequate attention to social differentials among classes within a population. This study, exploratory in nature, serves to focus on the critical importance of this element: in contouring the spread and impact of a complex web of factors, which ultimately mould the response of discrete sections of the population to the family planning programme.

REFERENCES

