

13.5.91

Dear Chayanika, Suatija, Kamaxi,

Chayanika had asked me to go through the monograph We and Our Fertility and give my, what she said, detailed comments. I think it was in the context of Hindi translation.

So I went through the report/monograph twice and noted down points, for whatever they are worth. ~~There are certain points~~

As I like the overall presentation & ideas, my comments are a matter of details mostly.

The comments can be classified into two categories: ① points on which I would like to clarify things for my own understanding ② points which I think might be reconsidered while preparing the Hindi book.

First my own personal ideas :-

page 7: There is quote here which is not very clear as to whose statement it contains. To me it's not very clear whether penetrative sex is needed only for reproduction. I do agree that this particular aspect of sex is overemphasized for reasons of reproduction, assumedly. But it might not be just that. Anyway, there is no way of knowing and no need to know.

(2)

page 12 top para : you say something to the effect that childcare to become a social responsibility. I dont know if its a suggestion because if it is, one needs to define it in the first place and also see to it that it does not lead to further uniformization. And dont you think that a marriage being a family to family affair is a sort of socialization of child upbringing.

page 14 last but one para :- when the demographers talk of wild fertility, they mean it in a social sense, not ~~or~~ in terms of individual women. so it might be a well regulated process for every woman but socially it might become, what they call, wild. This point is just to say that demographers point cannot be challenged on this ground.

page 33 first para :- you say some are "forced to produce children". I believe you are refering to cultural pressures on women. But to equate these with the brute physical methods of stopping beeth is not very proper.

(3)

page 34 : second para : somewhere you have mentioned that changing people's attitudes has never been the aim of neutral science.

To me the problem seems like this : The routine work in laboratory (what I call stamp collection) might not have this aim because this kind of science activity is done according to a set paradigm of science & society. But there is a realm of science which forces people to change their ways of thinking and behaviour. These changes might not be to our liking but they do occur. And science does play a role. One can think of examples but right now I am not going into that.

page 31 para 2 : The ideas expressed therein seem as if they are lifted from a text book of medicine. I believe there are what can be called the general ~~and~~ trends in medicine, discernible to us.

same page last para : Infertility was always considered one of the worst diseases afflicting women. 75 just that

(4)

the modern technology gives so called "scientific solutions". like, for example, Ayurveda always had remedies for infertility.

And incidentally, the childlessness & infertility ~~have been~~ should be used depending on the

context - ब्राह्मण और संतानहीनता।

page 40 last lines :- what sort of taboos had united the women world over? and was it a desirable state? ~~Its as good as saying that oppression had united people~~ In a way ~~the~~ uniform technology ~~was~~ is also a uniting factor. Any belief system, behavioural norm or technology is context specific. What is progressive for one context might be a regression in another.

page 48 last but one para last line :- population control and birth control have been used to denote some minute ^{& subtle} difference but it is not clear what.

page 69 "We, the women's groups" sounds very pompous and assum~~ing~~.

page 70 first para - There is an indication that women have found ways of controlling their fertility. It must be elaborated.

(5)

72 first para: patients don't know etc. Sometime it's true also. The problem is how does one understand the role of professionals, specialists (meaning a person specializing in any branch of knowledge). Knowing about our own body as a person ~~is~~ is one thing and to understand its processes, malfunctions and cures is another.

77 para 5 In the list skin colour, crooked nose, I don't think poor parents fit in.

I don't know if the list of books for further reading would be useful for a Hindi reader.

And now to go to the second category:-

The question of heterosexual, monogamous etc. has to be dealt with at a much greater length because these issues have not been

discussed among Hindi readership, in general. I don't know how the idea of homosexuality will be received, even within the activists *

I think diagrams should show, where in the body, a particular organ is located (e.g. the pituitary).

I am only afraid that this might evoke a ~~set~~ sense of rejection about the whole book and its approach. One needs to be careful.

(6)

p. 26 last two para - how would these be received? (I sincerely don't know)

p. 30 last para - the argument should be elaborated some more.

Some ~~thought~~ thought might be required to present the graphs and things. That ~~is~~ will depend on the readership you have in mind.

I think the book can almost as such be published in Hindi. It will just require minor explanations here & there. ~~Might be~~ These might even constitute a appendix.

I have roughly jotted down the things. Hope, they will be of some use.

ZsZAM.