

Complex Issues Related to Human Reproduction in Modern Society

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Abstract

The continued evolution of any species depends on the survival of the fittest and nature has its own “Weeding out” process to ensure the continued existence of a species. So it's for humans. Not so long ago, it was common for women to die in childbirth and for premature and severely disabled babies only to survive if they could do so on their own. However, natural selection is not acceptable in modern-day thinking and it is life at all costs if the baby is wanted it and abortion when the child is unwanted. Adding to this disharmony with nature, women are having babies when they want to have them and not when nature determines they should have them. Modern science has a solution for all reproductive issues, infertile women can get pregnant at almost any age and infertile men can be treated. The laws of nature are not obeyed resulting in weakening of the human race and overpopulation. Birth and death are naturally occurring life events. All over the world, healthy babies' are being born without help from doctors, nurses or medical assistance...it is a natural process. It is not suggested that humanity go back to the days before medical advancements, but rather to use modern technology to support natural processes rather than creating the imbalances that we see today. Ayurveda the Science of Life” works in harmony with nature, which is why it is fundamentally important concerning all issues related to human reproduction, including birth control and overpopulation, the use of hormones, fertility, pregnancy, childbirth and cesarean section, care of newborns and unwanted children. Of course, modern-day technology and scientific developments in these areas are necessary, but only as supportive measures for the natural process and emergency care. When allopathy is the only option, then childbirth becomes medicalized which is not only prohibitively expensive, but over time, women are at risk of losing their natural instincts and control of their reproductive right. To fully realize a system which advocates Ayurveda, would be labor intensive and require many different levels of expertise in allopathy and Ayurveda working together. Under the direction of physicians could be Ayurveda practitioner/nurses managing diet and lifestyle with medical assistance and midwifery skills. Lastly, but by no means least, a grass-roots level of volunteer Ayurveda doulas in the community, identifying issues, educating and providing support for all in their reproductive phase of their lives especially single women and unwanted babies and children. Ideally they would become the sorely need extended family to children who have no-one.

Introduction

There has never been a time in recent history when humanity has needed Ayurveda as much as it does today. Humanity is heading towards its own destruction; it is clearly evident that it cannot go on the way it has for the last one hundred years or so. We are slowly but surely destroying the planet on which we live and it may already be too late to save ourselves. Perhaps there is nothing we can do but whatever our fate may be, the answers to life today lie in Ayurveda “The Science of Life “whether the issues are social, political, environmental, economic, cultural or health.

Ayurveda is an evidence based system which addresses physical, mental and spiritual health of all living things. The philosophy behind Ayurveda and Yoga has been in existence for thousands of years and developed because man needed to understand life on earth. Ayurveda is described as an Indian tradition because India has managed to preserve its principles, but the knowledge is universal and timeless. The philosophies of Ayurveda and Yoga are complex concepts, but at the same time are remarkably simple because they are based on the principle of the five elements which is the origin of all things. Once we realize that the energies of the five

elements ether, air, fire, water and earth are everything, every cell of the body, all matter and all living things then we begin to comprehend the magnitude of this knowledge. Understanding the five elements and their evolution from the merging of Prakriti (base substance of the Universe) and Purusha (Source of Consciousness) is not difficult, but does require a shift in thinking for Westerners. The pendulum started to swing away from traditional medicine with the discovery of antibiotics for communicable diseases. Nowadays, every condition, every disease, acute and chronic are medicalized without any regard for ancient knowledge. Modern medicine has evolved over a relatively short period of time and is scientifically based in which there is extensive knowledge, but very little wisdom. Of course, modern-day technology and scientific developments are vitally important and Ayurveda will never be an alternative to it, but neither will allopathic medicine be an alternative to traditional medicine. This is why the future lies in an integrated system based on the philosophy of “Right and appropriate treatment for the patient “not based on a particular system of medicine. No other area demonstrates the dominance of modern medicine than in aspects of human reproduction where ancient knowledge is critically important. When reproductions medicalized, we are hand over our right as individual human beings to be in charge of our lives on earth.

Aspects of Human Reproduction for discussion in this paper are birth control and population explosion, cesarean section, hormones, fertility, breast cancer, pregnancy, newborns and unwanted children.

Population Explosion and Unwanted Children

Global human population continues to explode at an alarming rate and at the same time traditional family structure is disappearing. Human babies are helpless for longer and are more dependent than any other species, yet thousands of babies are abandoned at birth throughout the world, their future at the mercy of fate. Millions of unwanted children are born every year and millions are brought up in by women without male or family support. The issue of unwanted pregnancies and children is a world-wide problem manifesting in all cultures, religions and walks of life, but is particularly prevalent amongst the poor and underserved. Child trafficking is a multi-million-dollar business resulting in prostitution, child pornography, slave labor and violent crime. Children caught in the web of this trend often become the perpetrators and so the cycle continues in ever-increasing circles. Thousands of children are brought up by single women without support, spend their childhood in orphanages or are shuffled around from one foster home to another.

Contraception

Effective birth control is not acceptable in many cultures and at the same time, safe alternative to abortion is not available to most women especially poor, single women. Whether we approve of birth control or not, we must recognize that it is a woman’s

predicament when there is not a man or family support in pregnancy. At One time, men were equally responsible for contraception but over the past 40years or so it has become the responsibility of women. This is partially due to sexual freedom that women have attained which has given men more freedom from the responsibility of pregnancy. The result of this has meant a huge increase in sexually transmitted diseases (STD’s) which were a big deterrent for both men and women when syphilis was life-threatening, but now STD’s are easily treated. Never the less, STD’s are a big issue related to sexual freedom but for most women, the risk of pregnancy is much more of an issue than the risk of STD’s.

Long-term effects of using hormones

Most modern women choose oral contraception because it is more reliable. The statistics in the USA and show that 77% of women of child bearing age (15-44) is taking oral contraceptives as compared to India, which shows 9% of contraceptive use. Despite the wide use of oral contraceptives, just under half of the pregnancies in the USA are “Unintended” (<https://www.guttmacher.org/fact-sheet/unintendedpregnancy-united-states>) and abortion is a common method of birth control. Because women are having children much later in life and are sexually active at a younger age, one can assume that many women can be on oral contraceptives for twenty years or more. Furthermore, 38% of post-menopausal women take Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) meaning that a large proportion of women are taking hormones for most of their lives. Furthermore, many are the second or third generation taking oral contraception for twenty years then HRT and the long-term effects on humanity as a whole, may never be fully realized. However, the effect on the environment is surfacing. Studies of the Pacific NW waters in the US found evidence of pharmaceuticals, particularly hormones; in drinking water and that there productive systems of fish are being affected.

Hormones and Breast Cancer

In the 1960s, breast cancer was considered to be a degenerative disease and only very rarely did it occur in pre-menopausal women. Nowadays it is not uncommon for women under 30 years of age to be diagnosed with breast cancer. Even though the National Cancer Institute claims only a slight increased risk; there must be a connection between breast cancer, oral contraception and HRT. But instead of advising women against taking hormones, more and more money is poured into research to find the cause and cure of cancer.

Risks involved in Fertility Treatment

It has been known for a long time that childbirth at a young age is a defense against breast cancer. Many modern-day couples consider having a family much later in life, even when the woman is approaching menopause and more often than not is unable to conceive. Fertility treatment is the normal course for this group which again involves taking hormones and increases the risk of

breast cancer. Fertility treatment often results in multiple births. A high proportion of these babies is born prematurely and under natural circumstances would not survive, but with modern technology they can be brought to a normal birth weight. Statistics show that 40% of these babies have cerebral palsy as a confirmed diagnosis and there are other disabilities both mental and physical, which can be attributed to premature birth and medical intervention. News of multiple births in the media celebrates the medical achievement, but rarely is there follow-up of these children four or five years later.

As Ms. Jane Denton, Director of the Multiple Births Foundation writes: "The aim of all infertility treatment should be to have one live, healthy baby. The anguish of watching one or more of your children die or live with a severe disability is a situation no parent would wish to face, yet it is a frequent consequence of multiple births that is so often underestimated." Ayurveda recommends natural methods for treating infertility when both the man and the woman spend at least six months detoxifying and rejuvenating so that both the sperm and ovum are in optimal health. Even then a healthy baby is not guaranteed, but every attempt has been made for a positive outcome. Under these circumstances, conception will be natural and the baby is more likely to be normal and healthy. The current situation is illogical in terms of the natural scheme of things where on the one hand, thousands of babies are being abandoned and on the other, people who would normally be grandparents are going to extreme lengths to have children. Meanwhile, there are thousands of unwanted children without a home, without love, without care and attention. Added to this imbalance is the fact that it is increasingly difficult to adopt a baby and adoptive parents, disillusioned by regulations and laws in their native countries, are seeking adoption overseas, leaving babies in their own countries left without a home.

Natural Childbirth and Cesarean Section

More and more women are choosing or are advised to have cesarean section rather than natural childbirth. The US national C-section rate is over 30%, despite evidence 5–10% of pregnancies is considered optimal. Statistics show that China recorded the highest number of C-sections (46%), followed by Vietnam (36%) and Thailand (34%). The lowest rates were Cambodia (15%) and India (18%) which probably means they are only done when necessary. The reasons for this trend but are not limited to them and are as follows:

1. There is limited awareness of the risks involved in cesarean section. Women do not realize C-section is a major surgical procedure incurring risk of infection, blood clots and emergency hysterectomy. Recovery is a much longer and more challenging than in natural childbirth. The long-term effect of adhesions can cause pelvic pain, infertility and more serious conditions in future pregnancies, such as ectopic pregnancies and uterine rupture. Babies delivered by C-section are more

likely to have complications such as respiratory problems, childhood onset diabetes, obesity and asthma.

2. The average hospital payment for cesarean is much higher than for vaginal birth, therefore a greater opportunity for profit. In addition, a planned cesareans easier to schedule and more predictable than a vaginal birth making it more efficient and cost effective for hospital and staff
3. There is "Low priority" given to making it easier for a woman to give birth naturally such as "Doula care" which provides continuous support during pregnancy and labor. The decision to perform a cesarean is often made during labor because the staff does not know the patient, and cannot revert to care by a doula, which is more time-consuming.
4. Some labor interventions make a C-section more likely. For example, labor induction, continuous electronic fetal monitoring, and epidural too early in labor and epidural analgesics causing fetal distress.
5. Many women who have had a previous cesarean would prefer the option of Vaginal Birth after Caesarean (VBAC), but were not given the choice because health professionals and or hospitals were unwilling to offer it. Women who have had a previous cesarean, are carrying twins or the fetus in the breech position, are rarely given the option to deliver vaginally. A healthy mature woman's body is designed to deliver a baby and it is much healthier for a baby to be delivered naturally. Modern science has realized the process of birth as an important part of the journey into the world and of development. The contraction of the head in the birth canal and the secretions that nature provides are all part of the process of life and should not be interfered with unless Absolutely necessary. There is pain in childbirth and it should not be avoided by using epidurals simply for a woman's comfort. Pain is always there for a reason and if the woman cannot feel it then she is putting her baby at risk. The interesting thing is that, even if labor lasts many hours, once the baby is born the pain is soon forgotten. I have never heard of a woman not wanting another baby because of the pain of childbirth in the first delivery.

Newborns

In traditional societies such as India, women are able to give 100% of their attention to newborns in the early weeks because they are supported by family, extended family and the women of the village. This period is most important for the mother and baby. The mother will have the opportunity to fully recover from childbirth and it is a crucial time for the baby when human bonding occurs. It is well known in ayurveda that the first weeks of life are vital and that intense nurturing from the mother is crucial to emotional and mental development. Love is the essential ingredient to complete health and we learn how to love by being nurtured and loved ourselves. There is a short window of time in the early

weeks of life when this stage of development happens. A mother not only gives nourishment to her baby through breastfeeding but also conveys her love toward her child. This basic human instinct is critical to wellbeing and normal development and is why loving nurturing and calmness are so important to mental health. Thousands of babies throughout the world never receive love or nurturing and begin their lives with fear, bewilderment, anxiety, stress and loneliness engrained in their personalities. All the problems of modern-day society

Vedic Psychology

Before going further in this discussion, it is important to understand the Vedic concept of psychology in order to realize the consequences of lack of love and nurturing in babies and children. Vedic texts do not describe “Vedic Psychology” as such, but the Vedic concept of “mind” is profound and easily translates into contemporary thinking. Vedic thought not only considers the body, mind and spiritual self to be connected but interconnected, and the mind not confined to just the functions of the brain. There are three aspects of “Mind” which influence the sub-conscious.

- **Manas or semi-conscious mind:** Can be compared to the computer screen. In computer, we do not know anything about the files on the hard drive until they come up on the screen and likewise we are not aware of what is in the sub-conscious unless it manifests in the semi conscious mind. Mind takes in information through the senses which are the link to the outside world. Proper and early stimulation of the senses is essential to healthy development. If a baby is abandoned at birth or neglected, the child is at risk for developmental and emotional problems which he or she will have throughout life.
- **Ahamkara or self-conscious mind:** The Universe is linked to and exists in all things, therefore there is unity throughout but at the same time, everything has its own individuality and is separate. This separateness is called Ahamkara or ego which gives awareness of self or identity. It is the force or energy which gives individuality or “I-ness.” It is why “My” comes into being and is the reason we say “My” heart, “My” body because they belong to “me.” Every living thing has this sense of identity which gives every part of every being the intelligence to function. Cells are governed by the self-conscious mind.
- **Buddhi or conscious mind:** Can be compared to the computer processor and is the most important aspect of the mind in the context of development. This is the discriminating mind or intellect and its main function is to process information coming into the mind through the senses. The conscious mind allows us to judge, question, decide and doubt. For example, if we see a mirage which gives the illusion of water, the conscious mind will ascertain whether it is water or not before it decides. When there is doubt, then Buddhi matches the object to

an impression in the memory. A healthy, functioning Buddhi is essential to mental health, it irresponsible for sleep, cognitive powers and intelligence, and allows us to understand, be aware and discriminate, but it must be used properly.

- **Chitta-sub-conscious mind:** Can be likened to the hard-drive of the computer and is the storage compartment of all life’s experiences. It acts like a video camera gathering images as we experience life. These impressions or Samskaras are like scars on the sub-conscious. Buddhi are the most important aspect to sanity. If it is weak, experiences, especially traumatic experiences, will not be filtered and negative impressions on the subconscious will disturb the mind. Once an impression is created, it is almost impossible to remove, even though there may be some improvement with therapy. The discriminating mind (Buddhi) is not developed in young children so impressions (Samskaras) go straight to the sub-conscious (Chitta). Everything is recorded even before birth. It is a known fact that the feeling of “not being wanted” wills be transferred to the unborn child which is why pregnant women need protection and should avoid stress. Impressions must be of love and a feeling of being wanted, if they are of trauma, abandonment or of being unwanted, deep impressions are made on the subconscious which is the cause of emotional damage and mental disturbances in the child. The full impact of emotional deprivation is recognized by child psychologists and psychiatrists. Dr. Federici of the US is well known for his study of Rumanian orphans where children has minimal human contact in the early months. Without the loving nurturing of a mother and the security of being wanted, children is permanently damaged, their lives irrevocably impaired. The physical cause of these disturbances is explained by Dr. Patrick Luyten as damage to the Hypothalamic-Pituitary-Adrenal-Axis (HPA) which is a major part of the neuroendocrine system, controls the reaction to stress and regulates body processes. HPA axis is permanently damaged when a child is emotionally neglected in the early stage of life, and remains so after adoption. Animal studies have shown that damage also occurs when the mother is stressed or traumatized during pregnancy.

Babies in Orphanages

Babies who begin their lives in orphanages are particularly disadvantaged, they are unwanted before birth and abandoned without any nurturing. Even in the best of orphanages where babies are fed, kept clean and are healthy, there is rarely attention paid to his/her emotional and mental wellbeing. In this environment, babies are permanently damaged. Children institutionalized from birth are deprived of love, proper care and interaction. Emotional neglect directly results in poor growth patterns which is a marker of deprivation. There is an increased risk of emotional, learning, behavioral and anxiety disorders, Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), depression, language deficits, deficiencies

in intellectual abilities (Low IQ), severe attachment, and autistic spectrum disorders. Lack of healthy stimulation slows development of the brain and affects mental capacity. The activity of the brain is altered on many levels and the chances of neuropsychiatric and neurological issues are high. The consequences of deprivation are profound and lifelong even though there may be some potential for recovery. After placement in foster or adoptive care, the child will make dramatic developmental strides and the younger the child the better the chances of improvement. His or her IQ increases, language development may reach normal levels and emotional disorders, such as anxiety and depression, will be lessened. However, international research study, BEIP [1], has shown that the incidence of behavioral and attachment disorders and ADHD do not decrease. In other words, all children who have been institutionalized are affected to some degree and none of them recover completely from institutional care, where the word "care" is meaningless. Many adoptive children, with specific social and healthcare needs, are at risk of psychopathology; they are unstable, have difficulty in establishing relationships and all too often do not find their way into society. Neurobiological damage persists for years after adoption due to disturbances in the HPA, which regulates stress [2]. As long as children are neglected and abused in the thousands of orphanages all over the world, adoption will never hold the promise of a new life filled with love and opportunity. It will not be the source of happiness which these helpless human beings need. Furthermore, children adopted into cultural environments other than their own ethnicity suffer additional mental and emotional disturbances; in fact, experts see this as a major cause of inner conflict for the child [3]. In the documentary series [4] it was observed that, where children remain with the Mother and extended family with village life for support, there is not the isolation for the baby which exists in modern society and orphanages. Even in desperately poor situations, children are happy because they have love and security which material comforts cannot provide. From my own observations, working with poor and disadvantaged children in India as compared to children in modern society: I notice Indian children are more interactive, full of vigor and curiosity and have more confidence. Perhaps what is most apparent is they are contented and not always seeking attention.

Babies in Foster Care

Foster care is considered to be a preferable option for unwanted children and when it is an ideal situation, of course it is much better than an orphanage. However, many parents foster children to supplement their income, are often young and have busy working lives. The baby still may not get the nurturing and proper stimulation that he/she needs in the early stages of life. Studies in America have shown that foster care is a breeding ground for the exploitation of children.

Babies in the Modern World

In today's material world, there is not much time for newborns, hardly even time for birth to take place in the natural way. Family and extended family has mostly eroded and many mothers have a career and/or do single parents have to work. Present-day work schedules do not allow for women to devote the time needed during the first weeks of a baby's life. Many women work up to their delivery date, babies are often put into daycare at Avery early age where care is by strangers who may differ from day to day, therefore rarely do these babies have consistent twenty-four-hour care. Even in reputable daycare, babies rarely get the one-on-one love and nurturing they need, they are left to cry and not held as much as needed. Furthermore, many newborns are over stimulated due to television, telephones, internet and constant ambient noise because there is not the awareness of the need for calmness and silence. They are often taken to public places, kept up late at night and not allowed to sleep when they need to putting undue stress on the developing mind.

Discussion

The issue of unwanted pregnancy and children is highly complex and one which society has faced since the beginning of time. It exists in every culture, every religious setting and country. Even though the issue may look different in different settings, the common thread is the fact that women deliver the babies, nurture and feed them. Women worry when children are sick and grieve when they are killed or maimed. Women are at the core of the issue therefore, women are at the core of the solution. Modern society has drifted away from the natural instincts of our ancestors where there were no alternatives to the support of extended family and where skills of motherhood were passed down from one generation to the next. If humanity as a whole does not revive these skills, then we are at risk of losing this basic instinct which define who we are. There is a critical need to raise the awareness of the fundamental need of babies and young children to be intensely nurtured. This message must reach the public at large, governments, orphanage directors, educators, social workers, adoption and foster care agencies and medical workers. The whole world must learn again the importance of one-on-one intensive nurturing in the very early part of life and the fundamental need for all humans to feel wanted, even before birth.

In the West, it was thought not to be a good thing to hold a baby too much and not to pick him/her up if they cried for fear of spoiling the child. This attitude has split over into orphanages and foster care where there are not any mothers and the baby is left in a crib in isolation after birth only to be handled when being fed and bathed. It has been shown that if these children are fortunate enough to have a consistent caregiver in the early days and forms an

attachment, they are better adjusted in the long run. Even though there is a separation issue when adopted, it is not as serious as never having had any human attachment. In modern society, the opportunity to devote concentrated time to pregnancy and newborns is less and less possible and more commonly impossible. The extended family is disappearing, families are split up, single women are having babies without support of any kind and, unless they work, they cannot support themselves. Furthermore, unwanted babies are left at birth to a foster home or orphanage. Nurturing is fundamental to all mammals. It is known that if a puppy has not been with its mother from birth to six weeks, then it will be an aggressive dog unsuitable for adoption. Studies on chimpanzees show that a baby, which is not cuddled and held, becomes withdrawn, unresponsive and does not develop normally. As Western psychologists and psychiatrists debate the results of negative young life experiences and trauma, the gravity of the situation becomes ever clearer. In 1946, a young catholic nun in India had a revelation to leave the order and devote her life to the unwanted, unloved, and uncared-for. In the 1960s and 1970s, Mother Teresa revolutionized human thought and will be remembered for the founding of hospice which is the protection and care of the dying. Hospice is concept which the whole world has embraced, now it is time to embrace the concept of protecting and supporting mothers and newborns. Unborn and newborn babies are the future of humanity, the adults who will shape our world. The time is NOW.

“An International Congress” is proposed whose mission is to -

- Promote the healthy development of children all over the world by raising awareness of the need for close nurturing of newborns and young children.
- Protect and support women by: (1) Providing realistic birth control solutions. (2) Providing a safe and protective environment for delivering and nurturing newborn baby.
- Protect and support abandoned and disadvantaged children.
- Reform institutional and foster care, by bringing back “Grandmothers” to support orphanages, foster care and adoptive agencies.
- Educate & train mature volunteers as ayurveda doulas who would take the baby immediately after birth and nurture the child until adoption or fostering, or support the mother through the initial stages. If the baby is not adopted, volunteers become the extended family of the child whether he/she remains in an orphanage or goes into foster care.

- Be the advocate for children from conception to adoption or until the child is independent.
- Eliminate neglect, abuse and child trafficking world-wide.

Conclusion

To fully realize a system which advocates an integrated, holistic approach to all aspects of human reproduction would be labor intensive and require many different levels of expertise. A preliminary proposal of these levels could be:

1. Allopathic and Ayurvedic physicians in partnership to oversee overall management.
2. A practitioner/nurse level in Ayurveda and Allopathy directly under the supervision of physicians, managing diet and lifestyle, providing support and education to patients.
3. Ayurveda doulas under the supervision of practitioner/nurses providing on-going and a continuum of support for pregnant women, newborns pre and post natal care.
4. Mature women volunteers working at a grass-roots level in the communities to identify issues, educate and provide on-going support for single women, pregnant women, babies and young children. Clearly natural therapies have an important role to play in reproductive medicine. But, it must be integrated with allopathy as there will always be a need for care which holistic medicine cannot provide. However, let us not forget that conception, pregnancy, birth and care of newborns are natural processes, therefore on-going care, education and support in all areas of reproduction can be addressed more effectively in an integrated, holistic health setting.

References

1. B.E.I.P. "Bucharest Early Intervention Project" Charles A. Nelson M.D., Nathan A. Fox M.D., Charles H. Zeanah M.D. This US study compares the development of children living in institutions to the development of formerly institutionalized children living in Romanian foster homes. Both groups are compared to a group of children never-institutionalized living with their biological families. The domains of development studied include brain, behavior, social and emotional development, attachment, cognition, language development and physical growth.
2. Patrick Luyten, PhD. Associate Professor and Co-Director of the Psychoanalysis Unit at the Department of Psychology, University of Leuven (Belgium), and Senior Lecturer at the Research Department of Clinical, Educational, and Health Psychology, University College London (UK). Dr. Luyten explains how the HPAfunctions and how it is damaged if the child is neglected in the early stage of life and how it remains so after adoption.

3. Prof. Dr. Ronald S. Federici, Psy. PhD. USA specializes in mental disorders, which manifest in adoptive children. Care for Children International www.drfederici.com Dr. Federici at a symposium of the faculty of Social Sciences at Utrecht University, Netherlands-June 9, 2006, stated: "Even if children are adopted into disturbed family, it is better than being institutionalized from birth because they experience some level of attachment. If the family is pathological, very poor or even abusive it is preferable to the child being abandoned at birth and living in hospital or orphanage.
4. A Dutch 15-hour Television Series covering international adoption in Romania, India, China, Haiti, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Korea, and Vietnam in which all data are confirmed by personal testimonies and experiences of adoptive children, adults, and parents. First Series - "Life as it is: Adoption" (10 x 30') by VRT, Belgium. Second Series - "Adoption Part 2" (10 x 30') by VRT, Belgium. Third Series - "Adoption Part 3" (10 x 30') by VRT, Belgium.