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## UNIT 17 CHILDREN

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### 17.0 OBJECTIVES

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This unit deals with contemporary dimensions of some problems of children in India. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- describe the demographic composition of children and issues pertaining to their survival;

- discuss the characteristics of street children and orphans and measures undertaken towards the solution of their problem;
- explain the concept of child labour, its typology and the extent of child labour in India;
- analyse the concept of juvenile delinquency, conditions encouraging it and measures undertaken to ameliorate it;
- examine the rights of the children as proclaimed by the international bodies. Present a brief outline of the condition of the girl child in India; and
- describe National Policy on Children adopted in 1974 by the Government of India and provisions made in the Policy.

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## 17.1 INTRODUCTION

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It is possible throughout history to trace out a thread of increasing concern for the child. But it is at the turn of the twentieth century, particularly after the first World War that a concerted effort for recognising the rights of the child has been made all over the World. We have started realising that the future of a nation depends on the child. In the words of Abraham Lincoln, “a child is a person who is going to carry on what you have started. He is going to sit where you are sitting, and when you are gone, attend to those things which you think are important... the fate of humanity is in his hand, “Jawaharlal Nehru also reminded us of ‘the supreme importance of the child. He said, “Somehow the fact that ‘ultimately everything depends upon the human factor, gets rather lost in our thinking of plans and schemes. It is very important that we must have them, but ultimately, it is the human being who counts and if the human being counts well, he counts much more as a child than as a grown-up.”

Against this humanitarian backdrop the present unit examines the social problems of children in contemporary India. We begin this unit with a brief discussion on the demographic composition of children in India. It draws attention towards the increasing imbalance between boys and girls. We then, dilate on the orphan and street children and look into the measures taken by government to rehabilitate them.

A large number of children are engaged in various types of work and this hinders their mental and physical growth. We focus on this in the section on child labour. This unit then, goes into the numerous reasons as to why some children lapse into delinquent behaviour. It also looks into the various measures required to prevent delinquency as well as rehabilitate the delinquents.

This unit also gives an idea about the rights of the child proclaimed at different periods of time. It attempts to show how there is a growing concern in the world about the rights of the child. The UN agencies involved in children’s welfare finds mention next.

The girl-child constitutes nearly a half of the child population in India but a large section of them are neglected in every aspect of their life. The prevailing social, cultural and religious practices encourage discrimination against them. We discuss this in the section on International Year of the Girl Child. We conclude this unit by focusing on the national policy on children.

## 17.2 DEMOGRAPHIC ASPECTS

The word child has a variety of connotations. Sometimes it is used in the sense of physical or mental immaturity. But for all practical purposes, child is defined in terms of chronological age. Any person who is below the age of 15 years is called a child.

The number of children (0-14 years) in India has been increasing over the years. In the year 1971, there were 230.3 million children which had increased to 272 million, in 1981. According to the estimate by the Expert Committee on the population projection, the child population had gone up to 297.7 million in 1991. However, in terms of percentage to the total population, child population had declined over the decades. For example, it had declined from 42.02 in 1971 to 39.7 in 1981. In 1991 they constituted around 37% of the population. According to Planning Commission in 2000, 33.61% population were in the age group of the children.

### 17.2.1 Sex Ratio

According to the law of human biology, both males and females are born in equal proportion. But the Census reports show that there are more boys than girls in India. In 1981 there were 131.7 million girls as against 140.3 million boys. In other words, there were 938 girls per thousand boys. In 2001 there were 156.6 million boys and 149.6 million girls in India showing a decline in the sex ratio.

The disproportionate distribution between sexes starts right from birth and continues almost throughout life. The proportion of women per thousand men has come down from 946 in 1951 to 933 in 2001. Numerous factors like maternal mortality, immigration of males and high rate infant mortality for girls are given for the sex imbalance. But these factors give a partial explanation of the phenomenon. Major reason lies in culturally sanctioned negligence and apathy towards the girl. She is discriminated against even before birth in the form of foeticide. She is compelled to live a life of deprivation, ill-health and exploitation.

**Table 1: Percentage of population in the age group 0-14 years  
By sex and residence, India and major states 1994**

	Total			Rural			Urban		
	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female	Person	Male	Female
India and major States	36.5	36.8	36.1	37.5	37.9	37.0	33.3	33.3	33.4
Andhra Pradesh	33.8	34.0	33.5	33.6	34.0	33.3	34.1	34.1	34.2
Assam	39.6	39.0	40.4	40.6	40.1	41.1	31.8	30.0	33.8
Bihar	41.2	41.5	40.8	41.6	42.1	41.0	37.9	36.9	39.1
Gujarat	33.8	34.4	33.2	34.1	34.7	33.5	33.2	33.7	32.8
Haryana	37.7	37.9	37.5	38.6	38.7	38.5	35.0	35.6	34.4
Himachal Pradesh	34.6	36.2	33.0	35.1	37.0	33.3	28.8	28.4	29.2
Karnataka	34.0	34.3	33.7	35.1	35.4	34.8	31.7	31.9	31.4
Kerala	28.8	30.3	27.4	29.4	31.0	27.9	27.1	28.3	26.0

Madhya Pradesh	37.9	38.0	37.7	38.4	38.6	38.1	36.0	35.8	36.2
Maharashtra	34.4	34.7	34.1	35.6	36.7	34.6	33.1	32.6	33.6
Orissa	34.2	34.5	34.0	34.4	34.8	34.0	33.1	32.6	33.6
Punjab	33.6	34.1	32.9	33.3	33.8	32.7	34.3	34.9	33.5
Rajasthan	39.1	39.6	38.5	39.6	40.1	39.0	37.0	37.6	36.2
Tamil Nadu	31.0	31.5	30.5	32.2	32.7	31.7	28.8	29.3	28.3
Uttar Pradesh	39.6	39.8	39.4	39.9	40.1	39.7	38.0	38.1	38.0
West Bengal	35.3	34.8	35.7	37.8	37.6	38.0	28.2	27.4	29.2

\* Excludes Jammu & Kashmir and Mizoram

Source: Sample Registration System, 1995, Office of Registrar General, India

**Table 2: Projected child population by age group In India 1996-2016**

Sl. No.	Year	0-4 Yrs	5- 9 Yrs	10-14 Yrs	0-14 Yrs
1	1996	119546	123686	109545	352777
2	2001	108494	116145	122905	347544
3	2006	113534	105744	115488	334766
4	2011	119530	110968	105206	335704
5	2016	122837	117099	110461	350397

Sources : Census of India 1991, population projections for India and States 1996-2016

### 17.2.2 Infant Mortality

Infant mortality rate is considered an important indicator of child health and development. By infant mortality rate is meant the number of deaths of infants under one year of age in a given year per 1,000 live births in that year. In 1947 out of 1000 live births in India, 160 died before the age of one year. It had come down to 96.4 in 1986. In 2000 the infant mortality rate of India was 69. Though the infant mortality rate has decreased, it is till far higher than that of the developed countries of the world (for details see Human Development Report 2003).

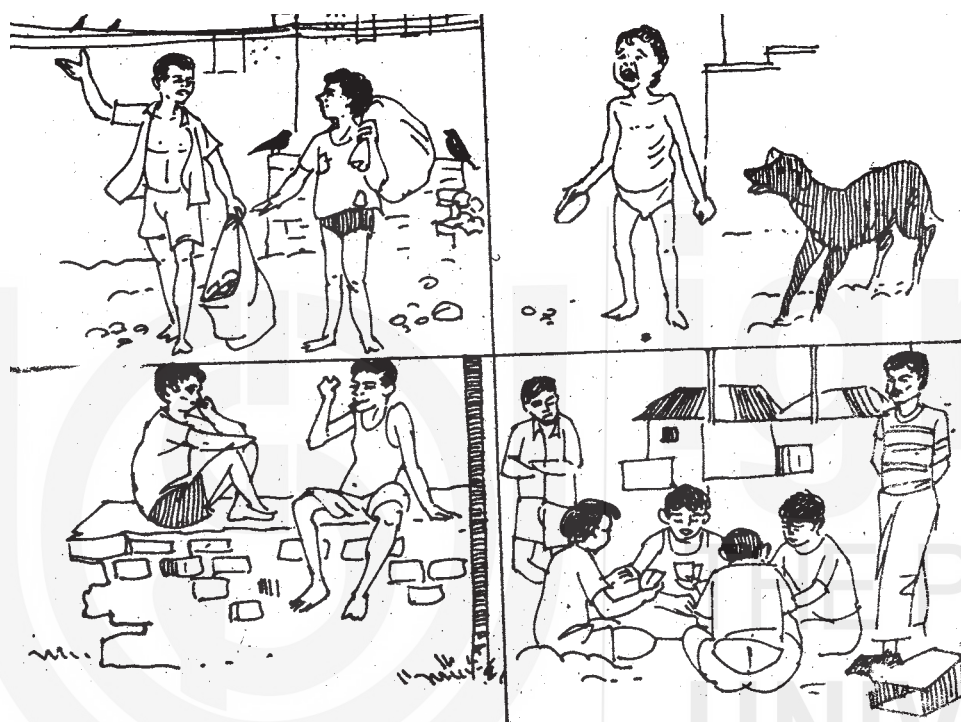
The major causes of infant deaths are found to be the diseases peculiar to infancy which include premature births, respiratory infection, diarrhoea etc. The diseases such as cough, fever and digestive disorder are also important child killers.

The six most common causes for child morbidity and mortality are tuberculosis, tetanus, pertusis (whooping cough), diphtheria, poliomyelitis and measles. These are preventable through immunisation. The Government of India has launched Universal Immunisation Programme. (in short UIP) and it was expected that by 2000 A.D. all children would be “fully” immunised.

The gradual decline in infant mortality rate and in birth rate has pushed up life expectancy at birth. According to the estimate, life expectancy at birth during 1986-91 is .58.1 years for males and 59.1 years for females. By the year 2000 the average life expectancy at birth Indian has gone up to 63.3 years. For the male it is 59.9 years while for the female it was 64.7 years (UNOU 2003).

## 17.3 STREET CHILDREN AND ORPHANS

Considerable number of children in India are the victims of poverty, erosion of social values, unsatisfactory home environment and lack of social security measures to take care of the exigencies which lead to destitution. Street children and orphans are the by-product of these factors. Orphans are those children who are bereft of either parent or both parents and those who have been deserted or abandoned. They are also called destitute children. Street children are those who are homeless. These children come from different vulnerable groups. However, these groups are not always mutually exclusive. Some of these groups may be mentioned here.



### 17.3.1 Major Groups

Here we may group these children under the following broad headings.

- i) children who do not get even minimal care in terms of food, clothing, shelter, education, medical aid, etc.
- ii) children who are in a sense “exploited” or “neglected” in their families,
- iii) children who are without any means of subsistence and shelter or in a virtual state of destitution,
- iv) children who are orphaned, abandoned or deserted,
- v) children who run away from their homes and cannot be restored to their parents as they are untraceable,
- vi) children who are vagrant, delinquent or uncontrollable,
- vii) children who suffer from ill-treatment, neglected or unsatisfactory home environment and are subjected to mental and physical suffering,
- viii) children whose parents do not provide or are unable to provide proper home life to them on account of their immoral activities like alcoholism, gambling, drug addiction, crime, prostitution etc., and

- ix) children who are found begging with or without connivance of touts or anti-social elements.

### 17.3.2 Measures for Rehabilitation

Both street children and orphans need food, clothing, shelter, love, affection and protection. They need opportunities for physical and mental development. The Government has already launched a scheme for children in need of care and protection. The main features of the scheme are as follows:

- i) it provides institutional care by establishing orphanages or children's homes,
- ii) it provides foster care by keeping a child for a certain period in a family which agrees to give him a substitute home,
- iii) it is implemented through voluntary organisations which are given a grant-in-aid to the extent of 90 per cent of the expenditure on approved items (the grant-in-aid is shared on an equal basis by the Central Government and the State Government),
- iv) children up to 18 years are covered in Children's homes, and
- v) foster care is given to children up to 6 years which is extendable to 14 years in exceptional cases.

However, for providing care and protection to street children, the Government is contemplating to undertake certain schemes in near future.

#### Activity 1

It may be possible for you to recall the population composition of 20 households of your relatives, friends and neighbours. If not, collect statistics of 20 households on population by sex. Now try to find out the sex-ratio of the child population of these households. Write a note on the cause of the variation in the sex-ratio in these households. If possible, exchange your note with other students of the Study Centre.

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## 17.4 CHILD LABOUR

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The term “child labour” is often used interchangeably with “working child” or “employed child”. While all these terms are defined on the basis of age of the person working, the latter terms denote that the working persons get wages or income. According to the Constitution of India, child labourer may be defined as a person who is below the age of 14 years and is working for an earning. However, child labour denies children the opportunities for mental and physical development and consequently their life chances are marred. Children engaged in domestic work or helping their parents in agricultural or household pursuits do not get income but their work interferes with their childhood activities like education and recreation. Hence child labour needs to be defined in a manner which will include both paid and unpaid work. The Operation Research Group of Boards has defined a child labourer as a person who is in the age group of 5 to 15 years and who is at paid or unpaid work and remains busy for any hour of the day within or outside the family. The Concerned for Working Children

(CWC) of Bangalore defines a child labourer as “a person who has not completed his/her fifteenth year of age and is working with or without wages/ income on a part-time or full-time basis”.

### 17.4.1 Types of Child Labour

The ILO has given a typology of child work which is applicable across the countries. The categories are as follows:

#### i) Domestic Non-monetary Work

Children in both rural and urban areas undertake unpaid work within the family for maintenance of the household. It is self-employed and is generally “time-intensive” The activities included in the category are: caring for younger siblings, cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water etc. Such work in India is done mainly by girls.

#### ii) Non-domestic and Non-monetary Work

This type of work is usually done by children in rural areas. It includes activities like tending of livestock, protecting crops from birds and animals, hunting, weeding etc. This work is also time-intensive and is often intermixed with domestic work.

#### iii) Wage Labour

Children work as wage labourers in organised and unorganised sectors in rural and urban areas. They work in artisan production, small scale production, in trade, manufacturing and service occupations. They work in restaurants, as ragpickers, hawkers, newspaper vendors etc. They are preferred to adults because they can be paid low wage for the same quantum of work that an adult does.

#### iv) Bonded Labour

Children work as bonded labourers. They are pledged by the parents against a debt or loan till the loan with interest is repaid. They work in exchange of food or nominal wage. Sometimes, an agreement is made between the parents of the child and the employer to work for a specific period of time. The bonded labour system is found both in rural and urban unorganised sector. Although bonded labour is abolished by law, it is practised in many parts of India even today.

### 17.4.2 Child Labour in India

India has a large number of working children. According to unofficial figures there are child labour in the range of .44 to 100 million. In the 1981 Census work has been defined as “participation in any economically productive activity”. A distinction between ‘main workers’ and ‘marginal workers’ has also been made. Main workers are those who have worked for the major part of the year (183 days or more) preceding the date of enumeration. Marginal workers are those who have done some work but cannot be classified as main workers.

Children in the age group of 0-14 years constituted 4.18% of male main workers and 8.35% of female main workers. Similarly children as marginal workers

constituted 10.32% of male marginal workers and 9.38% of female marginal workers. As many as 78.68% of the main child workers were engaged as cultivators and agricultural labourers. According to 1991 census there were 11.28 million working children in our country of which 85% are in the rural areas working in agriculture, live stock reining and fisheries.

According to a recent report in 2000 14% of the children of India belonging to the age group of 10-15 years are in the labour force.

Human Development in South Asia, quoting the UNICEF report of 1995, estimates the child labour force in the region as 134 million. About 100 million are in India. A very high proportion of children aged 10 to 14 work for a livelihood. In Bhutan it is 55 per cent in Nepal 44 per cent, in Bangladesh 29 per cent and in Pakistan 17 per cent.

Although poverty and adult unemployment are the main reasons for the existence of child labour, vested interests of employers also encourage its perpetuation. The employers pay low wage to child labour for the same quantum of work that adults can do.

### 17.4.3 Banning of Child Labour

There are two opinions on the question of continuance or banning of child labour in India. One group of people think that child labour should be banned since it is detrimental to physical and mental health of the child and is against the Directive Principles of the Constitution of India. The other group considers abolition of poverty as a pre-condition for abolition of child labour. They pled that child labour should be regulated so that children are not employed in hazardous work. The Government of India is taking steps to constitute a Technical Committee for identifying occupations which are hazardous for children.

#### Box 1

#### Child Labour in South Asia: Issues and Prostitution and AIDS

According to the report: "Child prostitution is widely known to exist in South Aisa but is rarely...discussed. Widespread poverty and in adequate social safety net have left many children with no choices but to sell their bodies simply, the number must be higher.

The report estimates that around 100,000 children are involved in prostitution. But according to the facts given in the report itself, the number must be higher.

According to the report, every year about 7,000 children are brought into India for prostitution. Quoting a Nepalese non-government organisation, the report says 100000 to 200000 Nepalese girls are working as prostitutes in India. Severe poverty in Nepal, dowry and other social problems facing teenage girls and a high school drop out rate have combined to condemn many girls to prostitution. Bangladeshi girls are also brought into India and Pakistan, while Indian girls are transported to other countries of the region to be sold for prostitution. 30,000 Sri Lankan children are being used as sex workers for foreign tourists. Children caught in the civil war in northern Sri



Lanka. When breadwinners are slaughtered, orphans are compelled to sell their bodies to corrupt businessmen who exploit their desire to escape from the war zone. These children are regularly gang-raped, harassed and forced to perform dangerous sexual acts. They are also exposed to AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases. The report goes on: “According to a recent survey of Nepalese sex workers who return from India each year, nearly 65 per cent are HIV positive. Their own communities often reject those who manage to escape and return their homes” (World Socialist Website).

In 1992 India has ratified the convention on the Rights of the Child which implies that India will ensure wide awareness on the issues of the children among the various governmental and the non-governmental agencies. India has also signed the World Declaration on the Survival, Protection and Development of the Children and thereafter the Department of Women and Child Development under the Ministry of Human Resource Development has formatted a National Plan and Action for children. As against this backdrop India’s policy on child labour has tried to strike a balance the international standard and obligation on the one hand and that of the grass root reality of India. Hence there are several legislation and the policies.

The Child Labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act 1986 prohibits the employment of child labour below age of 14 in factories, mines and in other firms of hazardous employment and regulates the working conditions of the children in other employment. Following another notification in 1993 under their law the government has prohibited employment of children in the slaughterhouses, printing, cashew de-scaling and processing, and soldering. In 1994 a National Authority for the elimination of Child Labour was set up under the chairmanship of the Labour Minister to co-ordinate the efforts of different arms of the government for the progressive elimination of child labour.

The Government of India has also adopted a National Labour Policy in 1987 in accordance with the constitutional mandate and the prevailing legislation on child labour. This policy consists of three complementary measures:

- Legal Action Plan to reinforce very strictly, the various provisions of the child labour (Prohibition and Regulation) Act.
- Focus on general development programmes benefiting children wherever possible. It envisages the development of an exclusive system of non-formal education for working children withdrawn from work and increasing the provision for employment and income generation schemes meant for their parents. A special Child Labour cell was constituted to encourage voluntary organisations to take up activities like non-formal education, vocational training provision of health care, nutrition, and education for working children.
- Area specific projects: To focus on areas known to have high concentration of child labour and to adopt a project approach for identification, withdrawal and rehabilitation of working children. (<http://www.indianembassy.org>).

**Check Your Progress 1**

i) What are the major causes of infant and child mortality in India. Answer in about seven lines

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ii) Point out the measures taken for rehabilitating orphan children in India. Answer in about 10 lines

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iii) Answer each of the following in one line:

a) Who has given a typology of child labour?

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b) What is the population of children in India today?

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**17.5 JUVENILE DELINQUENCY**

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Juvenile Delinquency has been defined as “some form of antisocial behaviour involving personal and social disorganisation”. It is a form of conduct that goes against the norms and laws of society and that tends to affect people adversely. Some think that delinquency is any act, course of conduct or situation which might be brought before a court and adjudicated”. Therefore, delinquency involves a pattern of behaviour which deviates from the normal and is forbidden

by the laws and sanctions of society. Hence juvenile delinquency is both a social and a legal concept.

### 17.5.1 Factors Promoting Juvenile Delinquency

Juvenile delinquency may arise out of numerous conditions or situations. The conditions or factors may be categorised into the following groups:

- i) Broken home, where children do not get love, warmth, affection and security,
- ii) Bad housing and lack of space for recreation in homes and in neighbourhood,
- iii) Poverty and neglect by parents,
- iv) Child working in vocations and places which are congenial to delinquency,
- v) Undesirable companionship in school, work place and neighbourhood, and
- vi) Undesirable influence of cinema and literature and other mass media.

The causes mentioned here are not exhaustive but only illustrative. It does not follow that the presence of anyone or more of the factors will definitely lead to delinquency. These factors singly or jointly may promote delinquent behaviour.

### 17.5.2 Corrective Measures against Delinquency

In the discussion of juvenile delinquency, age is an important factor. The legal age for maturity, according to the Indian Maturity Act, has been fixed as 18 years. According to the Indian Penal Code, no act committed by a child under 7 years of age is an offence. However, there is a general tendency to regard all children between the age of 7 to 21 years as juveniles. But according to the Juvenile Justice Act 1986, a boy who has not attained the age of 16 or a girl who has not attained the age of 18 years is considered a juvenile in India. However, earlier according to Children Act this age was different in different states.

It is felt that juvenile delinquents need to be treated in a manner different from that of adult offenders. If a juvenile is punished and imprisoned in the same manner as the adult, he or she might come out of the prison as a confirmed criminal, whereas if we help him/her to live in different environment it is possible to change and save him/her from becoming a criminal. In view of this, laws have been enacted for taking up preventive and corrective measures. The Provisions made under these Acts are described below.

Juvenile courts have been formed to treat juvenile cases in very informal and simple atmosphere. These courts are headed by full time special magistrates, preferably women. The juvenile is brought before the court not in chains or handcuffs. Their cases are not pleaded by lawyers, but by special officers known as Probation Officers.

Persons who have had training in social work and correctional administration are appointed Probation Officers. Every Probation Officer is entrusted with a few juvenile delinquents. He/She investigates their cases by visiting their homes, schools, parents, friends and neighbours. He/She collects informations for

understanding their environment. He/She plans for corrective measures and rehabilitation of the children.

There are Remand Homes where juvenile delinquents are kept till the cases are decided, by the court. During their stay they remain under close supervision and adequate measures are taken to keep up their mental, physical and moral conditions. There are separate Remand Homes for boys and girls.

After the decision by the court Children with minor offence are handed over to parents and those who need constant supervision, are kept in approved schools or institutions for care, treatment, education and training. It is expected that by the time they would come out of the schools, their criminal tendencies would disappear and they would have inculcated the qualities of good citizenship.

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## **17.6 RIGHTS OF CHILDREN**

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The child by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care before as well as afterbirth. The need for such special safeguards found its first expression as early as 1924 in the Geneva Declaration of the Rights of the Child. It was drawn up by the then “Save the Children Fund International Unit”. It was a five-point text which was taken on board by the League of Nations. It was expanded in succeeding years into what was to become the Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959.

### **17.6.1 UN Declaration of 1959**

The Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 20th November 1959 proclaims to provide to the child “the best that mankind has to give”. It reaffirms that the child should enjoy the rights for his own good and for the good of society. It calls upon parents, men and women and upon voluntary organisations, local authorities and national governments to recognise these rights and strive for their observance by legislative and other measures.

The principles or the rights set forth in the Declaration are as follows:

- i) All children, without any exception whatsoever, shall be entitled to the rights set forth in this Declaration, without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status whether of himself/herself or of his/her family.
- ii) The child shall enjoy special protection, opportunities, and facilities by law and by the other means, to enable him/her to develop physically, mentally, spiritually and socially in a healthy and normal manner and in conditions of freedom and dignity.
- iii) The child shall be entitled from his/her birth to a name and a nationality.
- iv) The child shall enjoy the benefits of social security and shall be entitled to grow and develop in health. To this end, he/she and his/her mother shall be provided special care and protection including pre-natal and post-natal care. He/She shall be entitled to enjoy the right to adequate nutrition, housing, recreation and medical services.

- v) The child who is physically, mentally or socially handicapped shall be given the special treatment, education and care required by the particular condition.
- vi) The child, for the full and harmonious development of his/her personality, needs love and understanding. He/She shall wherever possible, grow up in the care and under the responsibility of his/her parents and in any case in an atmosphere of affection and of moral and material security. A child of tender years shall not, save in exceptional circumstances, be separated from his/her mother. Society and the public authorities shall have the duty to extend particular care to children without a family and to those without adequate means of support.
- vii) The child is entitled to receive free and compulsory education at least in the elementary stages. He/She shall be given an education which will promote his/her general culture and enable him/her on a basis of equal opportunity to develop his/her abilities, his individual judgement and his/her sense of moral and social responsibilities and to become a useful member of society. The child shall have full opportunity for play and recreation which should be directed to the same purpose as education.
- viii) The child shall in all circumstances be among the first to receive protection and relief.
- ix) The child shall be protected against all forms of neglect, cruelty, and exploitation. He/She shall not be subject to traffic in any form. He/She shall not be admitted to employment before an appropriate minimum age. He/She shall not be caused or permitted to engage in any occupation or employment which would prejudice his/her health or education or interfere with his/her physical, mental or moral development.
- x) The child shall be protected from practices which may foster racial, religious and any other form of discrimination. He/She shall be brought up in a spirit of understanding, tolerance, friendship, peace and universal brotherhood and in full consciousness so that his/her energy and talents could be devoted to the service of his/her fellow men/women.

To be precise, the child has been granted the following rights by the UN Declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959, the right of affection, love and understanding, the right to adequate nutrition and medical care, the right to free and compulsory education, the Right to full opportunity for play and recreation, the right of a name and nationality, the right to special care if handicapped, the right to be among the first to receive relief at the time of disaster, the right to learn to be a useful member of society and to develop individual abilities, the right to be brought up in a spirit of peace and universal brotherhood, and the right to enjoy these rights regardless of race, colour, sex, religion, national or social origin.

### **17.6.2 International Year of the Child**

The United Nations General Assembly declared 1979 as the International Year of the Child. It provided an occasion to every country to review the condition of its children and to renew and intensify its programmes for developing the full potentiality of the children. It aimed at stimulating each government to

expand activities which would overcome adverse conditions affecting many children.

The year of the child had encouraged government, private organisations and individuals to do much more for the children who needed special help. Thus the year of the child provided an occasion for practical activities for making the rights of the child a living reality.

### 17.6.3 UN Convention of 1989

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child adopted on 20th November, 1989 is the most comprehensive and greatest treaty of twentieth century on children's rights. It sets universally, agreed standards for protection of children and provides a valuable framework for the development of programmes and policies that will ensure a realistic and safer future for children in every country. In the Convention, a child is defined as a person below the age of 18 years, unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier.

The Convention includes all the rights set out in the declaration of the Rights of the Child of 1959. It also includes a number of rights which have not been incorporated in the earlier Declaration. Some of these new rights are noted below:

- i) The right to the child who is capable of forming his or her own views, to express those views freely in all matters affecting the child. The views of the child will be given due weight in accordance with age and maturity of the child. He or she will be provided opportunity to be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting the child.
- ii) The right to freedom of expression, including the freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds.
- iii) The right to freedom of thought, conscience and religion.
- iv) The right to freedom of association and of peaceful assembly
- v) The right to seek protection against illicit transfer to and non-return from abroad.
- vi) The right to protection against arbitrary or unlawful interference with his or her privacy, family, home and against unlawful attacks on his or her honour and reputation.
- vii) The right to protection against all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or exploitation.
- viii) The right to protection against all forms of sexual abuse and sexual exploitation.

The rights set out in the Convention can be broadly grouped under the headings of survival, protection and development. The survival rights imply that children should be saved from preventable diseases. Protection connotes that every child should be shielded against physical, mental or sexual abuse. Development implies the rights to adequate nutrition, primary health care and basic education.

The Convention is a special one because for the first time in international law, children's rights are set out in a treaty which will be binding on those nations that ratify them. It is also special in the sense that there shall be an elected committee to examine the progress made by the nations in achieving the obligations undertaken in the Convention.

### **Activity 2**

Read again the sub-sections 17.6.1, 17.6.2 and 17.6.3 very carefully. Based on your daily experience you have like to examine how far the rights of the children are implementation of these rights. Develop a note on these in about two pages and discuss it with the counsellor and other students at the Study Centre.

## **17.7 UN AGENCIES INVOLVED IN CHILDREN'S WELFARE**

There are several UN agencies which have been working towards the cause and development of children in the developing countries of the world. The biggest of these organisations directly dealing with the problems of children are the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

### **17.7.1 WHO**

The World Health Organisation was established and as specialised agency by the United Nations Economic and Social Council on 7th April, 1948. Its objective is the attainment of the highest possible level of health by all the peoples of the world. WHO assists the governments to strengthen their health services, to stimulate and advance work to eradicate diseases, to promote maternal and child health, mental health, medical research and the prevention of accidents, to improve standard of teaching and training in the health professions and of nutrition, housing, sanitation, working conditions and other aspects of environmental health.

### **17.7.2 UNICEF**

The United Nations Children's Fund was established by the General Assembly of the United Nations in 1946 to give aid to child victims of war and for improving child health in war affected countries. It was an emergency measure and hence was called the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund.

In 1950, the programme was extended to children in underdeveloped countries. In 1953 it became a permanent organisation. It concentrates its assistance on development activities aimed at improving the quality of life for children and mothers in developing countries. The UNICEF has focused on popularising four primary health care techniques which are low in cost and produce result in a relatively short time. These include: oral rehydration therapy to fight the effects of diarrhoeal infection, expanded immunisation against six most common childhood diseases, child growth monitoring and promotion of breast-feeding. The UNICEF works in close collaboration with the WHO. The

UNICEF is the world’s largest supplier of vaccine and “cold chain” equipment needed to deliver them, as well as, oral re-hydration salts.

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) Point out the major factors promoting delinquency. Answer in about eight lines.

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ii) Point out the corrective measures taken against delinquency. Answer around in ten lines.

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iii) Fill in the blanks with appropriate answers:

- a) The declaration of the Rights of the child was made for the first time in the year  
a) 1926 b) 1924 c) 1925 d) 1935
- b) The year .....was observed as the International Year of the Child.  
a) 1976 b) 1989 c) 1990 d) 1979
- c) The World Health Organisation was established on.....  
a) 7<sup>th</sup> April 1948, b) 7<sup>th</sup> April 1946, c) 6<sup>th</sup> May 1952, d) 9<sup>th</sup> June 1942.



## 17.8 YEAR AND DECADE OF THE GIRL CHILD AND INDIAN SCENARIO

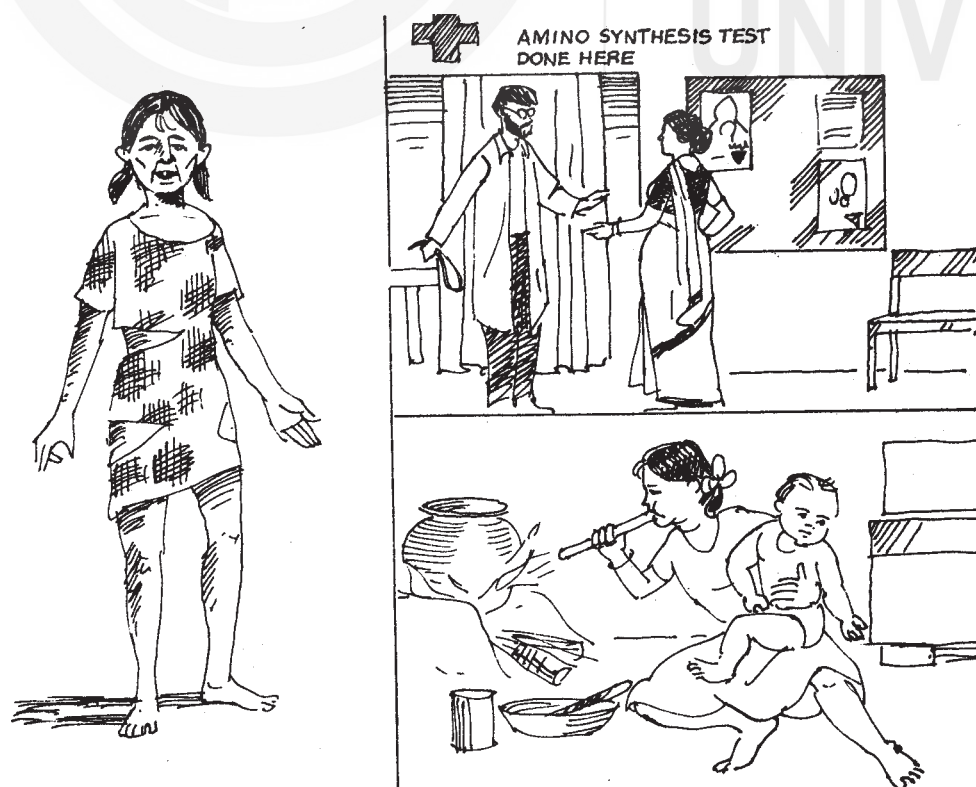
The gender discrimination or injustice against the girl child has not received pointed attention in the UN Declaration of the Right of the Child of 1959 and in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child of 1989. Initially the SAARC Technical Committee on Women and Child Development did not focus on the girl child. It was only in its 1986 conference on children that the SAARC (South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation) decided to examine the specific problems of children in every technical committee.

### 17.8.1 Initiatives of the SAARC Countries

The SAARC countries have agreed on a plan of action to create awareness about the low status of the girl and to initiate corrective measures to end discrimination against them. The SAARC workshop held in New Delhi in September 1989 decided to declare 1990 as “the year of the Girl Child” in the seven SAARC countries—India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Sri Lanka and Maldives—in a bid to give a decisive thrust to the campaign against discrimination of the girl child. The decade of 90s was declared as “the Decade of the Girl Child”.

### 17.8.2 Girl Child: The Indian Scenario

Notwithstanding the Decade of the Girl Child, the girl child in India have remained subject to low social status. The low status of the girl in India has to be seen in the context of religious, social, cultural and economic situations. These factors together perpetuate discrimination against the girl. The birth of a girl is not cherished it is rather mourned. If a woman gives birth to daughters, she is made to hang her head in shame.



Girl Child in India

A girl is breastfed less frequently and for a shorter duration. Weaning practice starts much earlier for a girl. The parents give her inferior quality of food and do not let her eat to her fill, fearing that she will grow early and too big. Tall and large girls are unfeminine and it is difficult to find grooms for them, the traditional parents think so. Slow growth of girls gives time to the parents to collect dowry for their marriage. Thus the girl starves nutritionally.

The girl is considered a “paraya dhan” (other’s property), hence any investment on her upbringing is considered wasteful. She is not given the opportunity to grow up into full personality. On the other hand, she is engaged in domestic work so that she equips herself to be acceptable to her in-laws. She is taught to cope with all odds that she may come across in the house of her in-laws. She is taught to be subservient and self-sacrificing. She is taught to develop the habit of austerity in thought, speech, dress and food.

Incidence of morbidity is higher among girls but they are given medical treatment less often. They are given lower access to immunisation. Enrolment of girls in schools is much lower. Low status of the girl is culturally designed. Social values and norms give sanctions to the perpetuation of gender inequality. It is hoped that during the decade of the girl child, suitable social and economic programmes would be launched which would minimise discrimination against the girl. In the meantime, voluntary agencies, Mahila Mandals, social workers and mass media have taken programmes for creating awareness among the people about the injustice done to the girl child.

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## **17.9 NATIONAL POLICY OF CHILDREN**

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The principles set out in the Declaration of Rights of the child by the United Nations General Assembly do not carry any obligation on any country to ensure that they are indeed realised. However, the Government of India started taking steps through action oriented programmes to guarantee these rights consistent with the magnitude of the problem facing the country and the availability of resources. It was only for the first time in the third five-year plan that a programme for child development was introduced under the social welfare schemes.

In the year of 1967 the Government of India appointed a Committee to go into the extent of the problems to meet these needs. The committee identified areas requiring action and suggested appropriate action oriented programmes. It observed the necessity for devising a comprehensive national policy for child development and recommended the constitution of a high level committee on child welfare under the Chairmanship of the Prime Minister to take a unified view of the needs of children.

After the consideration of the recommendations of the Committee, the Government of Children India adopted the Resolution on the National Policy on children on 22 August 1974. According to the Resolution children are a supremely important national asset. Children’s programmes should find a prominent part in our national plans for the development of human resources so that our children grow up to become robust citizens, physically fit, mentally alert and morally healthy, endowed with the skills and motivations needed by society.

### 17.9.1 Policy and Measures

It has been enjoined upon the state that it shall provide adequate services to children both before and after birth and through the period of growth, to ensure their full physical, mental and social development. The state shall progressively increase the scope of such services so that, within a reasonable time all children in the country enjoy optimum conditions for their balanced growth.

The measures adopted for achieving these objectives are as follows:

- i) All children shall be covered by a comprehensive health programme.
- ii) Programmes shall be implemented to provide nutrition services with the objective of removing deficiencies in the diet of children.
- iii) Programmes will be undertaken for the general improvement of the health nutrition and education of expectant and nursing mothers.
- iv) The state shall take steps to provide free and compulsory education to all children up to the age of 14 for which a time-bound programme will be drawn up consistent with the availability of resources. Special efforts will be made to reduce the prevailing wastage and stagnation in schools, particularly in the case of girls and children of the weaker sections of society. The programme of informal education for pre-school children from such sections will also be taken up.
- v) Children who are not able to take full advantage of formal school education shall be provided other forms of education suited to their requirements.
- vi) Physical education, games, sports and other types of recreational as well as cultural and scientific activities shall be promoted in schools, community centres and such other institutions
- vii) To ensure equality of opportunity, special assistance shall be provided to all children belonging to the weaker sections of the society, such as children belonging to the economically weaker sections, both in urban and rural areas.
- viii) Children who are socially handicapped, who have become delinquent or have been forced to take to begging or the otherwise in distress, shall be provided facilities for education, training and rehabilitation and will be helped to become useful citizens.
- ix) Children shall be protected against neglect, cruelty and exploitation.
- x) No child under 14 years shall be permitted to be engaged in the hazardous occupation or be made to undertake heavy work.
- xi) Facilities shall be provided for special treatment, education, rehabilitation and care of children who are physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded.
- xii) Children shall be given priority for protection and relief in times of distress or natural calamity.
- xiii) Special programmes shall be formulated to spot, encourage and assist gifted children, particularly those belonging to the weaker sections of society.

- xiv) Existing laws should be amended so that in all legal disputes, whether between parents or institutions, the interests of children are given paramount consideration.
- xv) In organising services for children, efforts would be directed to strengthen family ties so that full potentialities of growth of children are realised within the normal family, neighbourhood and community environment.

**Box 2**

**National Child Development Board**

It was set up in December 1974 with the Prime Minister of India as its Chairman and the Minister of Human Resource Development as its Vice-Chairman. The main objectives of this board are:

- a) to formulate and review the implementation of the programmes designed for the welfare and development for children
- b) to coordinate efforts made by different government and private agencies in implementing these programmes
- c) to locate gaps in the existing services and suggest measures to eliminate such gaps
- d) to suggest the priority areas of action from time to time; and
- e) to act as a high powered national body to symbolise the commitment of the nation to the welfare and development of children.

**17.9.2 Priority Areas**

In formulating programmes in different sectors, priority shall be given to programmes relating to:

- i) preventive and promotive aspects of child health,
- ii) nutrition for infants and children in the pre-school age along with nutrition for nursing and expectant mothers,
- iii) maintenance, education and training of orphan and destitute children,
- iv) creche and other facilities for the care of children of working or ailing mothers, and
- v) care, education, training and rehabilitation of handicapped children.

In order to provide a forum for planning, review and proper co-ordination of the multiplicity of services to meet health, nutrition, education and welfare needs of children, the National Policy on Children has made provision for the constitution of a National Children's Board. Similar Boards may also be constituted at the State levels.

**17.9.3 Voluntary Efforts**

The National Policy on Children emphasis that voluntary organisations engaged in the field of child welfare will continue to have the opportunity to develop either on their own or with state assistance, in the field of education, health, recreation and social welfare services. It has been enjoined upon the state to

encourage and strengthen voluntary action so that state and voluntary organisations, trusts, charities and religious and other endowments would be tapped to the extent possible for promoting and developing child welfare programmes.

In order to achieve the aims mentioned above, the state will provide necessary legislative and administrative support. Facilities for research and training of personnel will be developed to meet the needs of the expanding programmes and to improve the effectiveness of the services.

In pursuance of the National Policy on Children an Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) scheme has been started in the country. The scheme aims at providing a package of six services to children below 6 years and pregnant and nursing mothers. The services are supplementary nutrition, immunisation, health and nutrition education to mothers. These services are provided through Anganwadi Centres located in rural, urban and tribal areas. The scheme was started on an experimental basis in 1974 in 33 Development Blocks and by the year 1989-90 it has been functioning in 2438 blocks in the country.

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) What is the basic objective of the National Policy on Children. Answer in about three lines.

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ii) What are the measures adopted to achieve the objectives of the National Policy on Children? Answer in about ten lines

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iii) Name the countries where the Year of the Girl Child was Observed? Answer in about three lines.

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## 17.10 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit we have discussed the demographic composition of children in India. We have looked into the problems faced by street children and orphans and the measures taken by government to rehabilitate them.

We have, then, concentrated on child labour; from there we shifted our attention to juvenile delinquency. We then, focused on the rights of children adopted by UN agencies involved in children's welfare. Having done this, we moved on to explain the discrimination meted out to the girl child in India. Lastly, we have studied the national policy on children.

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## 17.11 KEY WORDS

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<b>Demography</b>	: It is the science of vital statistics as of births, deaths, marriages, migration etc. of population.
<b>Juvenile Court</b>	: It is a law court that tries the cases involving children under a fixed age.
<b>Policy</b>	: A governing principle or a course of action.
<b>Scheme</b>	: An orderly combination of things on a definite plan.
<b>Programme</b>	: An outline of work to be done.

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## 17.12 FURTHER READINGS

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Mandai, B.B. 1990. *Child and Action Plan for Development*. Uppal Publications: New Delhi

Government of India, 1980. *Profile of the Child in India: Policies and Programmes*. Government of India: New Delhi

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## 17.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) The major causes of infant mortality are pre-mature births, respiratory infection, diarrhoea, cough, fever and digestive disorder. The major causes of child mortality are tuberculosis, tetanus, whooping cough, diphtheria, poliomyelitis and measles.
- ii) In order to rehabilitate the orphan children, the Government has started a programme known as, the Scheme for Children in Need of Care and Protection. Under the scheme, children up to the age of 18 years are given care and protection including general education and vocational training. Besides, the provision for foster care has also been made, according to which, a child is kept for a certain period in a family which agrees to give a child a suitable home.
- iii) a) International Labour Organisation (ILO).  
b) The child population in India in 1991 was 11.28 million.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- i) Factors promoting juvenile delinquency are broken homes, lack of privacy in homes, bad housing, absence of space for recreation in homes and neighbourhood, neglect by parents, and poverty of parents. In addition, undesirable companionship in school, work place and neighbourhood, and undesirable influence of cinema and literature and other mass media contribute to juvenile delinquency.
- ii) Laws have been promulgated for taking up preventive as well as corrective measures against delinquency. Under these laws, juvenile courts under the control of full time women magistrates have been formed. The juveniles are brought before the courts without handcuffs or chains. Their cases are pleaded by special officers known as Probation Officers. These officers are trained in social work and correctional administration. Till the cases are decided by the courts, juveniles are kept in Remand Homes. After the decision by the courts, those juveniles who need constant supervision, are kept in approved schools for care, treatment, education and training. It is expected that by the time they would go out of the schools, their mental, moral and physical conditions would have changed and they would have imbibed the qualities of good citizenship.
- iii) a) 1924   b) 1979   c) 7th April 1948.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- i) The basic objective of the National Policy on Children is to provide full physical, mental and social development to children before and after birth and through the period of their growth.
- ii) The measures adopted for achieving the objectives of the National Policy on Children include a comprehensive health programme, nutrition programme and nutrition education, formal education, and informal education, facilities for sport games, cultural and scientific activities in schools, community centres, special assistance to children belonging to Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes, and special programme for treatment, education, rehabilitation and care of physically handicapped, emotionally disturbed or mentally retarded children.
- iii) The seven SAARC Countries, which observed the year 1990 as the Year of the Girl Child, are Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

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## UNIT 18 YOUTH: IDENTITY AND ALIENATION

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### Structure

- 18.0 Objectives
- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Definition of 'Youth' and 'Youth Culture'
  - 18.2.1 Youth
  - 18.2.2 Youth Culture
- 18.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Indian Youth
  - 18.3.1 Sex-Ratio of the Youth Population
  - 18.3.2 Rural-Urban Distribution
  - 18.3.3 Marital Status
  - 18.3.4 Educational Attainment of the Youth Population
  - 18.3.5 Working Population of the Youths
  - 18.3.6 Implication of the Increase in Youth Population
- 18.4 Changing Value System and Alienation of the Youth
  - 18.4.1 Changing Value System
  - 18.4.2 Alienation
- 18.5 Student Unrest
  - 18.5.1 Causes of Student Unrest
  - 18.5.2 Implications for Student Unrest
- 18.6 Some Possible Approaches to Youth Question
- 18.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.8 Key Words
- 18.9 Further Readings
- 18.10 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 18.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit, we shall discuss the contemporary dimensions of youth in India. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- describe demographic condition of youth population in India;
- explain the difference between student youth and non-student youth examine traditional and changing value system of youth;
- narrate the problems of alienated youth;
- describe the factors and problems causing student unrest; and
- discuss some programmes for the youth in India.

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### 18.1 INTRODUCTION

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The study of youth in India involves consideration of several dimensions. Youth can be understood both in quantitative and qualitative terms. Qualitative



description means a discussion involving socio-cultural variables. Quantitative term means a consideration of estimates of the proportion of youth in a population, that is, a discussion of socio-cultural variables like education, occupation, income, standard of living, rural-urban differences. A sociological discussion would require socio-demographic and cultural approach 'to youth in India. We begin this unit defining the term 'Youth'. We shall, then shift our focus to the demographic variables of youth, namely, age, sex, urban-rural distribution, marital status, educational attainment and unemployment rate.

Confrontation of youth with the traditional value system, alienation, identity crisis are briefly touched upon. Causes of student unrest are dealt with next. Finally, we mention the observations of sociologists on future programme for youths.

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## 18.2 DEFINITION OF 'YOUTH' AND 'YOUTH CULTURE'

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At the very outset let us be aware of the notion of youth. Though apparently it is considered to be a biophysical stage, it has enormous sociological significance in the study of social problem.

### 18.2.1 Youth

The term Youth is not used technically but rather it nearly describes a series of characteristics in respect to persons belonging to age group 15-24 years of a given population. The term is illusive. Some consider youth as a stage characterised by factors of biological nature i.e. biophysical changes which occur in the transitional stage between childhood and adulthood, roughly between 15 and 24 years age group. Thus in many studies on youth persons of age group 15-24 years are considered.

Despite realising the inherent drawback in such a classification (for it cannot serve as a common denominator to cover many complex problems all over the country) social scientists including sociologists largely depend on this age group classification. In this unit the age group 15-24 years would be retained for discussion on youth. Along with this classification sociologically the notion of "youth culture" is closely associated. However, the notion of youth culture has contextual relevance. Let us examine its relevance in Indian context.

### 18.2.2 Youth Culture

Euro-American sociologists such Bennett Berger (1963) and many others often talk about 'Youth culture'. In Western societies youth culture is identifiable and hence it is considered to be a sub-social system like *Black culture*, *America-Mexican culture* etc., But in a country like India, the youth are intimately linked with certain other features of social system. Therefore, Indian sociologists reluctantly accept the very notion of youth culture as employed by foreign scholars. In our discussion on youth we shall treat youth as "socio-demographic or statistical categories" of Indian society, which has enormous sociological importance and relevance.

Sociological studies on youth in India involve a discussion on several dimensions, namely demographic, social, cultural, economic and political. It would be useful here to examine demographic characteristics of Indian youth in terms of residence, education and working force.

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## **18.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE INDIAN YOUTH**

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It would be useful to examine the population of youth in terms of sex-composition, rural-urban distribution, marital status and educational attainment.

It is significant to note that the population of youth in the country at the turn of this century was 40 million. The proportion of youth in the total population since 1901 remained unchanged, it was around 17 per cent till 1971.

In 1981 the youth population was 122 million, i.e., a little less than 18.5 per cent of country's total population. During 1951-1981 the population almost doubled (from 62 to 122 million). According to 1991 census youth constituted 18.3% of the total population

### **18.3.1 Sex-Ratio of the Youth Population**

According to 1981 Census, of the total population 52% was of male youth. In terms of sex ratio it comes to 929 female per one thousand male. It is significant to note that male youth per 1000 female youth in India has been increasing during the last 20 years showing a deficit of 7 per cent of female youth.

### **18.3.2 Rural-Urban Distribution**

In 1991 of the total rural and the urban population 17.7 and 20.1% respectively were the youth.

### **18.3.3 Marital Status**

By and large the youth remain unmarried till they reach 20 years. But in India the situation is different, for a sizeable number of youth population is married. In 1981 most half of the girls in the age group 15-29 years were unmarried in urban areas. As compared to the previous Census years, the current mean age at marriage has gone up. However, a sizeable number of girls in rural areas still marry at young age. During 1961-81 the proportion of the youth remaining single has increased both in urban and rural areas. Category wise age at marriage in India for youth has been indicated in the following table:

### **18.3.4 Educational Attainment of the Youth Population**

The overall youth literacy rate in 2002 was 72.6% in India. In other words, in terms of sex and residence illiterates are predominant in the population.

Overall the literacy rate has gone up from 24 per cent to 36 per cent during the past 20 years. Youth educated up to matriculate were 3.6 million in 1961 and 20.2 million in 1981. In other words, a six-fold increase is apparent. The increase was obvious among the young women. In spite of the increase half of the male youth and three-fourth of the female youth in the country cannot read and write even today.

### 18.3.5 Working Population of the Youths

Usually the proportion of working population is expressed in terms of employment-unemployment rate. The National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), in its periodical survey provides data in this respect.

#### i) Incidence of Unemployment

Analysis of unemployment figures in the country clearly shows that the youth form a relatively significant group among the total unemployed persons. According to Visaria, the share of youth among the employed population in 1977-78 ranged from 48.5 per cent for the rural female youth to 79.8 per cent for the urban male youth.

When we analyse the unemployment rate among the educated youth, we get that among all educated youth the proportion of unemployed Secondary educated youth, both in urban and rural areas, is higher than others (see Table 3).

**Table 3: Unemployment Rates by Educational Attainment**  
1977-78

	Rural		Urban	
	M	F	M	F
All	3.6	4.1	7.1	4.4
Illiterate	2.5	3.6	3.6	4.4
Secondary	10.6	28.6	10.0	33.6
Graduates	16.2	32.3	8.8	31.0

Source: NSSO, India (1981)

It is obvious from the above table that overall employment rate among the urban youths is less than the rural youth. It has reached a critical stage among the educated youth population.

Analysis of data on youth unemployed in the country indicates some useful trends, namely:

- a) Unemployment rates among the rural female youth in states of Karnataka, Orissa, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Kerala were higher than the national average which, for the year under consideration (1977-78), was 5.6 per cent.
- b) Among rural male youth, this rate was higher than the national average of 6 per cent in Orissa, Bihar, Haryana, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. :
- c) Among male youth in urban areas, the rate of unemployment was higher than the national average in Orissa, Bihar, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal and Kerala.
- d) The incidence of unemployment was the highest among the urban female youth. In states like Assam, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Kerala and Maharashtra this rate was higher than the national average, and
- e) The rural unemployment rates in many states were significantly lower than those of urban unemployment.

### 18.3.6 Implication of the Increase in Youth Population

The rate of increase in youth population has serious implication both for educational and work opportunity. Despite the differences existing between these characteristics of the youth in different regions, certain common problems can easily be identified.

The bulk of the rural youth in India is out of school. Some are drop-outs. However, among the different social strata education is spreading. The out-of-school youth exhibit a different character. These children are forced in one way or the other to enter the work in production cycle prematurely.

Despite the numerical preponderance of rural youths this sector has been exposed very little. It is obvious that rural youth have less opportunity for receiving education, self-expression and enjoyment compared with other young people.

#### Check Your Progress 1

i) How is youth defined? Answer in four lines.

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ii) State some important dimensions of study of youth in India. Answer in about three lines.

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iii) Briefly describe some demographic features of Indian youth. Answer in eight lines.

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iv) Briefly state usages of demographic data on youth population in India.  
Answer in three lines

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## 18.4 CHANGING VALUE SYSTEM AND ALIENATION OF THE YOUTH

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### 18.4.1 Changing Value System

In this section, we shall be dealing with the phenomena of changing value system and the facts of alienation among the youth.

In the last two centuries, there have been enormous changes in our traditional value system. Let us explain this phenomenon and find out whether it has any impact on the youth of our country with special reference to the alienation of the youth.

In the traditional Hindu system life is viewed in terms of four well-marked states with social obligations. The youth enjoyed no authority, but were given some tasks in the second stage (i.e. Grihastha).

It should also be noted that in Hindu society education was restricted to certain caste levels; therefore, socio-economic and occupational mobility was almost restricted. Viewed against this value today specially after Independence this phenomenon regardless of religion and region has changed. One of the important contributing factor to change in value system is of course development in mass education. New ideas and values are inculcated through education. This makes youth student receptive to change. Several sociological studies support the view that youth student are/keen on social change in the areas of family, caste, notions of hierarchical status (including untouchability), rationality, secularism, equality, social justice, position of women and so on (Damle, 1977:203). It should be emphasised that although there is difference between rural and urban youth, their traditional value system is almost the similar.

### 18.4.2 Alienation

The term ‘alienation’ denotes a feeling of estrangement from other people and of confusion about existing norms. Many writers include in the concept of alienation, to explain notions such as lack of power, meaninglessness, sense of isolation and self- estrangement. The causes of alienation are many. In the present context a few factors seem to be important.

#### i) Generation Gap

One of them is a cleavage between young and old generation. The youths especially of urban areas depend much on their parents. On the one hand, there has been considerable rise in their level of aspirations and expectations; on the other, they confront the forces of traditions. Majority of the modern Indian youth are not interested to be bound by the traditional norms and values. They are interested to adopt the secular life-style and a rational outlook. These causes conflict which at some later stage leads to alienation.



Youth and Alienation

### ii) Unemployment

The second important contributing factor to alienation is widespread phenomenon of unemployment. Soon after completing a particular stage they require economic security. But as they fail to find a job they feel like living in an isolation. This is very crucial stage. Here they may become victim of other evils, such as mental illness, criminal activities, drug addiction. Here both rural and urban youth are almost in similar situation. Sachchidananda (1988) writes:

“Those (rural) boys who cannot go to the town for continuing their studies and remain in the village spend their time in idle gossip and in some cases turn to anti-social activities. It has been found that many such educated young men take active part in dacoities, road hold-ups which are extremely common in many parts of India”.

Some studies carried on in parts of northeastern and central India have pointed out widespread phenomenon of, ‘drug addiction’ in university and college campuses. It is not well established those whether alienated youth are victim of drug addiction or drug addiction alone leads to alienation. Both these factors influence each other and operate together.

### iii) Identity Crisis

Identity signifies a sense of awareness that people consciously or unconsciously assert for survival, recognition and reward in the existing social structures. Youth in recent time try .to define their own identity in order to obtain the resources for survival and try to get a place in the existing social order.

It is being felt that the youth have not satisfactorily been placed in the matter of education and occupation. Instead of being in search for identity youth are undergoing turmoil of identity crisis. This has led them to attract towards the forces of revivalism as remedy to inadequacies. In absence of adequate model to deal with rising identity crisis, the youth especially the educated unemployed youth indulge in non-institutionalised channels of socio-economic betterment.

### Check Your Progress 2

Tick mark the correct answers:

- i) In the traditional Hindu system life is viewed in terms of four well marked stages with social obligations. In this system of life youth enjoyed
  - a) good deal of authority without any social obligation
  - b) good deal of authority with social obligation
  - c) no authority but were given some tasks in the second stage of life Griha
  - d) All are incorrect.
- ii) There is difference between the rural and urban youth; and their traditional value system
  - a) is also different
  - b) is almost similar
  - c) cannot be judged in these two opposite scales.
- iii) Which one of the following is not a cause of alienation among the youth?
  - a) Cleavage between young and old generation
  - b) Spread of unemployment
  - c) Drug addiction
  - d) Enormous scope of employment.

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## 18.5 STUDENT UNREST

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In recent decades, there have been considerable number of incidences of unrest in the educational campuses. Studies reveal that youth unrest and educational institutions are highly correlated.

According to a sociological study of unrest on the campuses in the country, it was noticed that during the period 1968 to 1971 almost all the states in the country were heavily affected by instances of student violence (Vinayak, 1972). Of 744 cases of student unrest, 80 per cent were violent and about 20 per cent were peaceful. All India average ratio of violent to peaceful agitations was 4:5 to 1:0 and it ranged between 2:3 to 1:0 in Bihar and Madras, to 31:0 to 0:0 in M. P. The universities in the southern states were comparatively more peaceful or less violent. The maximum number of cases of student violence were in Delhi, followed by U.P. and West Bengal. The least disturbed states were Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan.

### 18.5.1 Causes of Student Unrest

Two broad categories can be listed as the causes of unrest and violence, namely, 'On-campus' issues and 'Off-campus' issues. The 'On-campus issues' are both academic and non-academic in nature. On-campus issues are related to examinations, fees, residential facilities. The Off-campus issues are sympathetic strikes (Bandh) and confrontation between student youth and non-student youth.

Vinayak has observed that during the period 1968-71 more than 65 per cent cases of unrest were due to Off-campus issues, about 24 per cent due to On-campus academic issues, and about 11 per cent due to other factors. The state-wise analysis revealed that there were 66 cases in Andhra Pradesh, 25 in Assam, 44 in Bihar, 128 in Delhi, 7 in Gujarat, 6 in Haryana, 7 in Himachal Pradesh, 15 in Jammu and Kashmir, 51 in Tamil Nadu, 14 in Maharashtra, 22 in Orissa, 50 in Punjab, 18 in Rajasthan, 109 in U.P., and 101 in West Bengal. This study revealed that almost all states were affected by student violence during 1968-71. There is no denying the fact that there have been several reported cases of agitations on campuses during the past decade.

Some specific studies have been directed to root out the causes of unrest.

- i) According to one source, the underlying cause of unrest is rooted in a general feeling of frustration among the youth. The educated students have come to believe that in the present set up the government policies have ignored merits and abilities.
- ii) The other important cause of student unrest has been interference of political parties with student union or organisations. Several studies have supported the views that the association of various political parties through the student wings in many ways are responsible for the outbreak of violence. The national political parties and their local bodies tend to use the students as their testing field for their strength for incoming elections.
- iii) The third contributing factor to unrest is unemployment. It is a well-known fact that the present day education system in the country does not guarantee suitable employment. The reasons are many: lack of proper guidance, training, career-oriented programmes and non-availability of jobs. .

According to a recent study by Parveen Visaria (1985) it is quite clear that in spite of the efforts on the various fronts, the quantum of unemployment has continued to increase with the growth in population. Visaria has concluded that the unemployed' males in urban areas have outnumbered the unemployed females. This study indicated a marginal rise in unemployment rate for rural males but a sharp decline in the unemployment rate for rural females. The trend for the youth population (age 15-29) was similar. The unemployment rates showed a rise among urban youths of both sexes and also among the rural male youth.

### 18.5.2 Implications for Student Unrest

Youth form a relatively significant group among the total unemployed persons in India. The reasons for unemployment are many and they are closely linked with population growth, economic growth and expansion of education. The



consequences of rising unemployment among the youth are for themselves and their families. It has been indicated that the increase in the number of educated youth and the indifferent quality of education makes matter worse. This has implications for student unrest in particular.

### Activity 1

Read Section 18.7 again and list the issues that have led to unrest and violence in university campuses in recent years. You may present your own observations about student unrest in your area and compare your observations with your friends at your Study Centre.

## 18.6 SOME POSSIBLE APPROACHES TO YOUTH QUESTION

According to Sachchidananda (1988), two Possible and complementary approaches could be thought of to discuss the youth question. It could be based either on an individual or socio-economic context in which one lives.

Despite the differences existing between characteristics of the youth in different regions, certain common problems can be identified. First, there is a high percentage of rural youth within the population. This sector must be given opportunity to play their role. A major obstacle in this connection is of lack of education. While education alone is not capable of bringing about socio-economic change on its own, it is nevertheless the condition, that is, educational opportunities which must be fulfilled if change is to occur. Therefore, the future programme, that is, educational policies, must be flexible and more sensitive than at present to regional and local traditions. Further, the youth are most affected by the erroneous process of development. As such future educational planning should take particular account of the situation and prospects of the employment including linking work with study.

### Box 1

#### Youth Services

There are various youth programmes launched by the State and the Central Governments as well with a view to enabling the youth (a) “to improve their skills and personality for effective participation in the process of development and (b.) to provide them opportunities to participate in the process of national development”. You may like to know about a few of these programmes

- 1) **National Services Scheme (NSS)** : This scheme aims at the involvement of College Students on a voluntary and selective basis in the programme of social service and national development.
- 2) **Nehru Yuvak Kendra (NYK)** : ‘This scheme aims to serve the non-students and rural youth with a view to improving their personality and employment capability. These *kendras* organise youth leadership, training programmes, national integration camps, operation of bio-gas plants, bee keeping, para-military training etc. At many places the scheme of Training Rural Youth for Self Employment is implemented through the Kendras

3) **Scouting and Guiding:** This is a part of an international movement which aims to building character of boys and girls.

There are other numerous schemes viz. International Exchange of Youth Delegations, Promotions of National Integration, National Service Volunteer Scheme, Exhibition for Youth, Youth Hostels; National Youth Award Scheme etc. meant for the youth in India. (India 2000).

Second important point is related to position of youth in general population structure of the country. Life expectancy in India has increased considerably over the past five decades. It is expected to increase much more in the next twenty years. Therefore, it would necessitate a clear-cut division between youth and old. In sociological terms it would mean two broad but distinct types of groups: old and young. Since role and responsibilities are associated with persons this would involve some transfer of authority from one generation to the next, i.e. from older to the younger. So there is a possibility of clash or conflict in ideas and actions between two generations. Such clash, likely to come up in years to comes. However, there are ways to tackle the problem of clash. One is possible changes In the family ideology. A democratic type of family atmosphere can resolve the conflict. Similar radical changes in other social institutions such as kinship and caste system are also required.

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) What are the main causes of student unrest? Answer in about seven lines.

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Tick marks the *incorrect* statement.

- ii) According to a recent study:
  - a) unemployed males in urban areas have out numbered the unemployed females.
  - b) there has been a marginal rise in the unemployment rate for rural males but a sharp decline in the employment rate for rural female
  - c) the unemployment rates showed a rise among the urban youth
  - d) none is incorrect.

iii) Discuss briefly anyone of the possible approaches to youth question in India with special reference to rural youth. Use seven lines to answer.

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## 18.7 LET US SUM UP

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This unit highlights certain important issues related to youth in India. We pointed out the difficulties in defining the term youth. Though the term was defined as ‘age-group’ category, the emphasis was also on socio-cultural variables. These were treated as identifiable criteria in the study of youth. We discussed at some length a few demographic variables of youth, namely, age-sex, urban-rural distribution, marital status, educational attainment and unemployment rate.

Confrontation of youth with the traditional value system, alienation and identity crisis were touched upon briefly. Discussions on the situation and problems of youth were held at some length. Lastly, observations of sociologists on future programme for youth, were indicated.

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## 18.8 KEY WORDS

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- Alienation** : A feeling of estrangement from other people and of confusion about the existing norms.
- Demography** : Study of phenomena connected with human populations; such as births, marriages and deaths, migrations and the factors which influence them. It involves statistics.
- Identity** : The condition of being the same with something described or asserted.
- Sex-Ratio** : Number of female per 1000 male as defined in the *Census of India*.
- Value System** : Shared cultural standard according to which the relevance – moral, aesthetic – of objects, of attitudes, desires and needs can be compared and judged.
- Violence** : An extreme form of conflict.
- Youth** : Persons of age-group 15-24 year of a given population. It is a socio-cultural and simultaneously a statistical category.
- Youth culture** : An identifiable sub-social system of a larger social system.

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## 18.9 FURTHER READINGS

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Damle.. Y, B. 1977. "Youth". In S.C. Dube (Ed.) *India Since Independence*, Vikas: New Delhi.

De Mellow, R.C., 1978. "Youth". In Romesh Thapar's (ed.) *Change and Conflict in India*. Macmillan India: Delhi.

Sachchidanand, 1988. *Social Change in Village India*, Concept: Delhi.

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## 18.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Youth is defined both as social and statistical category. Usually persons between 15 and 24 years age are considered youth.
- ii) Important dimensions of the study of youth in India are social demography and: cultural variables.
- iii) Demographic features of the youth can be expressed in age-sex-residence distribution in the general population.  
Rural-urban ratio is 3.1 (urban male 33 million, rural male 92 million). Youth mean marriage age is 22. Half of the male youth and three-fourth female youth are still illiterate.
- iv) Main usages are related to the areas of educational expansion and creation of job opportunities.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) c
- ii) b
- iii) d

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) The causes of the student unrest can broadly be categorised under two broad headings: on-campus and off-campus. The on-campus issues are related to examination fees, residential facilities etc. The off-campus issues are sympathetic strikes (Bandh), and confrontation between student youth and non-student youth. In general the feeling of frustration, unemployment and political interference have contributed substantially towards this unrest.
- ii) d
- iii) Rural youth must be given the opportunity to play their role, Hence they are to be educated adequately, to bring change in the society. The educational policies, must be flexible and sensitive to regional tradition. The further educational planning should take particular account of the situation and prospects of the employment including linking work with study.

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## UNIT 19 WOMEN

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### Structure

- 19.0 Objectives
- 19.1 Introduction
- 19.2 Indicators of Women's Status
  - 19.2.1 Demographic Status
  - 19.2.2 Health Status
  - 19.2.3 Literacy Status
  - 19.2.4 Employment Status
  - 19.2.5 Political Status
- 19.3 Social Structure, Social Processes and Women
  - 19.3.1 The Caste Structure
  - 19.3.2 The Institution of Family
  - 19.3.3 Socialisation within the Family
  - 19.3.4 Class Structure and Women's Work
- 19.4 Violence on Women
  - 19.4.1 Rape, Sexual Harassment and Abuse
  - 19.4.2 Domestic Violence and Dowry Deaths
  - 19.4.3 Prostitution
  - 19.4.4 Pornography and Misrepresentation of Women in the Media
- 19.5 Women's Issues: Challenges and Responses
- 19.6 Let Us Sum Up
- 19.7 KeyWords
- 19.8 Further Readings
- 19.9 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 19.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit, we shall discuss the issues relating to women's identity, dignity and social justice. After going through this unit you should be able to:

- discuss the various indicators of women's status;
- explain the structures and social processes that create and perpetuate women's subordination;
- examine the role of different forms of violence in the society;
- analyse women's issues in a structural and historical context; and
- describe the contemporary challenges and responses to women's issues in India.

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### 19.1 INTRODUCTION

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The focus on the status of women in India was drawn by the submission of the report titled 'Towards Equality' by the Committee on the Status of Women in India. This Committee, which was set up by the Government of India at the request of the United Nations, looked into various status indicators to evaluate

the status of women in India. The report had made shocking revelations of the regressive changes that women are faced as against the progressive changes that took place in various sectors of the country. Similar disclosures from other parts of the world made the United Nations declare the year 1975 as the Women's Year and the Decade 1975-85 for women.

The findings of the report and research studies thereafter, demonstrated the contradictions in the Constitutional guarantees of equality for women and the reality. Various issues like rape, dowry deaths, domestic violence, sati, desertion, female foeticide etc., were/are taken up for campaigning and seeking gender justice by women's organisations and human rights groups. The mid 70s and 80s had witnessed the resurgence of the second wave of the women's movement during this century. This new awareness of articulating the experiences of discrimination, subordination and neglect had also found its way into examining the existing body of knowledge. This had seen the heralding of women's studies research. Despite loopholes and inadequacies, there have been legislations, amendments to the existing Acts, policies and programmes for women during the 1970's and 80's.

In this unit we shall focus on some of the problems faced by Indian women. We begin this unit by identifying the indicators of women's status. We then, move on to concentrate on the family as an institution and its role in socialising a daughter to perform a secondary role. We will discuss different forms of violence that threaten the identity and dignity of women, like sexual harassment and rape, domestic violence and dowry deaths, prostitution and pornography and misrepresentation of women in the media. Lastly we shall explain the challenges faced by women's movement in India and various social responses towards the women's issues.

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## 19.2 INDICATORS OF WOMEN'S STATUS

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Ironically, in the Indian situation where women goddesses are worshipped, women are denied an independent identity and status. This is strongly ingrained in the social fabric, the culture, the economy and the polity. As the code of Manu states: 'A woman should never be independent. Her father has authority over her in childhood, her husband in youth, and her son in old age.' (Manusmriti, Dharmashastra, IX, 3). Women's identity, freedom, access to resources, opportunities, etc., are determined by the caste and class status of the family. Marital status and their fertility provide an identity to women. Married women achieve status and respect in the family and society after attaining motherhood, especially after giving birth to sons.

Through various cultural processes in the family and society the selfhood of women is denied from childhood. Freedom, individualhood and identity for women is limited and stifled which have various implications. Though there are certain positive changes taking place in terms of women's education, employment, participation in panchayat, etc., there is still a long way to go.

In general, the status of women is evaluated in comparison to the status of men. The major empirical indicators that are utilised for this evaluation are the demographic status, the health status, the literacy status, the employment rates and patterns and the political status.

### 19.2.1 Demographic Status

The indicators like the sex ratio, the mortality and morbidity patterns and life expectancy enable the evaluation of the demographic status of a population. For purposes of understanding the demographic status of women, we will elaborate on sex ratio and mortality patterns. The sex ratio indicates the proportion of females for 1000 males in the population. In India, since the beginning of this century, the proportion of women in the population has been declining. According to 1981 Census the proportion has slightly increased, however, the provisional figures of the 1991 Census indicate a decline again, with a marginal increase in 2001.

**Table 1: Sex-Ratio from 1901 to 1991**

Year	Ratio
1901	972
1911	964
1921	955
1931	950
1941	945
1951	946
1961	941
1971	930
1981	934
1991	929
2001	933

**Mortality rate** or the death rate measures the frequency of deaths. This is an annual rate and is calculated for different age groups as number of deaths for 1000 live births. The age-specific death rate data indicates high rate of female infant mortality (0-4 years) and maternal mortality (5-24 years). The high female infant mortality (36.8) as against male infant mortality (33.6) indicates the discrimination that young girls face in gaining access to adequate food and health care (Sample Registration System (SRS), 1987). The high rates of maternal mortality are because of obstetric risk at delivery and inadequate access to medical care. The low age at marriage and at consummation leads to early age at pregnancy and risk at delivery. The life expectancy rate represents the mean life length an individual is expected to survive given the prevailing mortality conditions. The life expectancy of females is 63.8 years and that of males is 62.8 years (as per 2000 view). It has been observed that the chances of longer life expectancy is higher among women during older years, whereas women in the younger years continue to have relatively higher death rates. (Also see Unit 33, Block 7 of ESO-12).

### 19.2.2 Health Status

Discrimination against women prevails in providing health care. Studies on hospital admissions and records have shown that men and boys get more medical care compared to women and girls. It is said that women and girls are

taken to “hospitals at much latest stages of ill-health compared to men and boys. Moreover, majorities of Indian women are anaemic. They expend higher levels of energy performing innumerable activities like cooking, cleaning, washing, fetching water, collecting firewood, taking care of the young and old, tending cattle, and working in agriculture field. However, their calorie intake is not commensurate with the energy expenditure. The calorie deficit takes a toll on women’s health in general and reproductive health in particular.

It has also been observed that with environmental degradation women are walking longer miles to collect firewood and water which has increased women’s work load. This has a negative impact on their health. Similarly, since women are the major water carriers, they are susceptible to water-borne infections. Cooking with inefficient fuel like crop wastes, dung cakes etc., and stoves, causes respiratory diseases like chronic bronchitis. Women engaged in agriculture, mines, plantations and in home-based production like rolling bidis, making paper bags, embroidery etc., face several occupational health hazards and are not covered by any health programmes.

### 19.2.3 Literacy Status

Education is regarded as an important instrument to bring about social change. Apart from its potential to bring about personality development, it also is a means to achieve financial independence and status mobility.

In India, from the post-independence period young women and girls are attaining higher education and entering male dominated fields. However, the overall literacy rates and the relative literacy rates are lower in comparison with male literacy rates. The total literacy rate in India is 65.38%, while for male it is 75.85%, for female it is 54.16% (Census 2001).

There are several factors that cause this situation. Firstly, due to low socio-economic status of the household, children are not sent to school. Even if children are admitted to school, daughters are withdrawn and are given the responsibility of the care of siblings and domestic work. The economic necessity, which compels households to send their children to perform labour, also deprives children of education. A high value is attached to daughter’s marriage and motherhood, therefore, families are unwilling to invest scarce resources in daughter’s education. Boys are more likely to receive such investments in order to improve their chances of employment. (See Unit 32, Block 7 of ESO-12 for further detail.)

### 19.2.4 Employment Status

Anthropological studies indicate that women were the major producers of food, clothing, crafts and many different tools through most of the human history.

The large majority of Indian women participate in innumerable activities for the survival of their families. However, definitions of ‘work’ and ‘worker’ fall short of capturing the variety of women’s work and its importance to the family. According to 2001 census 25.7% of the female and 39.3% of the males are workers. Of the total female workers 32.5% are cultivators, 39.4% are agricultural labours, 6.4% in the household industry and 21.7% belong to the other category of workers. The majority of these are involved in agriculture,



plantations and mines. Despite the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, women are paid lower wages, occupy lower skilled jobs, have less access to skill training and promotion. Employed women in the urban areas occupy stereotyped jobs like that of teachers, nurses, doctors, clerks and typists. Women are also making inroads into predominantly male oriented occupations like engineering, architecture, aeronautics, manufacturing, police services and management. But cultural barriers, which view women as 'weaker sex', discriminate against their selection, training and promotion. Moreover, women have to work doubly hard to prove their worth. (You may like to read Unit 31, Block 2 of ESO-12 and Unit 11, Block 3 of ESO-O6 for further information.)

**19.2.5 Political Status**

Unlike many Western countries where women had to put up organised struggles to acquire the right to vote, women in India have the right to vote as citizens of this nation. Though India had a woman Prime Minister, the Late Indira Gandhi, it cannot be said that women are fairly represented in the Parliament and other State and local bodies. They occupy only 8.91% of the seats in the parliament. By and large women have remained passive voters in elections and their polling behaviour is determined by the decisions that the male members and the community take. The question of reservation of 30% seats for women in the Lok Sabha and State Assemblies was widely debated recently. Though this bill has been placed in the parliament on several occasion, it has been withdrawn in one plea or the other. However participation of women in the Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) has been ensured in India with the 73<sup>rd</sup> constitutional amendment. Taking, the advantage of 30% reservation the PRIs more than 30 million women are actively participating in the political decision-making process at the grass root.

**Check Your Progress 1**

- i) Do you see any contradiction in the constitutional guarantee of equality for women and the reality? Answer in nine lines.

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- ii) What are the implications of the low status of women? Answer in Seven lines.

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- iii) Tick the appropriate answer  
The percentage of women workers is low because
  - a) Women are housewives
  - b) Women are not enumerated as workers
  - c) Women do not work
  - d) Workers are always men.

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### 19.3 SOCIAL STRUCTURE, SOCIAL PROCESSES AND WOMEN

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In this section let us try to understand the various structures that create the secondary status of women and perpetuate the discrimination through various social processes.

#### 19.3.1 The Caste Structure

The subordination of women was crucial to the development of caste hierarchy. The higher the caste the greater were the constraints on women. It is observed that the development of gender division, based on the control of female sexuality, was integral to the formation of the social structure.

It might be relevant to ask: What was the need to control women’s sexuality? What was it that women’s power would endanger? How was it linked to material resources? For unravelling these questions it is important to understand the system of caste.

To remind you, there are thousands of sub-castes regionally known as ‘jatis’. However, the pan-Indian social hierarchy is based on the ‘varna’ hierarchy, which divides the Hindu population in four major groups: the *brahmin* (priestly caste) at the top, followed by the *Khatriya* (warrior caste), then the *vaishya* (commoners, usually known as trading castes) and at the bottom the *sudra* (agricultural labourers and artisan). Some who are beyond the caste hierarchy were considered to be untouchables. The caste boundaries are maintained through strict purity – pollution principles, rules of commensality and endogamy, commitment to caste occupation and ascribed life-style. Ritual purity is in the nature of religious status but also coincided with economic wealth and social esteem. That is, the upper castes own more property and the lower castes are property less or have the least property. Over the decades the association of ritual status and economic status has undergone change, The concept of ‘dominant caste’ demonstrates this. (This has been discussed in ESO-14, Block 5, Unit 18, p.15.)

Three of the major signs of purity: vegetarianism, teetotalism and tight constraints on women, indicate that a significant degree of ritual purity comes

through domestic activities. The control on women comes from two major aspects.

- 1) Women's disinheritance from immovable property, removing them from the public sphere and limiting them to the domestic sphere in the form of **seclusion or purdah**.
- 2) Far greater control is exercised by men over women's sexuality through arranged marriage, child marriage, the prohibition of divorce, and strict monogamy for women, leading to sati and a ban on widow remarriage, including infant or child widows.

These strictures were enforced most strictly by the upper castes to maintain ritual purity, biological purity, caste supremacy and economic power. Lower caste groups attempting to achieve upward status mobility with improvement in economic power, also imbibe upper caste norms of constraining women's freedom. M. N. Srinivas had observed this relationship as an index of 'Sanskritisation'.

The ideological and material basis for maintaining the caste system was closely regulated by religious scriptures and the patriarchal, patrilineal and patrilocal family ideology.

### 19.3.2 The Institution of Family

You must have learnt in your earlier lessons that family is the most important social unit in which members live in a network of mutual ties, roles and obligations, that it is a unit of procreation, it nurtures the young and socialises them (i.e. transmits tradition, culture, religious and social values) to enable them to perform various roles in the society. Family performs the function of continuity of generations and the transmission of private property. The role of the family in procreation is closely intertwined with the pattern of descent and religious prescriptions/priorities. Descents are of two types: patrilineal and matrilineal. In the patrilineal descent system the property of the family is transmitted through the male offspring for example, father to son. In the matrilineal system the property is transmitted through the women, for example, mother to daughter.

Research into various traditions of religious practices, the matriarchal heritage of the 'Shakti' (mother goddesses) cult and beliefs indicate that the patrilineal form of descent, the existence of male gods and constraints on women's freedom were Aryan traditions imposed on liberal indigenous traditions. At present, barring the Nair community of Kerala, the Khasis of the north-east, the Garos of the North-eastern India, and certain tribes in the Lakshdweep, all the other communities practice patrilineal descent system. The worship of mother goddesses is prevalent in all parts of India.

Closely connected to the patrilineality is the practice of patrilocality, i.e., the transfer of residence of women to the village/residence/family of the husband, after marriage. The sons stay with the father. The property laws, therefore, forbade daughters from inheriting immovable property, since such property would pass to their husband's family on marriage. Instead women were given a portion of movable property (like jewellery) to take with them, known as dowry. This provides material reason for anxiety over the birth of daughters.

Moreover, the religious scriptures, especially the Hindu religion place a high preference for sons. According to the code of Manu, a man could achieve merit only by protecting the purity of his wife and through her, of his sons. A son is necessary for lighting the funeral pyre of the father, propitiating the souls of agnatic ascendants through **shradha** and thereby enabling the father and agnatic ascendants to attain **moksha** (to be relieved from rebirth). The role of the women is to beget sons, perpetuate the male descent and facilitate the performance of rituals. This hierarchy of male and female roles create differential evaluation of children with a strong son preference on the one hand and daughter neglect on the other, in terms of access to food, health care, education, freedom, rights and justice. The extraordinary preoccupation of viewing the family as harmonious, egalitarian and consensual unit, which enables the maintenance of social order, has blindfolded sociologists from several observations relating to women. The experiences of women within the family are different from that of men.

### 19.3.3 Socialisation within the Family

As mentioned earlier socialisation performs the function of transmitting culture, tradition, social values and norms. Apart from parental socialisation in the family, various agencies like the schools, peer groups, literature and films play a role in early socialisation and adult socialisation. Girls and boys receive differential socialisation, which further perpetuate asymmetric roles and relationship. Boys are equipped with higher education and skills in order to perform the 'breadwinner's' role and the girls are initiated into domestic chores at an early age, given lesser education, trained to work hard and to develop low self-esteem. Boys receive a status of permanence as against girls who are seen as temporary members of the family. Very few families enable their daughters to develop an independent identity and dignity.

It has been observed that school books perpetuate images of mother as the 'housewife', father as the 'breadwinner'; boys playing with guns and trucks and girls playing with toys and dolls. Though several schools encourage involvement in sports for boys and girls, there are stereotyped patterns of playing. Boys play football, basketball and cricket and girls skip and involve in restricted games. Media messages about women and girls perpetuate stereotyped sexist images which enable the media industry to maintain its market. (Elaborated further in sub-section 19.4.4).

#### Activity 1

Write an essay based on your experience of (as a man or woman) socialisation at school and in the family. Compare your note, if those of other students at your Study Centre.

### 19.3.4 Class Structure and Women's Work

Class is defined primarily by the ownership of property or capital or economic resources. In simple terms, in a capitalist structure hierarchy is determined by wage, relation viz., people who work for a wage and people who hire workers for wages in rural areas, where the social, economic and political power coincide with caste structure. The constraints on women that vary from upper to the lower castes are reinforced by the class structure as well. Women of upper

castes/classes are secluded, and participate in activities in the domestic sphere. Women from *middle* castes with medium and small holdings are more likely to work on their own fields and in certain cases work for wages. Women from artisan castes/classes contribute to the home-based production. The women from the lower castes, also the property less ones, was labourers. They belong to the bottom of the hierarchy where seclusion and restriction on mobility are not practised.

In the urban context, where there is a transition to non-agricultural occupations (from an ‘ascribed’ to ‘achieved’ status situation) the upper castes form the predominant group among middle classes. Women of this class emerged from seclusion during the century to acquire education and employment. The important aspect is that the economic dependence on men is broken. However, this did not drastically change the subordination of women. The class structure appears to build upon the existing gender hierarchy in the caste structure. The family within the class structure also derives status from women’s education and employment. Women perform status – maintaining and enhancing activities to the family – as educated housewives, mothers and earners. Advertisements in matrimonial columns are ample evidence of this trend. The family concern in this context is with the kind, quality and purpose of women’s education, limiting the type and level of employment, and in retaining the requirement that women perform domestic roles as well as paid employment.

Women’s subordination is entrenched in the caste and class hierarchies which have to be understood. Otherwise, women’s issues will be misunderstood as mere cultural accidents and violence on women as stray incidents.

**Check Your Progress 2**

i) What are the constraints on women imposed by the caste structure? Answer in about seven lines.

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ii) What are the constraints on women imposed by the class structure? Answer in about seven lines.

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## 19.4 VIOLENCE ON WOMEN

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There are different forms of violence on women which act as ideological threats to establishing a women's independent identity and dignity. The forms of violence that seek our attention here are:

- i) rape, sexual harassment and abuse,
- ii) domestic violence and dowry deaths,
- iii) prostitution, and
- iv) pornography.

### 19.4.1 Rape, Sexual Harassment and Abuse

Rape, sexual harassment, eve teasing, molestation and abuse of women/young girls by men act as function of limiting women's freedom and perpetuate the notion that women need male protection at various stages in life. Eve-teasing in colleges, public transport and other public places are rampant. There have been cases of gang rapes in colleges and incidents of acid throwing on young girls for defacing them in several parts of India. Sexual harassment and abuse at the workplace is least challenged or reported for fear of losing employment and stigmatisation.

It is futile to argue that provocative dresses worn by women are responsible for sexual harassment or molestation. In many cases saree and salwar kameez clad women have been sexually harassed. It is the scant regard for women which is responsible for sexual harassment of women besides their being regarded as commodities with no feeling, to be played with.

Rape is a violent sexual intercourse performed against the will and consent of the woman. It demonstrates a power relationship between men and women. Rape diminishes the identity of the woman as an individual and objectifies her. In India, atrocities and crimes on women are increasing so is the incidence of rape. Every two hours, a rape occurs somewhere in India. What is most frightening and disgusting about this upward swing is that a large percentage of these rape victims are children below the age of 12. Even toddlers of two and three years of age are not being spared but are considered suitable objects of sexual gratification by the rapist.

Paradoxically in our society, the victims of rape get stigmatised in the society. The woman who is the victim of rape is blamed because, the notion is that, "she must have invited it", "she perhaps was dressed provocatively" etc.

Except in a few cases most acts of rape are not outbursts of perversion. There are several forms of rape:

- a) rape within the family (e.g. incest rape, child sex abuse and rape by the husband, which is not legally accepted as rape);
- b) rape as caste/class domination (e.g. rape by upper caste men of lower caste women; rape of landless/agricultural labourers / bonded labourers by landlords etc.)
- c) rape of children, minors and unprotected young women;

- d) gang rapes during wars, communal riots and political upheavals;
- e) Custodial rapes (e.g. in police custody, remand homes, in hospitals, at the work place etc.);
- f) Stray, unpremeditated rapes.

The major rape incidents in Mathura and Maharashtra, and of Ramazabee in Hyderabad, in the police custody, and the court verdicts in these cases which acquitted the policemen on the clause of 'consent', led to a nation wide campaign for reform of the Rape Law. A change was brought by the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 1983. A man is said to have committed rape if he has sexual intercourse with a woman without her consent, or with her consent, but having obtained it in a state of insanity or intoxication or by putting her or any person in whom she is interested in fear of death or of hurt or when she is below sixteen years of age. The Act also introduced categories of custodial rape. In any case of custodial rape, if the victim gives an evidence that she did not consent to sexual intercourse, the court would assume that she did not consent. The onus of proving that rape was not committed will be on the man. However, the aspect of going into the details of past sexual history of the woman, in order to accept or reject the charge of rape has been left untouched. That is, the law sets standards of morality for protection of women.

#### **19.4.2 Domestic Violence and Dowry Deaths**

Violence on women in the family in the form of wife-beating, ill-treatment, emotional torture and the like, were considered family 'problems' and never acknowledged as crimes against women. It has been observed that domestic violence is prevalent in all classes of the society. An analysis of newspaper reports by a research study has observed a rising preponderance of deaths of women in the first few years of marriage. The extreme form of this violence on young brides came to be known as 'dowry deaths' or 'bride burning' cases.

In most of the bride burning or dowry death or dowry murder cases the insatiable demands of the in-laws of the daughter which cannot be met by her parents is the main reason. The daughter-in-law is tortured for bringing insufficient dowry. The in-laws conspire to finish the daughter-in-law so that they can get their son married for another time and extract more dowries from the next bride's parents.

In many cases dowry death or dowry murder or even post-marriage suicides (abetted by the torture of the bride at the hands of her-in-laws) could be averted if only the parents or relatives of the bride would have been willing to keep their daughter with them after their repeated refusal to go to their in-laws house. Arveen (Gogi) Kaur the only child of her parents wrote to her father much before committing suicide, "Papa don't throw me away like this. I swear on your life Papa I can't live here. I want to be back. I don't want anything more than this. I'm sure Papa you can afford me. Won't you Papa? Say something Papa. You don't know how your daughter is living out here. Please call her back. She'll die, Papa, but she won't live here.... " And she died of course.

In the case of suicides committed by the brides, it is proximately by the harassment and torture of the bride at the hands of her in-laws/husband and

remotely by the expenses involved in the upkeep of the daughter with or without her children by her parents and the patriarchal *izzat* (honour which it is felt by the bride's parents that the staying of their daughters in their natal family after marriage would tarnish their reputation and status in society) for which the bride's parents are not willing to accept their daughter back.

Keeping this in mind the social activists and feminists have been demanding the right of a daughter in parental property both ancestral and self-acquired. This, it is felt would mitigate the dowry death or dowry murder menace. As economic security for a bride is of the utmost importance like the emotional and moral support of her parents and relatives.

The existence, prevalence and ramifications of the practice of dowry is alarming. The incidence of dowry deaths which is in the increase in several cities, metropolitans and small towns was noticed by women's groups and there was a demand for an amendment in the Dowry Act during the early 1980s. Female foetuses are systematically aborted in North India and in Western India with the aid of Amniocentesis (a sex detection test) in order to avoid the future payment of dowry at the time of marriage.

It has been observed that the practice of dowry came into existence with hypergamy, i.e., a marriage between a lower caste woman and an upper caste man. The concept of 'stridhan', the share in property which women received at the time of marriage was slowly replaced by offering dowry by the bride's family to the groom's family. Instead of a share in landed (immovable) property, dowry is generally in the form of cash or kind on which young brides rarely have control. The growth of consumerism, i.e., the want to acquire consumer items like T. V., video, scooter, refrigerator etc., among the middle class has led further to the demand of dowry. This practice is now moving into the lower classes and non-Hindu communities where earlier it was non-existent. The prevalent notion about dowry is that it is compensation to the groom's family for taking over the responsibility of the woman's sustenance. This notion thrives on the assumption that a woman is a 'non-working' person and marriage entails the transfer of this 'burden' of maintaining a 'non-working' person from the bride's family to the groom's family. This notion is incorrect because (a) it undermines the multiple roles women play as housewives and mothers, and (b) does not explain why even employed women are expected to give dowry.

Some women's organisations provide counselling, legal aid and run support centres and short stay homes for women in distress. However, it is essential to reverse viewing women as 'expendable', 'dispensable' commodities and greater support for women should come forth from the community, neighbourhood and her parents.

There is a need to question the extraordinary value placed by parents and society on marriage and the pressure on women to-be-married-at-any-cost. The 'perpetuation of the practice of dowry undervalues women and make daughter unwelcome. The choice to remain 'single' (unmarried) should be respected and valued. Single women living alone or with the parental family should be nurtured as a 'norm' rather than a 'deviance'



### 19.4.3 Prostitution

Prostitution devalues women's dignity and stigmatises her as a 'fallen' woman in the society. The commodisation of woman's sexuality begins with the subordination of women. Women's identity as an individual is undermined by the objectification of her sexuality and the sale of sexual experience. In the urban context, where single male migration from rural areas is high the business of prostitution is rampant. In 1986, the earlier SITA Act was amended to prevent trafficking in prostitution. However, the new Immoral Traffic in Persons Prevention Act (ITPPA) has similar aims; objectives, logic and premises.

The ITPPA, however, continues to be biased against the prostitute. The clauses penalising the prostitute are retained. Simultaneously, the client is not made an offender.

Further, it makes little sense to raise penal measures without making provisions for strengthening the implementation structure. After all the reasons for the failure of SITA were:

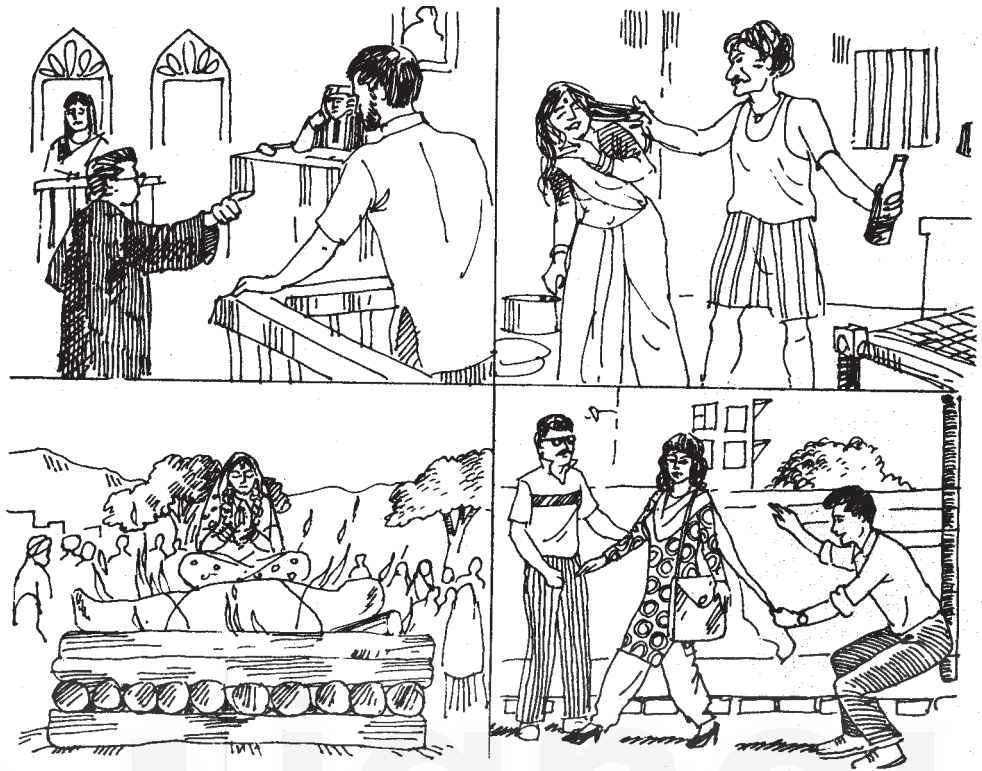
- a) brothel management - political nexus,
- b) circumvention of arrest by racketeers with penalisation of prostitutes,
- c) sanctions incorporated in the Act being utilised by police to extort bribes and fines from prostitutes,
- d) problems in producing evidence,
- e) sexist attitudes of magistrates,
- f) Paucity of reformatory homes, inadequate infrastructure facilities, poor quality of the staff and the corrective orientation towards rehabilitation. All these problems remain.

It is mainly situational compulsion, which gives rise to prostitutes and the problem of prostitution. Of the many situational compulsions, two stand out:

- i) social reprobates, and
- ii) economic paupers – who take to prostitution because of poverty and this is quite common.

In the former, we have those women who have been socially disowned, like widows, destitute and abandoned women, victims of deceit and cheating who were promised with marriage or were married and the person on whom they reposed faith sold them to a pimp or a brothel owner. Also amongst social reprobates we have women who have been discarded by their families, parents, husbands after becoming a victim of rape. Recently, in Bombay, a father refused to take back his daughter after she was raped. Not that he was poor, rather he was very rich. He did not want to take his daughter back because his honour and prestige would suffer. This happens in most of the rape cases. Ultimately, nowhere to go, they land up in brothels for no fault of theirs.

Prostitution is a serious and complex problem, which cannot be explained simplistically. Nobody joins it just for the fun of it. For there is no fun in it. Allowing every person to mutilate and violate your body, so many times a day



#### Violence against Women

round the year; year after year till one gets old is not a frivolous matter. It is humiliating and agonising. One is torn physically and mentally to such an extent that joining and knitting the threads and shreds of one's life anew is not only difficult but traumatically long and arduous.

Despite the Act several minor girls and women from rural areas and poor families are forced into the profession of prostitution, in which their living and working conditions are deplorable. They do not have control over their body, their earnings, their health deteriorates. Their children lack the support to receive education and other services. In the city of Bombay, certain non-governmental agencies, are running crèche facilities for the right care of these children and high schools for the working children. There are no governmental programmes to alleviate the problems of prostitutes.

The flesh trade, as it is known, is a thriving business where several groups of people like the pimps, procurers and police earn money at the expense of the women. The majority of these women/girls suffer from sexually transmitted diseases. Contraceptive precautions are not taken by them. It is found that many of them are victims of the Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS). However, the women in prostitution are targeted as bearers of the AIDS virus rather than victims of it.

#### 19.4.4 Pornography and Misrepresentation of Women in the Media

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986, prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner, and for matters connected or incidental thereto.

However, pornographic literature, magazines, pictures, hoarding and films are published/printed which are seen as upholding the ‘right to freedom of expression’, in actuality violate woman’s dignity. In turn these create and perpetuate patriarchal images of ‘strong’, ‘aggressive’, ‘violent’, and chauvinistic men on the one hand, and ‘meek’, ‘submissive’, ‘vulnerable’ women as sex objects on the other hand. These images are utilised in advertisements, like cosmetics, fabrics, domestic gadgets and various other commodities, for commercial gains. A woman is projected as sexy and enticing and the man as macho, violent and independent. The films too utilise a similar formula. There are pressure groups who protest from time to time against pornography and the misrepresentation of women in the media.

**Check Your Progress 3**

i) Tick the appropriate answer:

Rape occurs because:

- a) Women dress and move freely
- b) Men do not protect women
- c) It is an expression of sexual aggression
- d) Men are pervert.

ii) Is it enough to condemn dowry deaths? What are the values that you have to imbibe? Answer in seven lines.

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iii) What is most frightening and disgusting about the upward swing in rape? Answer in four lines.

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**19.5 WOMEN’S ISSUES: CHALLENGES AND RESPONSES**

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In the last two decades there have been a good deal of awareness on women’s issues in India both at the governmental and non-governmental levels. Most significantly there has been the emergence of a self-conscious women’s

movement which has tremendously influenced the plans and policies of the government on women's issues in recent years. We discussed women's movements in details in Block 7 of ESO-12.

**i) Women's Issues in the Pre-Independent Period**

During the British period the struggle for women's right was considered as an integral part of the Independent movement by our nationalist leaders. It is important to mention here that in this period there emerged a good number of women's organisations as a result of the reform and nationalist movement. The Women's India Association (1917), the National Council of Indian Women (1926), All India Women's Conference (1927) etc. were spearheading the women's movement.

**ii) Women's Issues in the Post-Independent Period**

The constitution of our country followed the basic principle of women's equality as accepted in the Fundamental Rights Resolution of Karachi Congress. The provision of Article 15(3) empowered the state to make special provisions for women and children. The legal reforms in the 1950s sought to provide greater rights to Hindu women in marriage, inheritance and guardianship. The main thrust of development policies for women was provision of education, health and welfare.

**iii) Contemporary Women's Issues**

The women's issues came under sharp focus in the seventies. After the United Nation's General Assembly Declaration of the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women (1967) and the subsequent UN request to its member states to submit report on the status of women in their countries. The Committee on the Status of Women in India was set up which submitted its report in 1974. In response to the UN call of Action (1975) and on the basis of the findings of the CSWI report, the Government of India has drawn up a Draft National Plan of Action for women. The Plan accords priority to the need of concrete action in the areas of education, health, welfare, and employment with special reference to the weaker section of the society. Besides the CSWI, Government of India also appointed various committees and commissions to suggest concrete action for the upliftment of the status of women in India. The most important of these have been that of the National Commission on the Self-employed Women 1988, National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 AD, National Commission for Women 1991 etc. and very recently the 72nd and 73rd amendments to Indian constitution ensuring one third representation of women in the elected bodies. Based on the recommendations of these commissions and committees, and also in view of the popular demand of various welfare and women's organisation in recent years various concrete actions are initiated by the government in various areas.

**iv) Basic Legislations**

**a) Marriage**

The Government of India has banned polygamy for all the government servants. Monogamy has been accepted in the laws of other religions except Islam.

b) **Age at Marriage**

The special Marriage Act fixed the minimum age of marriage at 21 years for males and 18 years for females.

c) **Dowry**

Under the Dowry Prohibition Act now court is empowered to act on its own knowledge or on a complaint by any recognised welfare organisation on the dowry murder. The Indian Evidence Act also amended to shift the burden of proof to husband and his family where dowry is demanded and the bride dies within 7 years of the marriage otherwise than under normal circumstances. Anti Dowry Cells are also established some important urban centres to tackle this issue effectively.

d) **Sati**

The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act 1987 declared the practice of sati unlawful.

e) **Rape and Indecent Representation of Women**

The Criminal Law Act also amended to provide protection to the rape victims from the glare of publicity during investigation and trial. It also introduced change in the definition of rape to remove the element of consent. It also enhanced the punishment of this crime.

The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act banned the depiction in any manner the figure of a woman, her form or body or any part thereof in such a way as to have the effect of being indecent or regatory or desigrating women, or is likely to deprave, corrupt or injure the public morality or morals.” (NPPW: 1988)

f) **Sex-Determination Test**

In recent years there have been several agitations against the sex determination test. It is important to note that in Maharashtra and in several other states prenatal sex determination test has been declared illegal.

g) **Work**

According to the Equal Remuneration Act 1973, man and woman are to be paid equally for doing the same or similar work. The Act also forbids discrimination on the basis of sex at the time of recruitment and after.

**Box 1**

**Maternity Benefits for Working Women**

The Maternity Benefit Act provides for a maternity leave of 4½ months in the case of pregnancy, and 45 days for abortion for the working women in the factories, mines, plantations, government, and semi government establishments. It also makes provisions for creches to care for the children of working women

The Minimum Wage Act provides a mechanism for fixing up minimum rates of wages which should reflect the basic minimum needs of the workers.

v) **Employment Programme for Women**

For income generation for poor women various programmes are also initiated. The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP) has fixed a target of 30% women beneficiaries to be covered under this programme. The programme for Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA) is meant to provide self-employment to rural women. The National Rural Employment Programme (NREP), Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programme are meant to provide wage employment in rural areas. Under the programme called training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment rural youth are imported new skill for generating self-employment. There are also special programmes for hilly and draught prone areas (see, for detail, Units 8,9,10 and 11 of Block 3 of this course). Women are given due considerations in these programmes. Besides, state governments have also introduced several programmes for employment among women through self-help groups etc.

**Check Your Progress 4**

Tick mark the correct answers.

- i) Which one of the following Article of the Constitution India empowered the government to make special provisions for women
  - a) Article 370
  - b) Article 356
  - c) Article 10
  - d) Article 15
- ii) The Maternity Benefit Act provides for maternity leaves in the case of pregnant women for
  - a) 46 days
  - b) 75 days
  - c) 90 days
  - d) 15 days
- iii) The Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRD P) has ‘fixed certain target for women beneficiaries to be covered under this Programme. This target is
  - a) 50%
  - b) 60%
  - c) 25%
  - d) 30%

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**19.6 LET US SUM UP**

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This unit has presented a description of the status of women in India, through various indicators like the demographic, health, literacy, employment and political status. The caste structure and its role in curtailing women’s freedom and the class structure and its perpetuation of women’s subordination have been discussed. The family as an institution and its role in socialising a daughter to

perform a secondary role, the issue of dowry and different forms of violence that threaten the identity and dignity of women has been examined.

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## 19.7 KEY WORDS

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<b>Hypergamy</b>	: A marriage between a lower caste woman and an upper caste man.
<b>Mortality Rate</b>	: Measures the frequency of deaths.
<b>Sex-ratio</b>	: Indicates the proportion of females per 1000 males.
<b>Shradha</b>	: The death ceremony amongst the Hindus.

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## 19.8 FURTHER READINGS

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Chanana, Karuna, (eds.). 1988. *Socialisation, Education and Women: Explorations in Gender Identity*, Orient Longman Ltd.: New Delhi.

Desai, Neera and Maithreyi Krishnaraj, (eds.). 1987. *Women and Society in India*, Ajanta Publications: Delhi.

Government of India, 1974. *Towards Equality: Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India*, Ministry of Education and Social Welfare: New Delhi.

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## 19.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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### Check Your Progress 1

- i) Yes, there is a contradiction between the constitutional guarantee and the reality in the case of women. Though some women have made strides in certain fields the majority of women have to go a long way. The sex ratio has to be balanced, the life expectancy for women at all ages should be improved, women should gain access to health care, education, employment and have a greater say in political processes and affairs.
- ii) The low status of women of the country has implications to the process of development. Because of the prevailing situation 50 per cent of the population is being neglected. The economic pressures of poverty have a greater effect on women and girls in the household, who work harder, longer, eat lesser, gain lesser access to social goods and services.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) The caste structure controls women's sexuality and the economic resources of the community through strict control on women's mobility seclusion, disinheritance of immovable property and rules of marriage. The caste structure maintains ritual purity, biological purity (through the birth of legitimate heirs), caste supremacy and economic power.
- ii) The class structure though not so strict, builds on the gender division created by the caste structure. The family draws status from women's achievements. Women enable to maintain and enhance the status of the

family. There are controls on type, equality and level of education imparted to a daughter. The respectability in the employment is evaluated and the dual role of the women are maintained intact causing extraordinary burden of family responsibilities on women. One of the major reasons why women (in the organised sector) occupy the positions of teachers, typists, nurses and doctors is because these professions are seen as an extension of their domestic roles.

### **Check Your Progress 3**

- i) c.
- ii) It is important to respect women's right to property and inheritance. Extraordinary value should not be attached to marriage. If women choose to remain single, it must be seen as a valid alternative to marriage. Women are not expendable commodities. The birth of daughters should be welcomed. Their individuality, identity and dignity should be respected at all levels.
- iii) What is most frightening and disgusting about the upward swing in rape is that a large percentage of the rape victims are Children below the age of 12. Even toddler of two and three years of age are not being spared, but are considered suitable objects of sexual gratification by the rapist.

### **Check Your Progress 4**

- i) d
- ii) c
- iii) d



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## UNIT 20 THE AGED

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### Structure

- 20.0 Objectives
- 20.1 Introduction
- 20.2 Nature of the Problem of the Aged
  - 20.2.1 Dimensions of the Problem
  - 20.2.2 Problems faced by Individual Aged
  - 20.2.3 Demographic and Socio-economic Changes and the Aged
- 20.3 Demographic Characteristics of the Aged
  - 20.3.1 Growth of the Population of the Aged
  - 20.3.2 Dependency Ratio
  - 20.3.3 Sex-Ratio
  - 20.3.4 Rural-Urban Distribution
  - 20.3.5 Marital Status
  - 20.3.6 Educational Background
- 20.4 Economic Characteristics of the Aged
  - 20.4.1 Work Participation
  - 20.4.2 Economic Status
- 20.5 Health Condition of the Aged
  - 20.5.1 Chronic Ailments
  - 20.5.2 Temporary Ailments
- 20.6 Social Adjustment of the Aged
  - 20.6.1 Living Arrangements in the Past
  - 20.6.2 Changing Family System
  - 20.6.3 Living Arrangements of Males and Females
- 20.7 Policies and Programmes for the Aged
- 20.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 20.9 Key Words
- 20.10 Further Readings
- 20.11 Answers to Check Your Progress

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### 20.0 OBJECTIVES

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In this unit we shall acquaint you with the problem of the aged in general and of the aged in India in particular. We shall do this by showing how and why this problem is becoming larger and more difficult, and by pointing out its different aspects.

After reading this unit, you should be able to:

- explain why the situation of the aged is posing problems;
- describe how changes in the society are rendering the problem more complex and difficult;
- discuss the demographic, economic and health conditions of the aged;

- examine how the aged were able to adjust themselves in the society more satisfactorily in the past and how they are finding their adjustment less satisfactory now;
- contrast the situation of the aged women with that of the aged men; and
- analyse the public policies and programmes to help the aged.

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## 20.1 INTRODUCTION

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The situation of the aged in the world in general and in India in particular poses a dilemma. On the one hand, we find that the life expectancy is growing and the proportion of the aged in the population is increasing, which can be regarded as great achievements of modern civilisation. On the other hand, we also find that becoming old is increasingly perceived as a problem, the aged is finding it more and more difficult to adapt themselves to the changing situation. In this unit we shall discuss all these issues pertaining to the aged in India. We will begin this unit by discussing the nature of the problem of the aged. For any understanding of the problem of the aged, the demographic characteristics have to be understood, which we shall discuss next. We shall then go on economic characteristics, health condition and social adjustment of the aged. Lastly we will focus on and examine the public policies and programmes for the aged.

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## 20.2 NATURE OF THE PROBLEM OF THE AGED

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There is a manifestation of a growing degree of prejudice and discrimination against the aged, so much so, the term “old people” has itself acquired a derogatory connotation and in the English language, other terms such as “aged”, “aging”, “elderly” or “senior citizens” are used while making a polite reference to old people.

We come up against the complexity of the problem of the aged at the very outset when we ask the question, who are the aged? For practical purposes, people who have crossed a given span of life are regarded as the aged. In the developed countries in which the life expectancy is relatively longer, people who have-crossed the age of 65 are classified as the aged or the elderly. But in developing countries such as India in which the life expectancy is relatively shorter, the cut off point is 60 years. In either case the definition is arbitrary; it is as if you get up one fine morning and find yourself grown old. Growing old does not happen suddenly, it is a complex and gradual process.

### 20.2.1 Dimensions of the Problem

Growing old is a complex and gradual process having biological, psychological and social dimensions, which not only do not fully correspond with one another but also do not exactly coincide with one’s chronological age. It is, however, true that the chronological age is an index of the growing and developmental process that goes on in the biological, psychological and sociological dimensions, and, therefore, the chronological definition of what constitutes old age is useful for purposes of study. But it is important to note that the aged of any given age group, say 60-64 years, do not constitute a homogeneous category as the pace of biological, psychological and social development again is not uniform in all individuals.

The problem of the aged boils down to their having to adjust in society when they are faced with certain crucial events in their life as they are growing old. Such events can be broadly divided into two categories, one consists of events related to the development of the older individuals, and the other consists of events of the historical time when the individual is growing old. Hence, the processes of demographic transition, industrialisation, modernisation etc. affect the status of the aged in the society.

### **20.2.2 Problems Faced by Individual Aged**

Let us first consider the problems faced by the individual in his/her biophysiological, psychological and sociological spheres of life when she/he is aging. When an individual passes from childhood through youth and middle age to old age, his/her everyday behaviour changes markedly because of his/her experiencing certain important events which are characteristics of each phase of life.

- a) In the bio physiological sphere, as the individual develops, she/he experiences, over the years, the attainment and the loss of reproductive capacity, the growth and decline of physical vigour, the loss of cells and functions and the growing susceptibility to disease in organs.
- b) In the psychological sphere she/he experiences the development of cognitive capacities, the changes in his/her life goals and self-identity such that when she/he is growing old his/her life goals and his/her self-image tends to be rather negative.
- c) In the sociological sphere, during the earlier phases of his/her life the individual enters into the major areas of interaction such as work, marriage, bringing up the family and membership of social organisations. In these events, she/he experiences increasing responsibility and power until the middle age, and during the old age she/he either loses roles or experiences a decline in responsibility and power. Thus in every sphere of life, as the individual becomes old, his/her capacity to adjust himself/herself to the society declines.

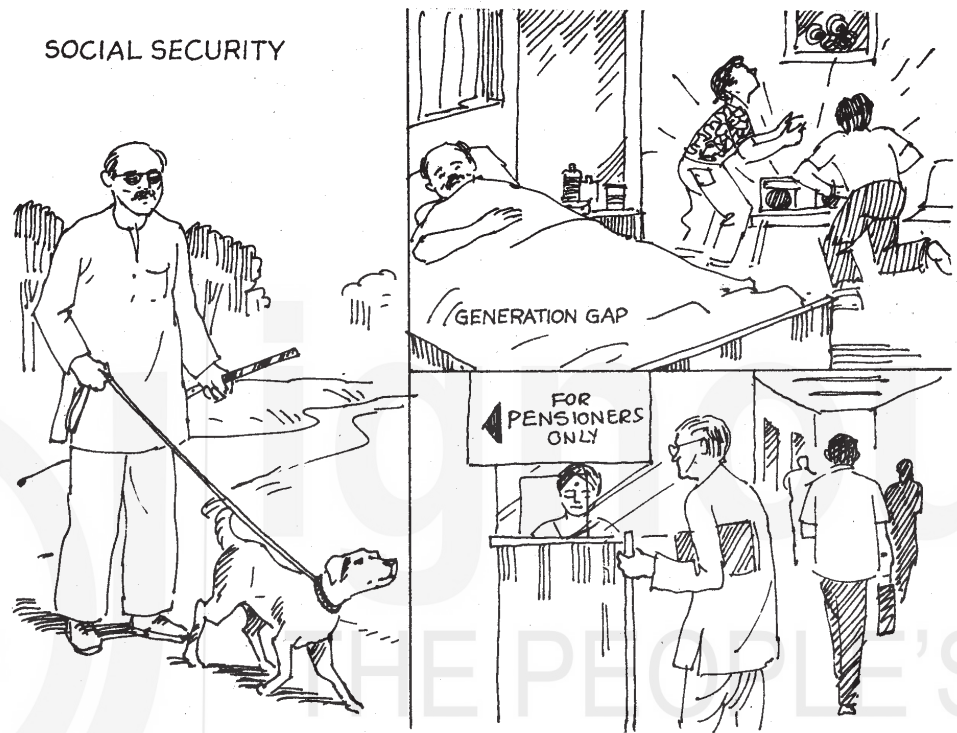
However, the ability of human beings to adjust themselves to the society need not depend solely on their inherent attributes and capacities, because in their adjustment they can be greatly aided by the prevailing socio-cultural factors in the adjustment of the aged in the society, whether favourable or unfavourable depends upon the major historical events during the life-time of the aged.

### **20.2.3 Demographic and Socio-economic Changes and the Aged**

There are sometimes epochal changes in history, which give rise to radical changes in the adjustment of individuals including the aged in their society. One such landmark in history having far-reaching consequences for the situation of the aged, resulting in their growing proportion in the population as well as their increasing difficulty of adjustment in society, is the transformation of the economy from the pre-industrial into the industrial form, with all its changes in the socio-cultural system, which we call modernisation.

a) **Demographic Transition and the Aged**

The growth in the proportion of the aged in the population is directly linked to the phenomenon of demographic transition. It is important to note that although it may appear that the growing proportion of the aged in the population is due to the increasing longevity or life expectancy, which is partly true, the main reasons for this phenomenon is the declining fertility, that is a reduction in the average number of children born to women in a society. On the other hand, the change in fertility is an aspect of the demographic transition.



**Aged and the Changing Society**

Demographic transition refers to the social process whereby a country or society moves from a condition of high fertility and high mortality to one of low fertility and low mortality, the former condition is known as the pre-transitional stage and the latter, the post-transitional stage. The period in between these two stages is known as the transitional stage, which is further, divided into the early, the middle and the late transitional stages. During the transitional stage, the mortality rate declines relatively faster than the fertility rate until gradually equilibrium is reached, ushering in the post-transitional stage.

The peculiar pattern in the change in the mortality and fertility rates give rise to a rapid growth of population as it is experienced in India during these last few decades. All the same, as the fertility rate is coming down, at the one extreme of the age variable of the population, the proportion of the children declines, and, at the other extreme, the proportion of the aged increases. Thus lower the fertility rate in a society, the higher, the proportion of the aged. Therefore, the developed countries which are in their post-transitional stage with the lower fertility rates, on the whole, have higher proportions of aged in their populations as compared with the developing countries such as India.

## b) Industrialisation, Modernisation and the Aged

Industrialisation and modernisation, besides leading to demographic transition, also bring about radical changes in the institutional structure of the society, which affects the mode of adjustment of the aged in the society. This can be explained with reference to the changes in the institution of the family which was a major factor in facilitating the adjustment of the aged in the pre-industrial society. It may be recalled that in old age an individual, by virtue of his/her diminishing biological, psychological and social resources, runs the risk of experiencing a decline in his/her security and status in society. This risk, in the pre-industrial society, is covered by the peculiar character of its family and the special position occupied by the aged in the family.

In the pre-industrial society, the family was also the unit of production and the productive assets are controlled by the elders, which ensured their influence and status despite their declining individual attributes. So also in their family enterprise the aged can work as long as their condition permits and on task consistent with their diminishing capacity, which ensures a gradualness in their aging process. On the other hand, in the modern industrial society, as the family tends to lose its production function, the younger tends become economically independent of their elders, giving rise to a change in the family structure.

In the new type of family structure in the industrial society, the aged are often left to fend for themselves at a time when their capacity for social adjustment tends to decline. At the same time, in the industrial economy, on the grounds of economic rationality, the aged are involuntarily retired from gainful employment while their productive capacity is still intact or only slightly reduced. Such a predicament contributes greatly to their economic insecurity and accelerates the process of aging.

On the background of the foregoing description of the problem of the aged in general, we shall next examine some of the aspects of the problem of the aged in India. The problem can be viewed from some of the trends discernible in the demographic, economic and health situations of the aged, in their living arrangements and adjustment in the society and in the public response to the solution of the problem.

### Activity 1

You must be coming across a few aged people regularly in your neighbourhood. Based on your interaction with or observation on them write a note on the status of the aged in your neighbourhood. Exchange your note, if possible, with other students at your Study Centre.

## 20.3 DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGED

The decennial censuses conducted by the Government of India give information on the age break-up of the population, which gives us an idea about the trends in the demographic characteristics of the aged. As already pointed out, it is also necessary to bear in mind that, as in several other developing countries, the aged in India are defined as all those who have completed 60 years of age,

unlike the cut-off point of 65 years in the developed countries. The age of compulsory retirement in the organised sector of employment in India is even earlier in most cases, in government service it is 60 years and in the educational institutions and in private corporations it is generally 62 years.

### 20.3.1 Growth of the Population of the Aged

The size of the population of the aged and especially its proportion in the total population is an important factor in the adjustment of the aged in the society. In general the smaller the size and the proportion of the aged, the better are the chances of their satisfactory adjustment. In order to get an idea about the proportion of the aged in India, you may familiarise yourself with the information about the percentage distribution of the total population by broad age groups shown in Table 1.

**Table 1 : Percentage Distribution of the Total Population by Broad Age groups, 1901-2000**

Census Year	Age Groups			All Ages
	0-14	15-59	60 +	
1901	38.60	56.35	5.05	100
1911	38.45	56.40	5.15	100
1921	39.20	55.55	5.25	100
1931	40.00	55.95	4.05	100
1941	38.25	56.85	4.90	100
1951	37.50	56.85	5.65	100
1961	41.00	53.36	5.64	100
1971	42.02	52.01	5.97	100
1981	39.54	53.93	6.52	100
1991	37.3	55.5	6.8	100
2000	—	—	7.6	—

**Source:** 1991-1971, ESCAP, 1982, Country Monograph Series No. 10, Population of India. Table 43. For 1991 Census of India 1991. For 2000 Planning Commission.

If you focus your attention upon the 60+ group, you will notice that these percentage, from 1901 to 2000, have ranged from 5.05 to 7.6. considering the fact that in some of the developed countries, the people over 60 years are above 20 per cent the percentage of the aged in India does not appear to be impressive. But it is important to note that since the 1950s the percentage of the aged in India has been rising steadily, reaching 7.6 per cent in 2000. The upward swing in the percentage of the older population in keeping with the fact that India, in recent decades, has been passing through the transitional stage of the global process of demographic transition, and accordingly in the decade to come, the rate of growth in the percentage of the aged will be even faster.

Another striking feature of the population of the aged in India is its impressive absolute size. It was 43 million in 1981 and is estimated at 55 million in 1991 and by the year 2001 A.D., it was touched the 75 million mark. By any standard these are daunting figures when we bear in mind the efforts and resources that are needed for enabling the aged to cope with their situation.

### 20.3.2 Dependency Ratio

There are different ways of bringing out the significance of the distribution of population in different age groups. One of the important ways which we cannot afford to overlook, is to see the size of the burden which the younger (0-14) and older (60+) age population places upon the population of the working age (15-59). The burden constituted by the younger population is termed the young dependency ratio and is obtained by dividing the percentage of population in the 0-14 age group by the percentage of population in the 15-59-age group and by multiplying the quotient by 100. Similarly the burden constituted by the older population is termed the *old dependency ratio* and is obtained by dividing the percentage of population in the age group of 60.+ by that in the age group 15-59, and by multiplying the quotient by 100. The basic information for obtaining the dependency ratios can be taken from Table 1, and as an Activity you may try to work out these ratios for different years yourself.

Because of the youthful nature of India's population, the country is faced with a very high young dependency ratio, which reached its peak in 1971 when it was over 80%. On the other hand, the old dependency ratio is much smaller, never going beyond 10% until 1951. But since 1961 it has been showing a progressive rise, reaching an all time high of 12.26% in 1991 during the past nine decades.

As shown in Table 2 dependency ratio is gradually going to increase for the aged in India. Although, trends in the young and old dependency ratios, which move in the opposite direction, may not make much quantitative difference the overall dependency to be borne by the working age population, they make a qualitative difference for the type of services to be provided by the society. When the young dependency ratio is heavier, more attention has to be paid to the provision of facilities for the health care and school education of children, whereas the provision of facilities for geriatric health care and the housing of the aged assume importance when the dependency burden becomes heavier for the old.

**Table 2: Gender wise Old Age Dependency ratio in India**

Year	Total	Males	Females
1961	10.93	10.91	10.94
1971	11.47	11.39	11.57
1981	12.04	11.84	12.24
1991	12.26	12.16	12.23
1996	12.00	11.99	12.02
2001	11.88	11.72	12.05
2011	12.84	12.67	13.01
2016	14.12	13.94	14.31

### 20.3.3 Sex-Ratio

In the last several decades, the sex-ratio (expressed as number of females per 1000 males) has been adverse to females. This bias can be seen in the case of the aged also, except that the degree of preponderance of males tends to decline as the aged grow in years. For example, in 1981 there were 933 females per 1000 males in the general population, but in the different cohorts of the aged,

namely the age groups of 60-64, 65-69 and 70 +, the number of females per 1000 was 933, 985 and 974 respectively.

Notice also that within their respective gender, the percentage of the aged among the females is higher than it is among the males.

In the developed countries, the life expectancy at birth is about 6-8 years longer for women as compared with men, and the sex ratio is very much in favour of females both in the general population and among the aged. With the advancement of demographic transition the situation in India with regard to the sex ratio as well as sex-related differential in life expectancy, is likely to approximate that in the developed countries.

### 20.3.4 Rural-Urban Distribution

The percentages of the aged, both among the males and the females are substantially higher in the rural areas than in the urban areas. In 1981, among the males, whereas 6.83 per cent was made up of the aged in the rural areas, the corresponding percentage was 5.06 in the urban areas. Similarly, among the females whereas 6.85 per cent was made up of the aged in the rural areas, the corresponding percentage was 5.68 in the urban areas. Such a trend goes contrary to our assumption made earlier in this unit that the percentage of the aged in a population is negatively correlated with its fertility. For, the fertility in the rural areas is usually higher than in the urban areas.

The unexpectedly higher percentage of the aged in the rural areas as compared with the urban areas can be attributed to another phenomenon, namely, that of rural to urban migration. The urban population in India has a substantial proportion of rural immigrants, and often the migrant adults leave their aged parents in their home communities. So also, often, some of the retired aged persons from the urban areas, especially among the aged belonging to the lower economic categories, go back to their home communities in the rural areas, to settle down, because of the difficult housing problem in the cities. Accordingly, some of the regions which send migrants in large numbers to big cities, such as the Konkan region adjoining Bombay, are noted for relatively very high proportions of the aged in their population.

### 20.3.5 Marital Status

In India it is a common practice for everyone to get married in due course of time. Therefore, there are only very small percentages among the aged males and females who have never married. In 1981 about 2 per cent among men and less than 0.40 per cent of the women among the aged had never married. The marital status of aged in India is given below in Table 3.

**Table 3: Proportions of Married, Widowed and Divorced or Separated persons among the Aged by Sex, 1991**

Country	Age Groups (in yrs)	Males			Females		
		Married (%)	Widowed (%)	Divorced /Separated	Married (%)	Widowed (%)	Divorced /Separated
India*	60-69	85.4	12.0	0.3	52.5	46.3	0.4
	70-79	52.5	19.6	0.3	32.7	66.1	0.4
	80+	61.7	25.4	0.5	23.4	69.8	0.3



- Excludes figures for Jammu & Kashmir.

The phenomenally higher rates of widowhood among the aged women is all the more disturbing because women depend heavily on men for economic support and their husbands are their legal supporters. Therefore the widowed status, as a rule., is more distressing for women than it is for men in our society.

### 20.3.6 Educational Background

Education is a useful tool for adjustment in old age, especially when the aged are obliged to assume new roles because of reasons such as retirement, loss of the marriage partner or declining strength. In India, however, the educational background of the general population itself is not satisfactory, let alone the aged. It is only in recent decades that efforts have been made to raise the educational level of the population. The aged of today who had been brought up prior to these efforts, therefore, lag very far behind the general population in their educational attainments.

There is widespread illiteracy among the aged. In 1981, 53 per cent males and 75 per cent females were illiterate in the general population while the corresponding percentage among aged men and women were 65 and 92 respectively. Similar differences are found at all educational levels.

On the whole, the low educational background of the aged, especially, that of the aged women, puts them in a very vulnerable situation when they are required to assume new roles and that too in a fast changing society.

#### Check Your Progress 1

- 1) What are the main causes, which give rise to the problem of the aged? Answer in six lines.

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- 2) Explain why the percentage of the aged in the population has been growing in recent times. Answer in four lines.

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- 3) How are the young dependency and old dependency ratios obtained and how are these ratios changing in India? Answer in eight lines.

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## 20.4 ECONOMIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AGED

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One of the major factors in the social adjustment of the aged is their economic condition which may be broadly divided into their employment status and income. It is not merely the possibility of having reduced or no income in old age, but even the fact of having to give up one's occupation in old age, has damaging consequences for the aged. For, one's occupation is not merely one's source of income but also a mode of relating oneself to society. Occupation also plays an important role in giving an individual his/her self-identity and social status.

As already pointed out, the influence of the historical changes on the social adjustment of the aged is nowhere better felt than in their economic adjustment. Because of industrialisation and modernisation, there has been a qualitative change in the economic organisation in recent decades, which has been affecting the economic role of the aged in a marked way. Whereas in the unorganised pre-industrial economy of the past, the aged could engage themselves in their family enterprise as long as they chose, in the organised modern economy, the aged are compulsorily retired. Compulsory retirement brings many problems for the aged, of which the loss or reduction in income is only one. It is, therefore, very important to know about the participation of the aged in the work force.

### 20.4.1 Work Participation

It may be useful for you to know some of the trends in the participation in work force by the aged and to see how these trends are affected by the changes in the economy.

In general, there is a wide difference in the rates of work participation by men and women. Accordingly, in 1981, among the aged 63.71 per cent of the men and 10.19 per cent of the women were in the work force. However, for the purpose of understanding the changing patterns of the work participation of the aged, it is sufficient if you pay attention to the relevant trends only among the aged men.

In general, when men reach the peak of their participation in work force, about 97 per cent are found employed. Therefore, the fact that only 63.71 per cent of the aged men were in the work force in 1981 would imply that about 33 per cent or one-third of the men had dropped out of the work force on account of old age. All the same the work-participation rate of the aged men in India is quite high considering the fact that in developed countries the corresponding rate is very much lower. The relatively higher work-participation rate of the

aged men in India can be attributed to the fact that the Indian economy more is still at a much lower level of industrialisation and modernisation. It can, however, be shown that in India also the work participation rate of the aged men is related to the level of industrialisation. For example, over the decades the Indian economy is being industrialised and organised more and more. So also the urban economy is relatively more organised compared with the rural economy. Accordingly we find that over the decades the work participation rates of the aged have come down both in the rural and urban areas, and at any point of time the urban rate is far lower than the rural rate. You will observe these trends from the information supplied in Table 4. Since the women's work participation rates are affected more by socio-cultural factors, there is no noticeable trends in their case that can be attributed in economic change.

**Table 4: Work Participation Rates (per cent) by the Aged (60+) in Rural and Urban Areas by Sex, 1971, 1981, 1983, 1987 & 1995-96**

	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
1971	77.5	11.5	53.4	6.5
1981	67.6	11.3	47.5	5.8
1983	64.2	15.6	48.8	11.8
1987	59.4	12.8	41.5	5.9
1995-96	60.3	17.3	35.3	9.2

**Source:** Information for 1971 and 1981 is from Census of India 1981, Series-I India (5% Sample), Statements 53 and 55, and for 1983 and 1987 and 1995-96 are from NSS 30th and 42nd and 52nd Rounds respectively.

It is therefore obvious that as the economy is getting more and more organised, there is going to be further erosion of the work participation rates of the aged men in the future. The aged who are still in employment, are working mainly in the informal sector of the economy and in occupations which are relatively less remunerative.

#### 20.4.2 Economic Status

One of the major problems experienced by most of the aged persons is the decline of their income during old age because of their reducing or giving up altogether gainful economic activity. This is evident especially, in the case of the aged who are compulsorily retired from the organised sector and in the case of the aged among the poor who are engaged in the informal sector of the economy.

Although many of the aged, who retire from the organised sector such as government employment, are provided with partial income security by way of pension or provident fund benefits, even among them there are only a few who are free from financial worries. If the economic condition of the aged who draw pension is bad enough, that of the general run of the aged is even worse. The broad conclusions of the studies which have dwelled on the economic problem of the aged are that the majority of the aged has inadequate income and that even the families with which the aged live, mostly belong to low income groups. Therefore, financial worries are a nagging problem of most of the aged.

A broad idea about the economic situation of the aged can be had from the information obtained by the NSS 42nd Round. In 1987 only 51 per cent of the aged men in the rural and 46 per cent in the urban areas were economically independent, the rest were partially or fully depending on others. Among the aged women only 9 per cent in the rural areas and 5 per cent in the urban areas were economically independent. Even the economically independent aged men and women are saddled with the responsibility of looking after other members of the family. Both in the rural and urban areas 69 per cent of the economically independent aged persons had other members of the family depending upon them.

The worst sufferers from inadequate income in old age are the elderly from the poorer sections who, normally, work in the informal or unorganised sector of the economy and are not covered by pensionary benefits. They neither have savings of their own, nor their younger relatives, earning at a subsistence level, are able to support them. The pity is that the type of hard, physical labour the poor people have to do can hardly be tolerated in old age. Yet by force of circumstances the aged among the poor have to keep on working until they are physical worn out and die of starvation.

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## **20.5 HEALTH CONDITION OF THE AGED**

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The health of the aged in India is one of the most neglected aspects of their problem. Not only the society at large but even the medical profession has failed to take note of the special nature of the health problems and diseases of aging. One of the major distinguishing features of the health problems of the aged from those of the younger population is that whereas the latter suffer more from infectious diseases, the former are handicapped more by chronic ailments.

Most of the available studies about the ailments of the aged have been made by non-medical investigators and they give us some rough idea about broad aspects of health and morbidity of the aged. Among them the National Sample Survey, 42nd Round, provides us with the most up-to-date information covering the entire country during 1986-87.

### **20.5.1 Chronic Ailments**

The findings of this survey indicate that about 45 per cent of the aged both in the rural and urban areas and both among the males and the females, suffer from one or another kind of chronic illness. Among the more prevalent kinds of chronic diseases are problems of the joints, cough or respiratory problems and blood pressure. Other diseases reported are heart disease, urinary problems, piles and diabetes.

As you will notice from information given in Table 5, there are significant differences in the rates of incidence of chronic diseases in the rural and the urban areas, and among the male and the female aged. Respiratory problems of the joints are more prevalent in the rural areas, and on the other hand, blood pressure, heart disease and diabetes are more prevalent in the urban areas.

**Table 5: The Percentage Distribution of Different Kinds of Chronic Diseases among the Aged who Suffer from such Diseases, 1986/87**

Kinds of Disease	Rural		Urban	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Cough (Respiratory problems)	25.0	19.5	7.9	14.2
Piles	3.3	1.6	3.2	1.8
Problems of joints	36.3	40.4	28.5	39.3
Blood Pressure	10.8	10.5	20.0	25.1
Heart disease	3.4	2.7	6.8	5.3
Urinary problems	3.8	2.3	4.9	2.4
Diabetes	3.6	2.8	8.5	6.6

**Source:** National Sample Survey, 42nd Round and 52nd Round

Similarly, both in the rural and the urban areas, respiratory problems, urinary problems, piles and diabetes are more prevalent among the males and problems of the joints are more prevalent among the females. Such a distribution indicates that the health problems have a bearing on the peculiarities of the socio-economic situations of the aged. The results of the survey referred to above, as well as, several other studies indicate that women whose life-style is more sedentary compared with men, complain more about ache in their joints, middle class persons living in cities and hence exposed to more stressful activity suffer more from high blood pressure and heart disease, aged from the poorer sections who are usually more malnourished, complain more about physical weakness, and the aged from the rural areas who are not accustomed to have periodical eye-tests are more often visually handicapped.

### 20.5.2 Temporary Ailments

Apart from chronic ailments the aged are also liable to fall ill with temporary ailments. The National Sample Survey (NSS), 28th Round revealed that in 1973, 29 per cent of the aged in the rural areas and 26 per cent in the urban areas were suffering from temporary ailments. NSS 36th Round specifically dealt with the physical impairments among the aged, and found that 11 per cent of the aged were physically handicapped of whom about one-half were visually disabled. On account of physical disability, health problems and advancing age, the aged are also likely to become physically immobile as compared with the people of other age categories. According to NSS, 42nd Round 5.4 per cent of the aged in the rural areas and 5.5 per cent in the urban areas were physically immobile. Immobility is prevalent more among the aged women than men and in both the sexes it is more marked among those who have crossed the age of 70.

There are many features which are unique to the health problems of the aged and in the developed countries where more attention is paid to the welfare of the aged, a special branch of medicine called geriatrics has come into being, which deals with the problems and diseases of old age and ageing people. Geriatrics is yet to make any headway in India although it is sorely needed.

**Check Your Progress 2**

- 1) How are the work participation rates and the economic status of the aged changing? Answer in eight lines.

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- 2) Describe briefly the health condition of the aged. Answer in four lines.

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**20.6 SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT OF THE AGED**

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The foregoing discussion on the demographic, economic and health conditions of the aged has thrown up some of the important problems faced by the aged in India. You have learnt that the proportion to the aged in the population is steadily increasing and at the same time the aged are being expelled from the modern, organised economy, at an increasing rate. The aged who continue in the work force are confined more and more to the less remunerative informal sector of the economy. Therefore, the economic insecurity of the aged is being threatened more and more.

The women become especially vulnerable in old age. Compared with their male counterparts, the aged women possess a much lower level of education, a much lower degree of participation in gainful employment and own little or no economic assets. Hence, they are almost totally dependent upon their male relatives. They are further handicapped by the fact that the majority of them are without their husbands, their legal supporters. Therefore, the economic, social and psychological insecurity suffered by the aged women is immense.

The problems as the aged, as already pointed out, are inherent in the fact of their biological, psychological and sociological-aging, as well as in the far reaching historical changes in the society. Let us now examine how the aged are adjusting themselves in the society under these circumstances.

**20.6.1 Living Arrangements in the Past**

Aging in the past was not considered to be a serious social problem, not only because the aged comprised a relatively smaller proportion in the total population, but also because they were provided with the necessary care and

support by their families. But in the changing circumstances the ability of the family to look after the aged is diminishing.

In the traditional Indian society the aged had a privileged position in the family. Their privileged status stemmed from the peculiar character of the normative family type, known as, the joint family. The joint family consisted of core relatives of several generations but belonging to the same lineage, who lived together with their spouses and children. The joint family included various kinds of relatives and enabled even issueless, unmarried or widowed aged persons to live within the family household. However, the kinship pattern of the relatives in the joint family was determined by the principles of the kinship system whether patrilineal, which is followed in most parts of the country, or matrilineal, which is prevalent in some regions. For example, in the patrilineal kinship system, the aged parents do not live with their daughter and son-in-law.

But, what really made the joint family to function in favour of its aged members were the pre-industrial economic system and the medieval property concepts. In the pre-industrial economic system, as in the agricultural economy even now, the family was also a unit of production; and the medieval property concepts put the aged persons, especially the senior most male member in charge of the productive assets of the family. In such a set up the junior members were economically subordinated to the senior ones. Thus, filial love and duty buttressed by economic dependence obliged the younger relatives to take good care of the elder members of their family.

### **20.6.2 Changing Family System**

The family situation in India, which provided for the satisfactory social adjustment of the aged is fast changing. It is the same forces of economic development and modernisation which are responsible for the rising proportion of the aged in the population, are also bringing about changes in the family system which diminish the capacity of the family to take care of its aged members. These forces are tending to deprive the family of its production function and, by doing so, are undermining the basis of the joint family system.

In the emerging economy, the earning members of the family, which is not a production unit, are obliged to find employment outside the family. In such cases not only the younger relatives are free from the economic authority of the elder members of the family but some of them may set up separate households of their own, and may even migrate to other places. In these circumstances, the aged persons have to fall back upon their own personal resources. If one's own income is not adequate, one becomes dependent on others as it is happening with increasing proportion of the aged. As you have already noticed in the section on the economic status of the aged, the vast majority of the aged are partially or fully/dependent on others.

The family system in India, as everywhere else in the world, is in a state of flux. The families conforming to the pattern of the classical joint family are fast disappearing. In its place simpler patterns of family are emerging, which do not depend upon the family being a unit of production. The emerging patterns of family are evolving round the type of nuclear family with the husband, wife and children as the unit. Because of the presence of the aged parents, the nuclear

family may give rise to the simple lineal joint family in which one of the aged parents lives with the married son or daughter. When all the children are married, and aged couple may stay together by themselves, or if the aged person is widowed, he or she has the option of living all alone.

These possibilities of living arrangements for the aged are actually reflected in the living arrangements of the aged in India as revealed in the findings of the NSS, 42nd Round.

The relevant findings are presented in Table 6. It will be worthwhile going the table with attention. You will observe that about 86 per cent of the aged both in the rural and urban areas are living in two types of arrangements either living with spouse or living with their own children. Living with grandchildren or other relatives is the case with 7 and 8 per cent of the aged in the rural and the urban areas respectively. About 7 per cent of aged in the rural areas and 5 per cent in the urban areas live alone. The percentages of the aged who live with non-relatives in homes for the aged are negligible both in the rural and urban areas. Thus overwhelming majority of the aged live with their relatives.

**Table 6: Living Arrangements of the Aged in the Rural and Urban Areas by Sex, 1995-96**

Type of Living arrangement	Rural			Urban		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Living alone	2.5	6.1	4.3	3.0	6.0	4.5
Living with spouse and other members	75.0	39.0	56.9	75.1	35.4	54.9
Living with own children	17.9	48.1	33.1	17.8	51.2	34.9
Living with other relatives and non-relatives	3.8	5.9	4.8	0.4	0.4	0.4

Source: NSS, 52nd Round

Information from various other studies which deal with the aged in different regions and communities gives one the impression, that the percentage of the aged living with their own children was larger as we go back in history. And, going by the trends in other countries, which are more modernised than India, it would appear that the living arrangements of this category are going to reduce further and the categories of 'living alone' and 'living with spouse' are going to increase.

Thus, the immediate family circle of the aged is becoming more and more restricted. Which is giving rise to new problems for the aged. Your attention may be drawn to two such important problems. First, the interpersonal family ties in relation to the aged are becoming increasingly difficult even when the aged are living with their married sons, especially in the urban areas. In the past, when the family's resources were controlled by the aged, the sons were dependent upon their parents. The situation is being reversed nowadays, and more and more parents are becoming economically dependent on their sons, which is damaging to the self-respect of the aged. Second, the number of caregivers available in the family is diminishing. In their sons households the aged can no longer take for granted the services of their daughters-in-law who were their traditional caregivers.



In the developed societies the care-giving ability of the families for the aged has become much weaker and the place of the family is taken up to some extent by larger institutions such as the homes for the aged and day-care centres. There is much scope for such institutions in India, but their development is still at the infant stage. As you can see from Table 6, only 0.7 per cent of the aged in the rural and 0.4 per cent in the urban areas are living in the homes for the aged. The day care centres are still at an experimental stage and that too in big cities.

### **20.6.3 Living Arrangements of Males and Females**

The living arrangements of aged men and women are so markedly different from each-other that you would like to know what causes the difference. A large majority of the aged women, 66 per cent in the rural areas and 67 per cent in the urban areas live with their own children compared with the corresponding percentages of 37 and 40 respectively among the aged men. In the categories of the aged living with their grandchildren and other relatives the percentages of women are also relatively larger. On the other hand, men live more often with their spouses compared with women. About 45 per cent of the men live with their wives both in the rural and urban areas, whereas, among the women only 25 per cent in the urban areas and 22 per cent in the rural areas live with their husbands. A substantial percentage of the men live alone, 11.8% in the urban areas and 8.2% in the rural areas, whereas, the corresponding percentages among women, 0.7 in the rural areas and 0.6 in the urban areas, are negligible.

The marked difference in the patterns of living arrangements between the aged men and women stem from two basic differences in their characteristics. First, as compared with men, a far greater percentage of aged women is without spouse, which explains why the percentage of women living with their spouse is much smaller. Second, the economic dependence of women on others is far greater than that of men, which explains why the percentage of women living alone is so low. Both of these reasons make it necessary for women to lean so heavily on others.

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## **20.7 POLICIES AND PROGRAMMES FOR THE AGED**

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You would have by now realised that nowadays the problem of the aged is causing greater concern for two main reasons: the percentage of the aged in the population is rising and the ability of the family to support and take care of the aged is diminishing. Therefore, it has now become imperative for the society to accept greater responsibility to facilitate the social adjustment of the aged. You would, therefore, be interested in knowing what policies and programmes the various wings of the society such as the state, the government and the various organisations, for alleviating the problems of the aged have undertaken.

In the developed societies when the problem of the aged has become even more acute, there are well developed, support systems for the aged devised by the public institutions. There are institutional arrangements to look after the financial, residential and health-care needs of the aged, which greatly

supplement and even replace the support of the family. The special needs of the aged are specifically recognised in every branch of social activity.

In the Indian society also, there is recognition of the responsibility of the larger society to look after the aged. Article 41 of the Indian Constitution enjoins the state to make effective provision of public assistance for the benefit of the disadvantaged and weaker sections including the aged. However, the policies and the programmes, which the government has undertaken so far, touch only the fringes of the problem of the aged.

We may refer to three main steps the government has taken in connection with the problem of the aged. First, the government has enacted legislation to affirm the duty of every person having sufficient means to maintain and look after his aged or infirm parents who are not able to maintain himself or herself. This step of the government only boils down to overseeing the traditional role of the family of providing support for the aged. This legislation, however, is of no material use as no parent is willing to go to a court of law to extract support from an unwilling child.

### **Box 1**

#### **Social Security For the Aged**

A section of the aged are the retired persons from the organised sector. They are provided social security by the employers in the form of pensions, provident fund, and gratuity etc. However these sections may not get sufficient emotional support from their families. Their families may not meet their entertainment needs. Hence they have to be accommodated somewhere by the state. Again, a major group of the aged is of those who retire from unorganised sector without any social security benefit. They have also to be accommodated and given social security in case they have no family. In India, there are few state-run homes for aged. The State and the Central Governments provide financial assistance to the voluntary agencies to set up such homes and to take up innovative programmes for providing services to them. There are also schemes of pensions of old age in all states and union territories. Through the criterion of eligibility differs, generally destitute, poor and infirm aged of 60 and above, are provided pensions at rates ranging from Rs. 30 to Rs. 100 per months (India 2000)

The second step the government has taken, is to assume partial responsibility for supporting destitute aged who do not have earning children or children with sufficient income to support them. The government provides old age pensions to the destitute aged, as well as, gives grants- in-aid to institutions, which take care of such persons. The old age pensions, however, consist of meagre amounts barely adequate for subsistence.

The third step the government has taken in respect of the aged is to pass legislation to ensure retirement benefits, such as, gratuity, pension and provident fund, to be paid by the employers to the aged who are compulsorily retired. Such legislation applies to the larger enterprises and, as such, these benefits are derived by only a small segment of the aged.

Besides the government, there are a number of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) which offer various kinds of services to the aged. The services provided by the NGOs include:

- a) Institutional services in the form of old-age homes,
- b) Vocational services and occupational therapy
- c) Non-institutional support systems including medical, psychiatric and rehabilitation services, nutritional care, recreation, counseling, education, training and awareness, and
- d) Day care centres.

Although this list is impressive; these services are available only in some nooks and comers of the country and that too in the big cities.

You will realise from the above discussion that the vast majority of the aged is not covered by any public provision of old-age support whether extended by the Government or the NGOs.

**Check Your Progress 3**

- 1) In what important respects the situation of the aged women is different from that of the aged men? Answer in eight lines.

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- 2) Why was the social adjustment of the aged more satisfactory in the past? Answer in six lines.

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- 3) Why is the social adjustment of the aged less satisfactory now a day? Answer in eight lines.

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## 20.8 LET US SUM UP

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We may now sum up the main points discussed in this unit. In general the aged are faced with problems, because of adverse events in their biological, psychological and sociological spheres of life. Their adjustment in this difficult period of their life is either facilitated or rendered more difficult by the socio-economic and cultural factors during their lifetime, which are influenced by historical events.

The socio-economic and cultural factors in the past were conducive to a more satisfactory social adjustment of the aged. Their proportion in the population was small and their family was adequate to provide them with the necessary support and care.

In the present times, change in the socio-economic and cultural system has rendered the social adjustment of the aged difficult. Their percentage in the population is increasing, the family as their support system is becoming weaker, and alternative public support systems are not coming up fast enough.

Developing societies, such as India, which are subjected to economic development and modernisation are experiencing an increasing degree of deterioration in the situation of the aged. In India, although the percentage of the aged in the population is not very high compared with the developed countries. It is progressively increasing and their absolute number is enormous. At the same time, the economic, health-care and social needs of this enormous number of the aged are rapidly increasing. These changes are accompanied by the changes in the family structure which is losing its efficacy as a support system for the aged.

The problem of the aged in India has, therefore, clearly become a social problem which makes it incumbent upon the society to assume greater responsibility for the support of the aged. But the development of the public support system is still in a nascent stage.

In a nutshell, we have discussed the nature of the problem of the aged, demographic characteristics, economic characteristics, health condition and social adjustment of the aged, besides focusing on and examining the public policies and programmes for the aged.

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## 20.9 KEY WORDS

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- Demographic transition** : The social process whereby a society moves from the condition of high fertility and high mortality to one of low fertility and low mortality.
- Fertility** : Average number of children born to women in a society.
- Geriatrics** : The branch of medicine, which deals with the problems and diseases of old age and aging people.

- Life expectancy** : The average span of life which children born at a given point of time can expect to live.
- Old dependency ratio** :  $\frac{\text{Per cent of Population of 60+ age group} \times 100}{\text{Per cent of Population of 15-59 age group}}$
- Young dependency ratio** :  $\frac{\text{Per cent of Population of 0-14 age group} \times 100}{\text{Per cent of Population of 15-59 age group}}$

## 20.10 FURTHER READINGS

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## 20.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

### Check Your Progress 1

- i) The problem of the aged arises because the aged have to adjust in society when they are faced with certain crucial events while they are growing old. One type of these events are the changes which take place in their biological, psychological and social spheres of life. The other type consists of socio-economic changes which take place during the historical phase in which they are living.
- ii) The growing proportion of the aged in the population is due to the declining fertility and increasing longevity of the population. These are the characteristics of the demographic transition which is brought about by economic development and modernisation.
- iii) The young dependency ratio is obtained by dividing the percentage of the population in the age group 0-14- by that in the age group 15-59, and by multiplying the quotient by 100. Likewise the old dependency ratio is obtained by dividing the percentage of population in the age group 60+ by that in the age group 15-59 and by multiplying the quotient by 100. In recent times the young dependency ratio has begun to decline and the old dependency ratio has begun to increase.

### Check Your Progress 2

- i) In general, the aged tend to withdraw voluntarily from the work force when their capacities decline very much. But when the economy gets organised, the aged are non-voluntarily made to retire even when they are capable of performing their duties. Thus, as the Indian economy is becoming more and more organised the percentages of the aged who are withdrawing from the working force are increasing continually. As a result of this process more and more aged are becoming dependent on others.
- ii) The aged suffer more from chronic diseases than infectious ones as compared with the general population. They also tend to be physically

handicapped to a greater extent. The pattern of incidence of the chronic diseases among the aged varies according to rural-urban and genders differences.

### Check Your Progress 3

- i) The aged women as compared with aged men are less educated, participate in the work force to a lesser extent and are economically more dependent on others. The percentage of aged women, who are without spouse, is far greater, than in the case of aged men. There is a marked difference in the patterns of living arrangements of aged men and women; whereas men live with their spouse or all alone to a larger extent, the women live more often with their own children or other relatives.
- ii) In their social adjustment in the past, the aged was greatly aided by their families. The peculiar structure and function of the family in the past were advantageous for the adjustment of the aged. In particular, the fact that the family was also a production unit and that the productive assets of the family were controlled by the aged, protected the status and security of the aged.
- iii) Nowadays, the economy is becoming increasingly industrialised and organised, which is depriving the family of its production function. The younger relatives are less economically dependent upon the aged and on the contrary the aged are becoming more dependent upon their younger relatives. In the changing circumstances, the number, ability and disposition of the care-givers to the aged in the family are declining. The aged-are, thus, finding their social adjustment more difficult.

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