



DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

DRD-02

Rural Development in India

Block

5

CONCEPT AND IMPORTANCE OF GENDER STUDIES

Unit – 1

**Concept of Gender, Social and Economic status of Women in India,
Gender Discrimination**

Unit – 2

Women and Natural Resource Management, Women in Agriculture

Unit – 3

**Issues of Gender Equity in Rural Areas, Practical and Strategic
Needs of Women**

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Concept and Significance of Gender Sensitization



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DIPLOMA IN RURAL DEVELOPMENT

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Unit – 1

Concept of Gender, Social and Economic status of Women in India, Gender Discrimination

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Explain the concept of gender*
- *Distinguish between Gender and Sex*
- *Describe gender discrimination*
- *Explain the social and economic status of women*

Structure:

- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 The concept of “Gender”
- 1.3 Gender Discrimination
- 1.4 Causes of Major Gender Discrimination in India
- 1.5 Gender Discrimination in Different Social Institutions
- 1.6 Socio-economic Status of Women
- 1.7 Impact of Mass Media on the Status of Women
- 1.8 Women as influenced by the Mass Media
- 1.9 Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1987
- 1.10 Women’s involvement in Mass Media
- 1.11 Where do Women stand in Rural India?
- 1.12 Major Problems of Rural Women
- 1.13 Suggested ways and approaches to improve the Status of Rural Women
- 1.14 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.15 Key Words
- 1.16 References
- 1.17 Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

1.1. Introduction:

Do you know women constitute nearly half of the total human population but, their share in the fruits of development is abysmally low? This low status has raised many important issues including development. Gender perspective, it is felt, has to be an integral part of any development process. 'Gender' as a concept has dominated the intellectual discourse over the past few years and has become the focus of policy planning. Gender, as a universal category, serves like a central organizing principle of social life virtually in all cultures. In common place too gender lore surrounds us. Keeping the frequent use of the term, its interdisciplinary character, its interplay with the institutions of the society and the societal processes, the present unit tries to make a reflective analysis of the concept, its operation and its association with various activities of human beings and the society. So, before we move on, let us try to understand what do we mean by the term gender?

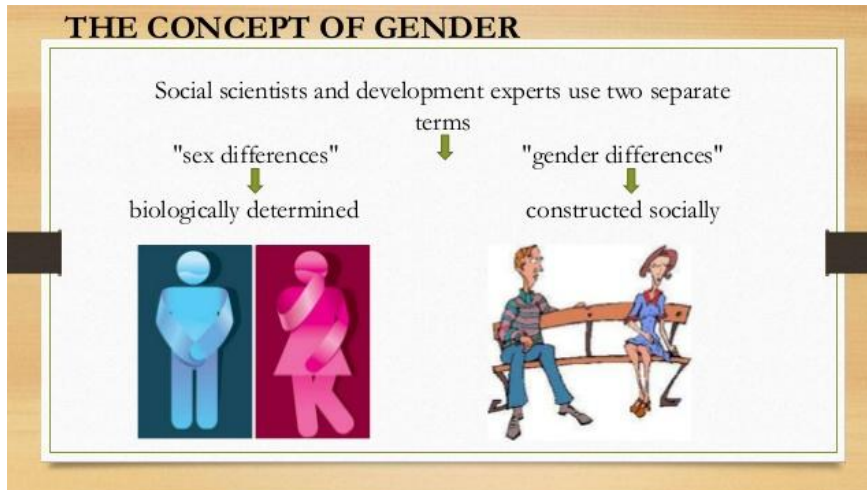
1.2. The concept of “ Gender ”

The dictionary meaning of gender is classification of objects roughly corresponding to the two sexes as well as the properties of these two sexes. The word gender is now being used as a conceptual category and it has been given a very specific meaning. In its new incarnation gender refers to the socio-cultural definition of man and woman, the way societies distinguish men and women and assign them social roles. It is used as an analytical tool to understand social realities with regard to women and men.

For ages, it was believed that the different characteristics, roles and status accorded to men and women in society, are determined by biology (i.e., **sex**), that they are natural, and therefore, not changeable. The concept of gender enables us to state that sex is one thing, but gender is quite another.

Everyone is born male or female, and our sex can be determined biologically. Each society then slowly transforms a male or female into a man or a woman, into masculine and feminine, with different qualities, behaviour patterns, roles, responsibilities, rights and expectations. Unlike sex, which is biological, the gender identities of women and men are physiologically and socially—which means historically and culturally determined. **Ann Oakley**, who was among the first few feminist scholars to use this concept, says: “Gender is a matter of culture; it refers to the social classification of men and women into ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine’. That people are male or female can usually be judged by referring to biological evidence. That they are masculine or feminine can not be judged in the same way: the criteria are cultural, differing with time and place.

The constancy of sex must be admitted, but so also must the variability of gender. She concludes that gender has no biological origin, that the connections between sex and gender are not really 'natural' at all."



Main Differences between Gender and Sex:

- Sex is natural where as Gender is socio-cultural and man-made.
- Sex is biological where as Gender is socio-cultural and it refers to masculine and feminine qualities, behaviour patterns, roles, responsibilities etc.
- Sex is constant, it remains the same everywhere where as Gender is variable, it changes from time to time, culture to culture, even family to family.
- Sex cannot be changed where as Gender can be changed.

Sex

- Biological differences between men and women.
- Not vary with race, caste, class, ethnicity, religion, and time.
- Women's ability to give birth, breast feed.

Gender

- Social differences between men and women
- Manifested in different roles, qualities and behaviors of women, men and society as a whole.
- Vary with race, caste, class, ethnicity, religion, relation position, situations, age, time.
- Vary with situations, the same person may behave differently in different contexts.

1.3. Gender Discrimination

Gender refers to the social, cultural and psychological characteristics by which human behaviour is characterized as 'masculine' or 'feminine'. It is not determined by an individual's biological characteristics, but by how society looks at the roles of men and women. Whereas, gender discrimination is meant only for women, because females are the only victims of gender discrimination. Gender discrimination is not biologically determined but it is determined by socially and the discrimination can be changed by the proper and perpetuate efforts. Denial of equality, rights and opportunity and suppressant in any form on the basis of gender is gender discrimination.

Discriminations:

From womb to death, females are facing lots of discrimination against them. Some of them are:

- Foeticide
- Not giving enough and nutritious food
- Not allowing to go to school (Denial of education)
- Not giving needy health care while in ill health
- Early marriage
- Eve teasing, Sexual harassment
- Dowry
- Divorce, Destitution even for silly or without any reason

1.4. Causes of Major Gender Discrimination in India:

Attaining gender justice is not an easy task in India. From time immemorial, a girl child has been considered as an unwanted entity and a burden that the parents would not mind doing away with. Discrimination against women begins even before her birth. The gruesome evils of female feticide and infanticide prove how brutal the world could be to women.

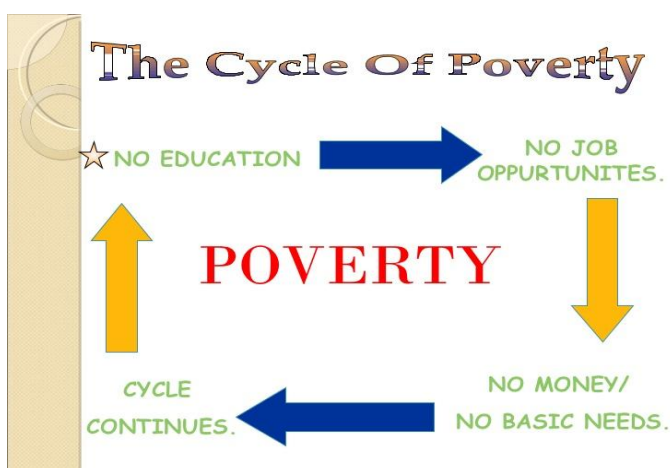
Though the Indian constitution provides equal rights and privileges for men and women and makes equal provision to improve the status of women in society, majority of women are still unable to enjoy the rights and opportunities guaranteed to them.

Traditional value system, low level of literacy, more house hold responsibilities lack of awareness, non-availability of proper guidance, low mobility, lack of self confidence family discouragement and advanced science and technology

are some of the factors responsible to create gender disparity in our society. The most important causes of gender disparity such as poverty, illiteracy, unemployment, social customs, belief and anti-female attitude are discussed here.

1.4.1. Poverty:

In India of the total 30 percent people who are below poverty line, 70 percent are women. Women's poverty in India is directly related to the absence of economic opportunities and autonomy, lack of access to economic resources including credit, land ownership and inheritance, lack of access to education and support services and their minimal participation in the decision making process. The situation of women on economic front is no better and men still enjoy a larger share of the cake. Thus poverty stands at the root of gender discrimination in our patriarchal society and this economic dependence on the male counterpart is itself a cause of gender disparity.



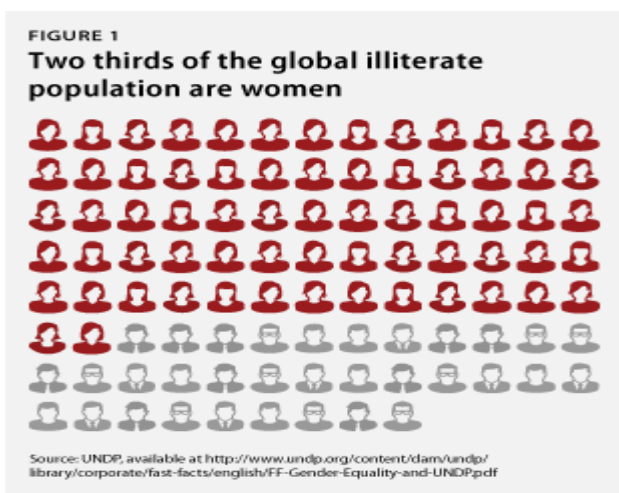
1.4.2. Illiteracy:

Despite the notable efforts by the countries around the globe that have expanded for the basic education, there are approximately 960 million illiterate adults of whom two thirds are women. Educational backwardness of the girls has been the resultant cause of gender discrimination.

The disparities become more visible between male and female literacy rate, during 2001. The literacy rates for males increased from 56% in 1981 to nearly 76% in 2001. The corresponding change in female literacy rate from 30 to 54%. On the whole the decline on gender gap peaked in 1981 at 26.6% and was 21.7% in 2001 is less impressive. The interstate variation in literacy rate for

males was much lower in comparison to females. At the state level female literacy rate varies from 35% in Bihar to 88% in Kerala In states like Arunachal Pradesh, Assam, Bihar, Jammu and Kashmir and Rajasthan, the female literacy rate is below 50%.

The progress towards education by girls is very slow and gender disparities persist at primary, upper primary and secondary stage of education. Girl's account for only 43.7% of enrolment at primary level, 40.9 % at upper primary level, 38.6% at secondary level and 36.9% at degree and above level. More over girl's participation in education is still below 50% Gender differences in enrolment are prevalent in all the state at all levels. They are not able to realize full identity and power in all spheres of life only due to illiteracy.



Source: www.undp.org

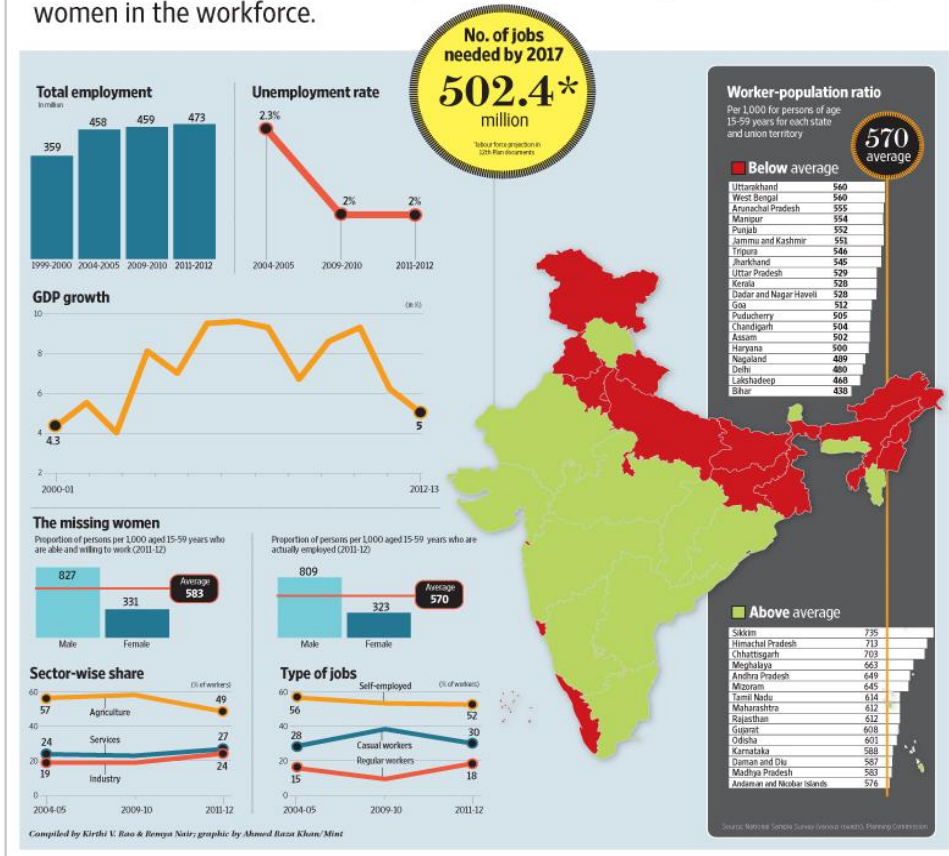
1.4.3. Lack of Employment Facilities:

Women are not able to resolve the conflict between new economic and old domestic roles. In both rural and urban India, women spend a large proportion of time on unpaid home sustaining work. Women are not able to respond to new opportunities and shift to new occupations because their mobility tends to be low due to intra-house hold allocation of responsibilities.

Rights and obligations within a house hold are not distributed evenly. Male ownership of assets and conventional division of labour reduce incentives for women to undertake new activities. In addition child bearing has clear implications for labour force participation by women. Time spent in bearing and rearing of children often results in de-Skilling, termination of long term labour contacts. Thus women are not being able to be economically self sufficient due to unemployment and their economic dependence on the male counterpart is itself a cause of gender disparity.

PROFILING INDIA'S WORKFORCE

The National Sample Survey Organisation provided the country with a fresh update on employment. The good news was that job creation saw a big spike in the last two years; the bad news is the quality of employment is far from desirable—something that is compounded by the vexing fact of the missing women in the workforce.



Source: National Sample Survey Organisation (NSSO), India, 2013

1.4.4. Social Customs, Beliefs and Practices:

Women are not free from social customs, beliefs and practices. The traditional patrilineal joint family system confines women's roles mostly to the domestic sphere, allocating them to a subordinate status, authority and power compared to men. Men are perceived as the major providers and protectors of a family while women are perceived as playing only a supportive role, attending to the hearth. Boys and girls are accordingly drained for different adult roles, status and authority. In Indian culture since very early periods, men have dominated women as a group and their status has been low in the family and society.

The preference for sons and disfavour towards daughter is complex phenomenon that still persists in many places. Sons especially in the business communities are considered to be economic, political and ritual assets where as daughters are considered to be liabilities. Thus anti female social bias is the main cause of gender disparity in our society.

The boy receives a ceremonial welcome on his birth where as everyone is sad at the birth of a girl child. The preference for male child is due to lower female labour participation, prevalence of social evils like dowry and many others causes. The typical orthodox mentality is present even in this modern era leading to sex determination tests and abortion in an illegal way.

Parents often think that teaching a girl child to manage the kitchen is more important than sending her to school. Many feel that it is an unnecessary financial burden to send a girl child to school as subsequently she will be married off and shifted to some other family. This orthodox belief of parents is responsible for gender disparity.

1.4.5. Social Attitude:

Though many social activists and reformers carried their crusade against all social odds to restore honour and dignity to women, attitudinal disparities still hunt our rural masses. Despite pronounced social development and technological advancement, women in our society still continue to be victims of exploitation, superstition, illiteracy and social atrocities.

The social stigma that women are housekeepers and should be confined to the four walls of the house is perhaps a viable cause of gender disparity. They should not raise their voice regarding their fortune for the sake of the prestige of the family. In patriarchal society a lot of weightage is given to men.

In the health and nutritional field, male members of family are supposed to take fresh and nutritious food in comparison to women because either they are earning members or head of the family or they are supposed to be more important than female members. This type of social attitude is conducive to create the problem of gender discrimination.

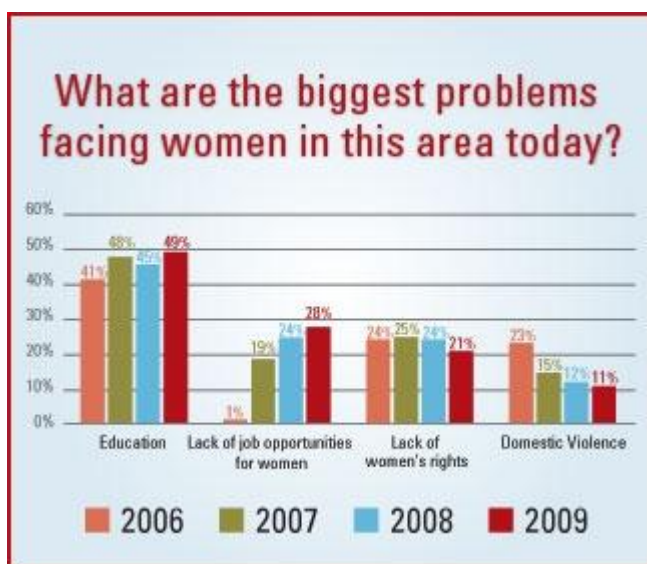
1.4.6. Lack of Awareness of Women:

Most of the women are unaware of their basic rights and capabilities. They even do not have the understanding as to how the socio-economic and political

forces affect them. They accept all types of discriminatory practices that persist in our family and society largely due to their ignorance and unawareness.

Article 15 of the Indian constitution states that the state shall not discriminate any citizen on the grounds of only sex. The irony is that there still is widespread discrimination which is a form of injustice to women. Hence at the onset of the new millennium let this generation be a historic example by putting an end to the gender – based discriminations by unfurling the flag of gender justice in all our action and dealings.

As Desai has stated, if women get equal opportunities like men, they can work in every field like men. Today if she lags behind a little, it is not her fault but the fault of traditions which have suppressed them for centuries, owing to this, her own thoughts like also hang around only familial life and her nearest environment also does not provide favourable conditions for her devotion in the outside work. In order to change the situation along with economic growth social progress is also greatly required. Hence the need of the hour is to effectively combat gender disparity as to promote gender equality by sufficiently empowering the women.



Source: www.asiafoundation.org

1.5. Gender Discrimination in Different Social Institutions:

Law treats men and women as equals, but in practice, gender discrimination exists in all social institutions. It begins in the family and spreads to other institutions in society.

1.5.1. Family:

In most of the households, father is considered to be the head of the family and hence, centre of authority. Regardless of this view that whether a woman is paid employee outside the home or not, domestic work is considered as a woman's area or sphere of activity. Since household work is unpaid, it is not considered as important as paid work, which is gradually done by men. Even though there is a gradual increase in the number of women being employed outside the home in wage work, the image of a male as the 'bread winner' continues to persist. The distribution of work-roles in the family based on sex is called gender division of labour. This gender division of labour also gives rise to an unequal division of power between males and females within the household. The arrangement of relationships, which upholds male superiority and female subordination, is called **patriarchy**. In a male dominated family set up, women are expected to merge their identity with that of a male member, be it the father or the husband. In patriarchal families, inheritance rights are traced and passed on through the male line and women may not have a share at all or an equal share in the family property.

In many ways, family socialization upholds gender discrimination. It is the first source of discrimination. It is in the family that daughters and sons are socialized for playing different roles in society. This role allocation is not based on ability but on sex. Such a pattern of preparing daughters and sons for playing different roles is known as **gender-based socialization**. Since an individual's first contacts are with his or her family, the seeds of gender inequality are sown in the family and are transferred to other institutions in society.

1.5.2. Religion:

All over the world, religion has had profound impact on human behaviour. Religion has a long past and religious texts have been mostly composed by men. Since women are not allowed to receive education for a long time, they could not read what was actually written in the religious texts. So these have often been used to discriminate against women. There is little wonder that many values and practices, which suppress women, claim to have religious sanction. Many a time religion practices double standards, in that in one breath it says that women should be treated with the highest respect, and in another it upholds such practices as humiliation of widows, child marriage or Sati. In many religious rituals women and men are not accorded equal status. Since religion has a large following, its influence in formulating social attitudes relating to men and women is very strong.

1.5.3. Education:

Education has a special and unique role to play in all societies. It is the social institution, which has been entrusted with the responsibility of transmission of culture from one generation to the other. Education is imparted both through schools and institutions, outside the school, including the family and the church/ temple. The school has a very strong influence in the formative years of a child's life. Images and impressions created in the school have a long bearing in changing a child's views about gender.

The National Policy on Education, 1986 had laid down that gender discrimination must be completely eliminated from the educational system. Yet, many school textbooks continue to present women/girls in negative images. Further, today in many schools girls and boys are not permitted to play the same games or mingle freely.

At higher levels of education some courses are considered more suitable for women than men. Even though the entry of women in higher education is on the increase in recent times, they are still concentrated in such disciplines as liberal arts, biological sciences, computers and electronics. These are considered 'soft courses' and hence, more suitable for women. Thus, in so many ways, education still upholds gender discrimination.

1.5.4. Economic Institutions:

In the initial stages of history, when men and women were moving from one place to another in search of food and shelter, there was no structured division of labour. But when human beings began to lead a settled existence and adopted plough based on agriculture, a clear division between the work spheres of men and women emerged. Around this time, work itself came to be divided into two spheres, namely man's work and women's work. A woman came to be referred to as 'housewife' or 'homemaker', while a man began to be recognized as a producer or the breadwinner.

After industrialization swept the world, men got a further advantage over women because they had better opportunities to acquire education and skills. The largest numbers of women who work outside their homes are in the unorganized sector and are subject to exploitation of different kinds. Further, though there is a law that equal pay be given for equal work, often women get lesser pay than men for the same work. Women, who have to work both inside and outside their home thus, suffer the 'double burden'. In any case, it is a woman who works most and receives the least recognition and benefits.

1.5.5. Political Institutions:

Democracy for most women means casting their votes in elections and not participating as people's representatives. Politics is still considered as unsuitable for women because they have no experience of handling power. Since men have held power in all institutions, they are not really prepared to accept the idea of sharing power with women. The 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution of India gave 1/3rd representation to women in rural and urban local self-government and paved the way for nearly a million women entering the political decision making process.

Gender discrimination is thus found in all social institutions. For centuries, society has tried to deprive women of their rightful place in the public sphere by holding their biological make-up as the primary reason. The Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) in 1979 brought into international focus the rights of women as human rights, including the right to be free from discrimination. Women activists regard this Convention as a key tool to support their struggle against discrimination in all spheres, pushing governments towards attaining these internationally recognized minimum standards. Gender equality can be achieved when obstacles to the liberation of women are removed and women and men share responsibilities not only in the family but society at large.

1.6. Socio-economic Status of Women:

Women constitute more than 48% of India's population. But, India is still a male dominated society, where women are often seen as subordinate and inferior to men. The development of women in a society is always indexed by the status accorded to its womenfolk. The better the status of women, the better is their development. What precedes the analysis of the status of women is the understanding of the term status.

Status is referred to a position in a social system or a subsystem which is distinguishable from and at the same time related to other positions through its designed rights and obligations. The status accorded to women in society symbolizes its level of progress. The spirit of a civilization can be assessed by the way in which women are treated by the members of that civilization. The status of women in India has been subject to many great changes over the past few millennia. From equal status with men in ancient times through the low points of the medieval period, to the promotion of equal rights by many reformers, the history of women in India has been eventful. In modern India, women have held high offices in India including that of the President, Prime Minister, Speaker of the Lok Sabha and Leader of the Opposition. As of 2011,

the Speaker of the Lok Sabha and the Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha (Lower House) of the Parliament were women. However, women in India continue to face atrocities such as rape, acid throwing and dowry killings while young girls are forced into prostitution, as of late rape has been a sharp increase following several high profile cases of young girls brutally raped in public areas. According to a global poll conducted by Thompson Reuters, India is the fourth most dangerous country in the world for women and the worst country for women among the G20 countries.

After India gained independence, the constitution makers and the national leaders not only recognized the unequal social position of women but saw to it that women would get equal rights with men. The concept of equality has been enshrined in the constitution and has been the greatest source of honour to the women who once constituted the most neglected and subjugated section of the society. The principles of Hindu Social Organisation were formulated by males, who debarred the women from enjoying equal rights in the social life. With the spread of women's education in India and due to the impact of the west, the Indian women rose against the cruelties of the male. They opposed polygamy, sought right to divorce, claimed equality in marital right and demanded restriction on dowry. On account of these demands, several social legislations were enacted to improve the condition of the Indian women. The Hindu Marriage Act, 1955 classified Hindu Marriages, determined the age for marriage, provided for monogamy and guardianship of the mother and permitted the dissolution of marriage under specific circumstances. The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 made provision for equal rights of the daughter in the property of the father. The Hindu Adoption and Maintenance Act, 1956 allowed Hindu Women to adopt a son or a daughter and to claim maintenance from the husband under certain circumstances. The position of the Hindu widow has improved considerably and she now enjoys a respectable position in the household. Although the widow marriage has been legalized since long, the Hindu Marriage Act also provides for her right to remarry. A widow may now adopt either a son or daughter under the Hindu Adoption and Guardianship Act, 1956.

In both villages and cities there has been a remarkable increase in the number of women going out of the four walls of the household and becoming workers. In the employment market, they are giving tough competition to men folk. In some fields, then number of women employees is steadily increasing. For example, women working as teachers, doctors, nurses, advocates, bank employees, clerks, typists, telephone operators, receptionists and so on, are to be found in almost all cities. Since 1991, though in a smaller number, women are getting recruited into armed force air force and naval force also.

Employments have given women economic independence and the feeling of importance. They now feel that they can stand on their own legs and look after

the entire family by themselves. This has boosted their self-pride and self-confidence. In order to give protection to the economic interests and rights of the women folk the government has undertaken various socio-economic legislations which cover areas such as right to property or inheritance, equal wages, working conditions, maternity benefits and job security.

In spite of all, women are still regarded as belonging to the weaker section. Irrespective of class to which a woman belongs, house work is her responsibility. The sexual division of work in the family is very sharp and pronounced. The perpetuation of the resultant double burden makes the life of a working woman full of strains and tension. In short, the way in which economy has been developing, though the door, of outside employment for women have been opened but working women's life is very hard and at time not fully rewarding. In the unorganized sector, exploitation of women continues, for they are illiterate, ignorant and unorganized.

It can also be said that majority of our women are happy with their family life and do not cherish any ambition relating to the political and public life. Those earning women members also do not have the full freedom to spend their money in accordance with their own will and wish. Most of the women do not prefer to take decisions on important matters but leave them to their men folk's discretion. Thus our women are not completely free from the hold of the customs. Another indicator of the low social position of girls in the society is the phenomenon of adverse sex ratio. Recent prevalence of the test of amniocentesis, culminating in the abortion of a female foetus – feticide is the extreme instance of the devaluation of girls in society. It appears that the societal approach towards women, their role and status has not radically changed. Hence, bringing about more and more legislations to ensure better opportunities to grant more rights and concessions is of no benefit unless there is a basic change in the people's attitude towards women and women's role in society.

1.7. Impact of Mass Media on the status of Women:

Media is a powerful form of communication. It provides information, guidance and awareness to the masses. Mass media like TV, radio and films, apart from family and school, have an important role to play, and act as an effective means of social change. These forms can assist in changing the attitudes and reinforcing the ideas of individuals, which in turn helps in raising the standards of living in the society. The pattern of values in a society is reflected in the subject matter of communication. These values tell us how women are treated in a particular society and the prevailing attitudes of that society towards women.

Women account for almost half of the total population in any country. Any developmental plan, whether related to education, family planning or nutrition, depends upon on the level of participation of women. The National Council for Women's Education emphasizes upon the potential significance of girls' education. Mass media has been intensively used to inform and create awareness about the family planning programmes.

Studies reveal that the impact of mass media, and women's exposure to the media, is not satisfactory. This kind of exposure was more negative till the turn of the twenty-first century. Mass media is not contributing its best to prepare women to play their new roles in society.

According to Dr. Anita Arya, the role and influence of mass media on the status of women can be considered from the following angles:

- A content analysis of the media and their treatment of women
- The influence of the media on their audience
- The influence of the media on women themselves

Let us now discuss the roles played by different forms of media in influencing the status of women.



Source: www.undp.org

1.7.1. Role of the Press:

The press in India is obviously highlighting and publishing matters relating to women. It is by and large trying to enhance the status of women. Many of the newspapers, almost all Indian language dailies, are coming up with a separate section or page for women. The articles in these sections cover some

noteworthy achievements by women in different fields and sometimes in the fields which earlier only men were encouraged to take up. Some sections also feature real-time stories of women who have faced challenges and achieved success in their lives. They also cover the other routine cooking recipes, beauty tips, knitting designs, etc.

Dr. Anita Arya states that a citizen should be able to appeal against misuse of his or her name by the press. For instance, in reporting about rape, abduction or other such incidents, the press should not mention the name of the girl or of her relatives. The press is supposed to exercise restraint and not publicize news which may affect a woman's reputation.

There have been many protests against the use of the female figures in advertising. The previous trend was that the advertisers are making use of female figures even if the product is not related to women. This overemphasis resulted in number of complaints to the Press Council of India about the exploitation of sex in advertisements. Though to an extent this trend continues even today, there has been a definite change in the image of women in advertising.

Among the powers and functions of the Press Council, the following two have bearing on the status of women:

- (i) To build a code of conduct for newspapers, news agencies and journalists in accordance with high professional standards.
- (ii) To ensure the maintenance of high standards of public taste and foster a sense of both the rights and responsibilities of citizenship.

Though the Press Council dealt with a number of cases about the undue exposure of female figures, the debate on the use of female figure in advertisement continues. While the Board of Advertisers is supposed to maintain high standards, it is the responsibility of the general public and, particularly, women's organizations to complain or protest against such obscenity. The Press Council has already given a ruling on this subject, but unless there is a more strict and vigilant watch on advertisements, hoardings and posters, and the voice of common man to restrict such nudity, the Council will be helpless in resolving such issues.

1.7.2. Role of Radio:

Radio is a powerful medium of information and education as its impact and reach is considerable. In a vast country like India, the impact of radio is more than the coverage of press. This is because in the rural areas most of the rural people are illiterates and cannot read newspapers. For such people, radio can be an effective medium through which much of the information can be transmitted.

Special programmes in all regional languages meant for women are broadcasted regularly from the All India Radio. These programmes aim to inform, educate and entertain the rural women folk in rural areas. The timings are also set specifically in accordance to the convenience of women to listen to these programmes. The topics covered under these programmes are specifically related to nutrition, maternity, child health, family planning practices, discussions and talks related to women's interests, interviews with women achievers in public and private fields, etc.

According to Dr. Anita Arya, the Family Planning Units of AIR plan and produce family planning programmes for rural areas, industrial workers, women and youth, projecting a broad-based social movement closely linked with maternity, child health and nutrition. While the Government of India has laid stress on family planning instruction, national integration, nutrition and new agricultural practices, however, how much has been achieved in a positive way to emphasize the new role of women in present-day society remains unsure by the radio is unclear.

1.7.3. Role of Television:

Today, many television channels are coming up with special programmes related to women. There are a number of programmes and serials which focus on the everyday lives of women folk. Some programmes include discussion about social problems, interviews with personalities who have achieved success in their lives, new cooking recipes, beauty tips, latest fashions in clothing and jewellery, and so on.

Television plays a major role in educating rural women. Programmes related to agriculture, cattle rearing and family planning are helpful in getting informed and educated in these fields. Due to such exposure, women in the rural areas are able to gain knowledge and find new ways for improving their standard of living. Through talk shows, which are meant especially for women, the opportunity to come up with their views and opinions are given to rural women.

1.7.4. Role of Literature:

Literature plays an important role in influencing the status of women. Writers like Rabindranath Tagore, Sarat Chandra and Prem Chand dealt with writings which reflected the status and problems faced by women in those days where women's freedom was limited and inequality persisted. But there has been deterioration in the standard of writings. Some of the books written have adverse effect on youth, leading to deviant behaviour. Writers who concentrate more on economic and social problems do not gain much popularity, and their books are not among the best sellers.

However, there are many women writers who have criticized literature that degraded the status of women. They are trying to come up with writings which reflect the position of women in the society and are also making efforts to enhance the prestige of women. Feminist writers are trying to focus on the problems faced by women, issues related to violence against women, inequality, education, health, etc.

1.7.5. Role of Films:

Films are another powerful media which can have positive as well as negative influences on the individuals. Films have played a definite role in influencing the status of women. The Indian film industry has exploited sex in order to attract the public. This has degraded the image of Indian women. In most films emphasis is laid on the physical attributes of the heroine. It is to be noted that till recently, in most of the Indian films, women were given a subordinate state in relation to men. This has tended to perpetuate and encourage the feeling that women are always inferior in status to men. A few films have endeavoured to project the new role of women in present-day society. However, they have not attempted to educate women regarding their rights, duties or responsibilities and have ignored reality. A few filmmakers have made films on contemporary themes and problems, but they have not tried enough to change the conventional images of women.

1.8. Women as influenced by the Mass Media:

Dr. Anita Arya has discussed some of the aspects as how women are influenced by the mass media. These are discussed as follows:

- The mass media is very much a part of the socializing process, and, in this role, the media has been used to reinforce the traditional stereotypes of women. More than that, the distorted image of a woman as a sexual being alone is being emphasized.
- The coverage of women as participants in economic activity as leaders and as general participants in the developing process of our changing societies has been inadequate. An impression is given that women have no role to play in the economic life of the community. The impression thus conveyed is false, as much as the total work force of the country consists of at least 20 per cent females. This figure does not include the unpaid labour of housewives or of rural women's dairy and farming activities in their own homes. The media, thus, gives an erroneous impression of women as consumers and dependents (mostly through advertisements, cartoons, etc.) rather than producers.
- The media is attuned to a male audience and caters to this audience. Women's view-point on general issues is normally not sufficiently represented.

Thus, women tend to see things mostly from a male point of view, and are conditioned to accept the male worldview rather than to evolve one of their own.

According to Dr. Pushpa Sinha, among several studies of the commercial films, advertisements, and magazines made all over the world, it was unanimously alleged that media, especially films and advertising, need to change the following:

- Stereotyping of sex.
- Use of children to reinforce the stereotyping of sex roles.
- Creating false ideas of marriage.
- Inferring that marriage and motherhood are ultimate goals.
- Women portrayed as ambushers and pursuers of men, the victims, although men must always be seen to be in control of the situations.
- Too many products aimed at bolstering women's confidence, implying that they are inferior and need improvement and lack of security these products offer.
- Advertisements which imply that women need men's superior knowledge and guidance to do simple tasks.

1.9. Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1987:

An important act has been passed in India to improve the status of women in the media. This act may be relevant to cases of sexual harassment under the following provisions:

- Where an individual harasses another with books, photographs, paintings, films, pamphlets and packages, containing an 'indecent representation of women, they are liable for a minimum sentence of two years.
- Section 7 provides that companies are liable where there has been 'indecent representation of women' (such as the display of pornography) on the premises of the company.

The National Commission for Women and the Department of Women and Child Development have recommended certain amendments in the Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1987. These are as follows:

- To amend the title of the Act from Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act to 'The Derogatory and Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act' including its consequential amendments.
- To amend Section 2(a) this concerns amendment of the term 'advertisement' to specifically include electronic and other media.
- To insert Section 2(g) to enlarge the definition of the word 'publish' to cover the Web services.
- To insert Section 4A empowering authorized officers and notified

- voluntary organizations to make complaints.
- To amend Section 6 to enhance punishment for offences under the Act.

1.10. Women's involvement in Mass Media:

For a long time, women's participation in the different forms of media has been to a large extent peripheral in nature. Today, women media practitioners are on the rise in most parts of the world, both in mainstream and in alternative media. In community media, women play important roles, both in conducting and planning the programming and in its decision-making processes. Women in electronic media are working as newsreaders, anchors, producers, directors, etc.

Women today are stepping into areas of media that have long been only 'male domains. Many women are becoming investigative journalists and entering into male-dominated areas. Women investigative journalists are being hired by all major newspapers and TV channels (CNN, BBC, NDTV, etc.). In India, Barkha Dutt has successfully crossed the gender barriers of investigative journalism. Her courage of the Kargil incident has won her accolades. In regard to women's participation in print media, access of women to the journalism profession has definitely increased over the last few years. Women are now occupying positions as staff reporters, writers, editors, etc.



Though women are being successful in occupying high positions in electronic and print media, there are certain factors which discourage women in entering into these media forms. For example, if we take the print media, women form a relatively less proportion of the total number of journalists in the country in comparison to men. As the concentration of the print medium is mostly the urban areas, women journalists are also restricted to these areas. According to Ms. K.Manjari (National Council Member, Indian Journalists Union), an encouraging development in the younger crop of women journalists is that they have refused to confine themselves to reporting trivial or the traditional topics or doing the standard interviews and sob stuff features. Women journalists

seem to be out to prove themselves every bit as resourceful and enterprising in their job as their male colleagues.

In discussing about the biases in recruitment, Ms. K.Manjari says that the most common reasons given by managements for not taking women is that the latter cannot do night duty (if subeditors) and cannot do late hour reporting (if single) with the result that the 'investment' of the management in them is a loss; if already married but without children, they will inevitably need to be given maternity leave, or if having children, they will not give their job the attention required.

These kinds of problems are not only faced by the women in the print media but also in all forms of media. There prevails lot of gender inequality in the fields of electronic and print media in regard to recruitment, promotions, etc.

The Beijing World Conference on Women identified media, including information and communication technologies, as one of the critical areas of concern for gender equality and the empowerment of women.

Comprehensive policy frameworks and regulatory mechanisms need to be put in place in order to make the media a useful tool to promote and contribute to greater gender justice, respect for women's human rights, sustainable development and a culture of peace. Some of its recommendations to achieve these objectives were as follows:

- Governments need to formulate standards, based on equality between women and men that should be reflected in all communication productions, including programming and media portrayal.
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms should be put in place in order to halt sexism and gender-based stereotypes in mass media, including strengthened policies against sexist images in publicity.
- Governments and relevant bodies should implement programmes that will increase women's access to media, including assigning resources to promote gender equality through the use of both mainstream and alternative media.
- Governments should put in place policies and financial support, including within international cooperation programmes, with regard to supporting the strengthening of women's communication and media initiatives.
- Gender balance needs to be established at all decision-making levels within the media industry. This could be achieved through measures such as affirmative action and quota systems.

Recommendations:

According to Ashine Roy and Dr. Anita Arya, in order to change the attitudes towards women and girls, the social consciousness of the country must be

raised, and the participation and access of women to expression and decision making in and through the media must be increased. The governments should take the following actions:

- Setting up of an expert group on women's issues on radio, television and other government media, including print media. This group will work towards operationalizing a communication policy for women, particularly on drawing up a framework on roles/images projected of women. They should examine media strategies for combating revivalism and obscurantism that denies women constitutional equality. The group may also consider the possibility of a national voluntary code to govern the projection of women in advertisements.
- Support women's education, training and employment to promote and ensure women's equal access to all areas and levels of the media. Promote women's full and equal participation in the media, including management, programming, education, training and research.
- The communication policy for women and girls needs constant monitoring and reappraisal, as the question of communication and image portrayal of women and girls is a sensitive and complex one. For this purpose, a 'media advisory committee' consisting of eminent social workers, writers, social scientists and media practitioners may be constituted.
- Media personnel, including originators of information in all media forms including All India Radio, Doordarshan, print media, etc., must be sensitized to women's issues, particularly to the projection of positive images of women. More sensitized women need to be inducted for producing information programmes, films, etc., in the national media. Positive models of women as cultivators, producers, managers, etc., must be forcefully projected.
- Support research into all aspects of women and the media so as to define areas needing attention and action, and review existing media policies with a view to integrating a gender perspective.
- Aim at gender balance in the appointment of women and men to all advisory, management, regulatory or monitoring bodies, including those connected to the private and state or public media.
- A scrutiny of all existing Censor Board rules regarding indecent representation of women in the media must be made and redefined. Particular attention must be paid to the distinction between 'pornography' and 'obscenity'. Women could comprise at least half the membership of all Censor Boards and media monitoring cells. All persons selected for membership should have awareness of the issue involved.
- Encourage and recognize women's media networks, including electronic networks and other new technologies of communication, as a means for the dissemination of information and the exchange of views, including at the international level, and support women's groups active in all media work and systems of communication to that end.

- Initiatives for quality control must be taken in respect of commercial and popular films and serials.
- Guidelines should be developed for their evaluation. A short discussion should proceed. There should be a ban on screening of films which endorse traditional stereotypes. Advertisements which either degrading women or endorse the stereotypes should be banned.
- Encourage to the extent consistent with freedom of expression, these bodies to increase the number of programmes for and by women to see to it that women's needs and concerns are properly addressed.
- Textbooks in use in the formal and non-formal education system and at other levels of education and training should be carefully assessed for removing negative images and references to women.
- Research and analysis should be undertaken to assess the ways in which the various communication channels reach and affect women and girls. Reasons for the very low exposure of women to mass media must be identified.
- Reaction of the target group must be much more extensively researched and analysed. Feedback should not only be about communication programmes and activities, feedback-monitoring studies should accompany the transmission of communication programmes in all media channels.
- Theatre writers and directors should be encouraged to evolve new trends and develop new plays, deriving ideas from the rich theatre heritage of the country. The staging of these should be linked to open-ended audience discussion.

According Ashine Roy, to promote a balanced and non-stereotyped portrayal of women in the media, the governments should take the following actions:

- Promote research and implementation of a strategy of information, education and communication aimed at promoting a balanced portrayal of women and girls and their multiple roles.
- Encourage the media and advertising agencies to develop specific programmes to raise awareness of the platform for action.
- Encourage gender-sensitive training for media professionals, including media owners and managers, to encourage the creation and use of non-stereotyped, balanced and diverse images of women in the media.
- Encourage the media to refrain from presenting women as inferior beings and exploiting them as sexual objects and commodities rather than presenting them as creative human beings, key actors and contributors to beneficiaries of the process of development.
- Promote the concept that the sexist stereotypes displayed in the media are gender discriminatory, degrading in nature and offensive.
- Take effective measures or institute such measures, including appropriate legislation, against pornography and the projection of violence against women and children in the media.

The non-governmental and media associations' interference can also bring about a change in the portrayal of women in the different forms of the media. The national and international media systems should develop, consistent with freedom of expression, regulatory mechanisms, including voluntary ones, which promote balanced and diverse portrayals of women by the media. Thus, if the governments were able to follow at least some of these suggestions, the status of women in the mass media would definitely change.

1.11. Where do Women stand in Rural India?

While analyzing the current status of rural women, it may be asserted that they are still found to over-burden with heavy domestic workloads, having limited role in household decision-making at household level with limited access and control over household resources, suffer from restricted mobility and entitled to low level of individual assets. Incidences of early marriages among girls are still prevalent in some parts of rural India; besides that domestic violence against women in the form of dowry, wife- battering, threat to divorce, polygamy, unwillingness to provide livelihood support, family conflict etc., are still considered to be a frequently occurred phenomena as far as statistics are concerned.

State of Women in Rural India: Some Reflections from Evidences

- Females have a share of 48.1% in the urban population and of 48.6% in the rural population.
- Pace of increase in female literacy rate is perceptibly higher in rural areas; it has increased from 46.13% in 2001 to 58.75 in 2011
- The workforce participation rate of females in rural sector was 26.1 in 2009-10 (NSS 64th Round) while that for males was 54.7. In urban sector, it was 13.8 for females and 54.3 for males.
- National Family Health Survey-III (2005-06) data shows that in the rural sector currently married women take 26% decisions regarding obtaining health care for herself and 7.6% in case of purchasing major household items. 10% decisions are taken by females in respect of visiting their family or relatives. For urban areas, these figures are 29.7%, 10.4% and 12.2% respectively.
- The labour force participation rate of women across all age-groups was 20.8% in rural sector and 12.8 in urban sector compared with 54.8 and 55.6 for men in the rural and urban sectors respectively in 2009-10.
- In the rural sector, 55.7% females were self-employed, 4.4% females had regular wage/salaried employment and 39.9% females were casual labours compared with 53.5%, 8.5% and 38.0% males in the same categories respectively.

- In 2011-12, the share of women swarojgaris in the total swarojgaris assisted under the Swarnajayanti Gram Swarojgar Yojna (SGSY) stood at 69.4%.
- The share of women in the person days employed through MGNREGA stood at 48.3% in 2011-12 (all districts with rural areas).
- Out of 150.18 million households in the rural areas in 2004-05, 16.67 millions (11.1%) are Female Headed Households while in the urban sector, out of the total of 56.97 million households, 4.85 million (10.9%) are Female Headed (as per NSSO report).
- Keeping with the past trend, the share of rural migrant females stood at a high level of 47.7% compared with a meagre 5.4% of their male counterparts in 2007-08. The share of urban female migrants was 45.6% compared with 25.9% for males during the same period.
- The female Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) was 49 compared with the male IMR of 46 and the overall IMR of 47 in 2010.
- The Maternal Mortality Ratio has come down from 254 during 2004-06 to 212 during 2007-09.
- 57.4% women in rural areas and 50.9% women in urban areas suffered from anaemia during 2005-06. Among the States, prevalence of anaemia was the highest in Assam and Jharkhand, both at 69.5%, and it was the lowest in Kerala at 32.8%.

1.12. Major Problems of Rural Women:

We will now move on to see the major problems that the rural women face in their day to day life. In rural areas, women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity, and hence, they are relegated mainly to household duties and cheap labour. Without the power to work and earn a good income, their voices are silenced. For the rural women, the day starts early in the morning with the responsibilities of fetching water, fodder, fuel and cooking food. She takes care of the children and members of the family, their health, orientation and education and attends to various income generation activities. She manages all the household matters, looks after the family assets and livestock, handles the purchases and finance, works for almost 14-16 hours and is the last to sleep at night. Still, when you ask her children/husband what their mother / wife does? Most of them instantly reply “NOTHING”. There is no recognition for their hard work, just because her work is not evaluated in terms of money. She often falls sick, but does not complain and this goes unnoticed by others in the family as they continue to work as usual for the sake of the family. Women are ignored in matters, which are of concern to them as well. As a result, today women are the worst sufferers in the society due to drudgery, ill health, illiteracy, deprivation and humiliation. Backwardness of women is a sign of poverty and women are the worst sufferers during the period of scarcity and calamity. Now, we will analyse the problems of rural women in detail:

1.12.1. Lack of Education:

The government might have many plans and facilities towards educating the girl child but despite all we have not been able to uplift the standard of the rural women as expected. Education plays an important role in increasing the awareness level on women's rights. When both boys and girls go to same school and grow up with mutual respect and understanding, women are likely to find more rightful place in the family and society. But the general perception of the rural people is that boys are superior to girls and with this perception and attitude girls are given less attention in comparison to boys.

As per the latest Census of India, female literacy rate in rural areas is 58.75% in comparison to 79.92% in urban area. If we bifurcate the educational level of rural female then as per NSSO June 2010, 46.7% are completely illiterate upto primary level, 11.1% upto middle level and only 10.3% are educated upto secondary level. This shows the miserable status of the women education in rural areas.

1.12.2. Access to Health Facilities:

Most women in the rural areas face severe health problems because of hand to mouth existence and a large family to feed which results in women sacrificing their meals which led them to get anaemic and this manifests into major health issues. Government might be having so many plans to improve the health status in the country especially in rural areas for which NRHM was started in 2005 with an objective of improvement in public health delivery system in the rural areas. Data may be showing some improvement in the various areas like Infant Mortality Rate, Crude Birth Rate, etc but lot more need to be done especially in rural areas to make sure that the facilities meant for the rural people are reaching to them effectively and timely. Janani Shishu Suraksha Yojana is also important initiative in this direction.

1.12.3. Perception of having Lack of Income Generation Capacity:

In rural areas, the contribution of women in household work is not recognised as part of any economic contribution to the family income. Women are generally not perceived to have any meaningful income generation capacity and hence are neglected mainly to household duties and cheap labour and as a result without power to work and earn good income their voices are also silenced.

1.12.4. Control by Men:

In rural areas everything is being controlled by men only and women are ignored to participate and give their opinion in the family matters even if it is related to them. So in a society, where men control the destiny of women, how is it possible to empower women? Even in matters of sex and child bearing rural women do not have the permission to oppose the wishes of their men and if they are encouraged to do so it will create mistrust rather helping the rural communities. Women can gain power only when men start respecting the feelings of women and accept their contribution what they are devoting to the family matters.

1.12.5. Gender Equality:

Even many countries have made progress in developing the capabilities of women but still the inequalities continue to exist between women and men specifically in the rural areas. The low status of the women in the society is the outcome of our patriarchal system which is in force by traditions. This women's oppression have to be sensitized to improve the gender equality.

1.12.6. Unequal Access to Economic Opportunities:

Women are more likely than men to work as unpaid family labourers or in the informal sector. Women farmers tend to farm smaller plots and less profitable crops than men. Women entrepreneurs operate in smaller firms and less profitable sectors. As a result, women everywhere tend to earn less than men. If we see the status of employment of rural women then 54.2% are self employed, 40.3% are casual labourer and only 5.5% are regular employer in different sectors.

1.12.7. Less Voice in Households and in Societal Decision Making:

In most of the countries, especially poor rural women have less say over decisions and less control over resources in their households. And they even participate very less in formal politics than men and are under-represented in its upper echelons. As per the World Development Report 2012, 1/5th married women in India are not involved in spending decisions, even about their own incomes. Women's ability to own, control, and dispose of property still differs from that of men- sometimes legally, often in practice.

1.13. Suggested Ways and Approaches to Improve the Status of Rural Women:

1.13.1. Educational Dimension:

Education is the key which opens the doors not only to men but women too, develop humanity and promotes national development. And the requirement of such initiative is more at rural level where women are lacking behind in education field and education can be an effective tool for improving women's position to acquire knowledge to perform better. It is suggested that there should be some centre in each village which can provide literacy training to not only young women but senior citizens too.

1.13.2. Economic Dimension:

Educationally empowered rural women can contribute more not only to her own economic development but in the overall development of the country. We know that rural women contribute not only in household work but equally in agricultural activities and if they are given ownership and control over productive assets it will create a sense of belonging and owing along with decision making abilities which will further enhance their self esteem and confidence. The rural women need to be extended access to land, financial decision making, household budgeting, bank accounts, etc.

1.13.3. Social Dimension:

Rural women are deprived in all the areas whether it is health, nutrition, sanitation, education.etc. Addressing all these gender gaps in human capital endowments requires fixing the institutions that can deliver public services in timely manner to expectant mothers and improving the availability of clean water and sanitation to households will go a long way to closing these social gaps. Other areas where rural women suffer most are female mortality and skewed sex ratios at birth which need to be addressed at the earliest. There is no doubt that in present time rural women have become more aware about these sensitive issues.



1.13.4. Capacity Building:

Capacity building and status of women are two important attributes complementary to each other. There should be separate agency to provide skills and capacity building in various areas particularly to rural women. SHG is the core areas where rural women can have their own business through micro-financing to get economic liberty. In this direction government has taken many initiatives like STEP (Support to Training and Employment Programme) to encourage rural women so that their productivity can be increased and they can keep themselves abreast of the various changes occurring in the competitive environment. Training in such programmes can enhance their knowledge, skill and abilities firstly on need basis and then can be provided on essential needs. In addition to all the above points some more areas may be taken care of like, reducing gender gaps in human capital development, limiting the reproduction of gender inequality across generations, disparities between women and men in earning and productivity to be narrowed down, gender differences in household and societal voice to be reduced, and many more.

Steps taken by our Govt.

We can say that government will take some steps in Favour of women.

1. Seats reserved for women parliament .



Total 543 seats

2. Banned to get know about baby in stomach of women which is after being killed called Foeticide or Infanticide.



- Our constitution
- Indira Mahila Yojna
- Rashtriya Mahila Kosh, Mahila Samridhi Yojana, Self help groups at Panchayat level and many more.
- National Women's Commission and State Women's Commissions
- National Policy for the Empowerment of women (2001)

To conclude, unbearable bureaucracy, terrible inefficiency, and corruption at all levels of the government have wasted much of the money allocated to rural development. Furthermore, the local officials who manage products that target women do not themselves believe in the potential of women. Yet the process continues, without an alternative. International agencies continue to pour money into these programmes, only to benefit the middlemen. Clearly, a new approach is required to have an impact on the lives of women in rural India, and to ultimately help in stabilizing population growth.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the causes of Gender Discrimination in India?

Ans.

2) Have you ever found gender discrimination in the family, a unit of social institution?

Ans.

3) What are the major problems of rural women in India?

Ans.

1.14. Let Us Sum Up:

In this unit we have discussed the meaning of gender and sex. We have analyzed the socio-economic status of women and the factors responsible for gender discrimination in India. While the impact of various developmental policies, plans and programmes implemented over the last few decades have brought forth a perceptible improvement in the socio-economic status of women, problems like literacy, ignorance, discrimination and violence continue to persist even today. Gender disparity manifests itself in various forms, the most obvious being the trend of continuously declining female ratio in the population in the last few decades. Discrimination against girl children, adolescent girls and women persists in parts of the country. Hence, while

making an assessment under the purview of gender studies, it was found that the impact of Mass Media on the status of Women has made significant changes in the socio – economic life of women but, rural women are yet to join in the mainstream of 70 years of independent India by surpassing all the problems sustained by the patriarchal society of India.

1.15. Key Words:

- **Gender:** Gender refers to the way members of the sex groups are perceived, evaluated and expected to behave or the socially defined roles expected of males and females.
- **Sex:** Sex identifies the biological differences between men and women and is genetically determined.
- **Gender Role:** Gender Role is the process by which roles are assigned to boys and girls and later men and women, on the basis of social expectations.
- **Gender inequality:** Gender inequality refers to the unequal treatment made to individuals on the basis of their gender.
- **Gender discrimination:** Gender discrimination means to give differential treatment to individuals on the grounds of their gender. In many societies, this involves systematic and structural discrimination against women in the distribution of income, access to resources and participation in decision making.

1.16. References:

1. Bhasin, Kamla(2003)*Understanding Gender*,New Delhi, Women Unlimited
2. Gopalan, Sarala (2002) *Towards Equality- the Unfinished Agenda, Status of Women in India*. National Commission for Women: New Delhi
3. Sen, Sujata (2012) *Gender Studies*, New Delhi
4. Desai, Neera (1977) *Women in Modern India*, Bombay

1.17. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Poverty
Illiteracy
Lack of Employment Facilities
Social Customs, Beliefs and Practices
Social Attitude
Lack of Awareness of Women
- 2) Yes.
In many ways family socialization upholds gender discrimination. It is the first source of discrimination. It is in the family that daughters and sons are socialized for playing different roles in society. This role allocation is not based on ability but on sex. Such a pattern of preparing daughters and sons for playing different roles is known as gender-based socialization. Since an individual's first contacts are with his or her family, the seeds of gender inequality are sown in the family and are transferred to other institutions in society.
- 3) Lack of Education
Access to Health Facilities
Perception of having Lack of Income Generation Capacity
Control by Men
Gender Equality
Unequal Access to Economic Opportunities
Less Voice in Households and in Societal Decision Making

Unit – 2

Women and Natural Resource Management, Women in Agriculture

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Define the role of women in management of natural resources*
- *Understand the contribution of women in agriculture*
- *Explain the constraints faced by women in farming*

Structure:

- 2.1. Introduction
- 2.2. Women's role in environmental conservation
 - 2.2.1. The Contrast
 - 2.2.2. Environmental Educator
 - 2.2.3. The Gap
 - 2.2.4. The Impact
- 2.3. Women in Agriculture
 - 2.3.1. Contribution of Women in Indian Agriculture
 - 2.3.2. Constraints faced by Women in Farming
 - 2.3.3. Recognizing contribution of Women in Farming
- 2.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 2.5. Key Words
- 2.6. References
- 2.7. Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

2.1. Introduction:

In the transitional phase from traditional society to modern orientation, developmental processes in India have neglected both women and the environment. In spite of the rich Indian heritage which worshipped both women and the environment, both were sidelined until recently.

Women manage natural resources daily in their roles as farmers and household providers. The close association between woman and natural resources is then valid primarily in rural context, where because of socio-economic roles through generations women are required to provide food, water, fuel, fodder, and income from the surrounding resources base for survival. Fulfillment of these

goals has given them a special understanding of natural resources and led them to adopt a more sensitive attitude towards environment. The women-environment interlink has proceeded through a specific hierarchy:

- Performance of specific tasks over several years.
- Knowledge base and skills for natural resource management.
- Better managers of natural resources.
- Sensitive attitude towards environment.
- High ecological consciousness.

Natural resources must be used in a way that meets today's needs, while conserving them for future generations. Any government and non-government efforts to conserve must appreciate and recognize the central role of women as they have diverse indigenous knowledge in the use and exploitation of natural resources whether it is to provide food, shelter, traditional medicines or for other purposes.

2.2. Women's role in environmental conservation:

Women, the people with the least formal power, and also the poorest and the most illiterate in virtually every country have, however, acted as catalysts and initiations of environmental activism. But they always get a raw deal in environmental management programmes. Their knowledge and expertise is completely ignored by the decision – makers concerned. In environmental agencies, women have little representation and they are rarely informed about training opportunities and environmental projects.

2.2.1. The Contrast:

The status of women makes it difficult for them to get organized but there is growing evidence that women are responding eagerly to social and ecological issues like tree planting and prohibition etc.

For example: in Kenya, an anatomist, Wangari Maathai founded the 'Green Belt' Movement in 1977, to take up plantation of trees to arrest the march of desert. She involved school children and nearly 50,000 small – scale farmers, mostly women in planting 10 million trees, 80 percent of these have reached maturity. In the 17th century, more than 300 Indians led by a woman named Amrita Devi lost their lives while trying to save their sacred trees by clinging to them. Today also women's initiative and participation in the Chipko and Appiko movements in the Himalayas and northern Karnataka respectively, in India prove women's interest in restoring the ecosystem.

Women once mobilized, play a more significant role in afforestation efforts than men who prefer to be concerned with monetary benefits rather than environmental reconstruction.

2.2.2. Environmental Educator:

In recent years, several steps are afoot to create awareness about environmental degradation, environmental conservation and upgradation through proper environmental education. But environmental education must specify the relationship between environment and gender. In her roles as agriculturist, home economist, teacher, energy conservationist and an all – round resourceful person, a woman can become the first environmental educator for her children and others. Moreover, environmental education should be expanded in rural and remote areas with a specific gender focus.

2.2.3. The Gap:

Efforts have been made in recent years by the government to promote new technologies like biogas plants, firewood plantations and fuel conserving smokeless chulhas, latrines and hand pumps. These can reduce the rigours of rural living, improve health and meet fundamental household needs. But there has not been much headway. A major reason for this failure is that dissemination programmes seldom involve women in the development of technologies and their applications in the field.

Gender inequality is most evident in access to land. Custom prohibits women from owning land in many countries. Landless women often depend on common property resources for fuel wood, fodder and food. And overuse of those resources poses a serious threat to rural livelihoods and food security.

2.2.4. The Impact:

Special incentives have to be offered especially to rural poor women for training in these new technologies like repairing hand – pumps, operating biogas plants, installing and operating smokeless chulhas, etc. Thousands of hand pumps have been installed in villages and a majority is usually out of order at any point of time. The efforts made by the National Water Mission are very encouraging and have to be extended. Under this, training is given to women by the government department concerned to enable them to play an active role in using and repairing hand pumps for the supply of drinking water. They are also actively associated with selection of sites for hand – pumps and other water resources.

There is a need to involve women as equal partners in tackling environmental issues recognizing their knowledge, experience and their significant role. Hence, they can play in environmental conservation and management. The potential of science and technology should be utilized to solve environment – related problems and ease woman’s work-load inside and outside the home.

Gender issues have to be focused on policies related to habitat and housing both in rural and urban areas. The government, non-governmental organizations, environmental conservation agencies and common man should recognize and mobilize women as active participants to protect and enrich the natural resources that sustain us.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)’s targets:

To maintain gender equity in its programmes for sustainable management of natural resources, FAO has set itself the following targets till 2013 :-

- **Land issues and gender :**

Develop training modules on gender and land rights, and use gender analysis as an integral part of land use planning.

- **State of world of land and water resources :**

While reporting on the state of world land and water resources, address differences in women’s and men’s access, control and ownership.

- **Water management projects :**

Collect and disseminate sex-disaggregated data on agriculture water management and include gender analysis in water management projects.

- **Plant genetic resources :**

In reporting on implementation of the international treaty on Plant Genetic Resources, address women’s access and share of benefits.

- **Land cover and GIS :**

Develop geographic information systems that integrate gender-related environmental and socio-economic data.

2.3. Women in Agriculture:

Have you ever heard of a person designing buildings and not known as an architect, or a person catching fish and not known as a fisherman or a person writing books and not called a writer? The story is different when it comes to the rural women in India. The women in rural India do the maximum agricultural work, but still are not recognised as farmers. They are involved in all aspects of agriculture, from crop selection to land preparation, to seed selection, planting, weeding, pest control, harvesting, crop storage, handling, marketing, and processing. But still women in agriculture are ‘invisible and silent partners’ in economic life right from the grass root to the policy level.

According to Dr. M.S. Swaminathan, the famous agricultural scientist, some historians believe that it was woman who first domesticated crop plants and thereby initiated the art and science of farming.



2.3.1. Contribution of women to Indian Agriculture:

Women form the backbone of agriculture, in India. Agriculture, the single largest production endeavour in India, contributing about 18% of GDP is largely a female activity. Agriculture sector employs 4/5th of all economically active women in the country and 48% of India's self-employed farmers are women. Women make 48.5% of the total population but constitute 70% of the labour force in animal husbandry. These are important stakeholders in farming activities in India constituting 90% of the total marginal workers in India. Women's importance in agricultural production both as workers and as farm managers has been growing in the last two decades, as more men move to non-farm jobs leading to an increased feminization of agriculture. Studies reveal that working hours of agricultural women a day last for 15 hours whereas her male counterpart works for 7 to 8 hours. Further, an estimated 20 percent of rural households are de facto female headed, due to widowhood, desertion, or male out-migration. These women are often managing land and livestock and providing subsistence to their family with little male assistance. Hence, agricultural productivity is increasingly dependent on the ability of women to function effectively as farmers.

Why land is important for women?

- Land access can reduce a household's risk of poverty, but for persistent gender inequalities land solely in men's hands need not guarantee female welfare.
- Direct land transfers to women are likely to benefit not just women but also children. Evidence both from India and from many other parts of the world shows that women, especially in poor households, spend most of the earnings they control on basic household needs, while men spend a significant part of theirs on personal consumption, such as alcohol, tobacco, etc.
- Women with assets such as land have greater bargaining power, which can lead to more gender, equal allocations of benefits even from male incomes.
- Women without independent resources are highly vulnerable to poverty and destitution in case of desertion, divorce or widowhood.
- Tenure security and especially titles can empower women to assert themselves better with agencies that provide inputs and extension services.
- Women are often better informed than men about traditional seed varieties and the attributes of trees and grasses. If they had greater control over land and farming. This knowledge could be put to better use.

2.3.2. Constraints faced by Women in Farming:

In villages, women are overburdened with the three fold responsibility of home, agriculture and livestock management. Despite this, much of the contribution of women in the food production system their role as food producers and providers is yet to be given effective recognition. Not even 2% of the land is owned by women. Most extension services are focused on cash crop rather than food and subsistence crops, which are the primary concern of women farmers and the key to food security. This is true for Indian agriculture also. High literacy rates and poor living conditions among rural women, lack of leadership and inadequate participation in the organisational and economic affairs of the agricultural institutions like cooperatives, lack of agricultural technology aimed at reducing the physical drudgery of farm women, inadequate access to credit and agricultural inputs and other services, lack of female farm extension workers, lack of marketing facilities and opportunities, less participation in decision-making even within the household, lack of opportunities to improve socio-economic status of farm women, lack of skills and attitudes in leadership and management are some of the constraints suffered by farm women.

The improved technology package has been developed in the country for agriculture and agro-processing but these have selectively been adopted mainly by male farmers and entrepreneurs. The female farmer/entrepreneurs remained passive spectator and continued to adopt traditional practices. The reasons may vary from technological to marketing and social barriers. These issues may be grouped into:

(a) Technological barriers:

The equipment for agricultural production processing and value addition are developed keeping ergonomic design factors of male operators. For women these are scaled down in size but their physiological responses under long duration of work are hardly investigated. The physical strength, working posture and environment under which female workers are employed varies from region to region, which influences the adoption of technology. The research institutions have hardly appointed female researchers and technicians for evaluation of women specific technology.

(b) Training and Skill:

The training facilities available for women in selected traders, are largely located in cities and rural women can hardly avail these opportunities. Agriculture production related training facilities are nowhere available to cater to the rural women needs. The programme confine mainly to demonstration of machinery and women hardly get chance to handle these machines. This does not improve the skill of women but creates awareness and therefore modern machinery does not generate interest among women worker.

(c) Passive attitude towards modernization:

In traditional agriculture women farmers were equally involved in decision making process. In the absence of knowledge take the decision for modernization of agriculture and the female members are left behind as passive spectators. They give their share of labour through traditional tools and equipment.

(d) Credit facilities:

The modern agriculture including improved machinery requires higher capital investment which is not adequate from farmer's savings alone. The women farmers are not conversant with Banking System and procedure for availing loan and thus, are deprived of credit facilities for purchase of machinery and other agricultural inputs.

(e) Marketing System:

Purchase of improved machinery or sale of agro-produce requires knowledge of industries dealing in machinery and organized marketing network system for agro-produce. The women workers seldom handle such issues outside their village boundaries, though they are involved in trade in village or local bazaars.

(f) Social barrier:

Women are equally competent to operate any mechanical device as seen in urban areas. But the rural women workers in India have confined to using hand tools and there are social reservations in handling machinery.

2.3.3. Recognizing Contribution of Women in farming:

Over the years, there is a gradual realization of the key role of women in agricultural development and their vital contribution in the field of agriculture, food security, horticulture, processing, nutrition, sericulture, fisheries, and other allied sectors. Women have traditionally been playing very important role in all aspects of agriculture irrespective of the fact whether their role is recognized or not. With regards to farming, women contributing a lot towards agricultural production, their potential can be exploited further by ensuring that women have equal opportunities with men to own land, have access to agricultural services and tailoring such services to their needs, promote the adoption of appropriate inputs and technology to reduce the drudgery faced by them, improve the nutritional status of women and children, provide better employment and income earning opportunities through the creation of self help groups and other income generating activities and reviewing and reorienting the government policies to ensure that the problems that constraint the role of women in food security are addressed. For the first time, farm women have been recognised as a 'kisan' with the launch of 'Mahila Kisan Sasaskthikaran Pariyojna'(MKSP) by the central government. The various developmental projects need to be designed to address the needs of farm women.

Thus, government policies should be framed to provide legal support and instill confidence in women. Programmes should be developed exclusively for women, to build leadership skills for managing agricultural community based development activities. Access of technology, inputs and credit has to be ensured predominantly through women extension workers. They should be trained in farm management skills and made capable of taking even complex decisions.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) How women's roles are influential in environmental conservation?

Ans.

2) What are the constraints faced by women in farming?

Ans.

2.4. Let Us Sum Up:

The underlying causes of gender inequality are related to social and economic structure, which is based on informal and formal norms and practices. Women and men have distinct roles within the farming system. Gender differences in rural farming households vary widely across cultures. Women tend to concentrate their agricultural activities around the homestead, primarily because of their domestic and reproductive roles: they play a critical role in food production, post-harvest activities, livestock care, and increasingly in cash cropping.

Moreover, with regards to natural resources management, there are evidences justifying the response and involvement of women in major social and ecological issues like the Chipko and Appiko movements in the Himalayas and northern Karnataka in India respectively, where 300 Indians led by a woman named Amrita Devi lost their lives while trying to save their sacred trees by clinging to them restoring the ecosystem.

2.5. Key Words:

- ***Natural Resource Management:*** Natural resource management refers to the management of natural resources such as land, water, soil, plants and animals, with a particular focus on how management affects the quality of life for both present and future generations leading to sustainable development.
- ***Chipko Movement:*** In the 1970s, an organized resistance to the destruction of forests spread throughout India and came to be known as the Chipko movement. The name of the movement comes from the word 'embrace', as the villagers hugged the trees, and prevented the contractors' from felling them. Not many people know that over the last few centuries many communities in India have helped save nature. The original 'Chipko movement' was started around 260 years back in the early part of the 17th century. A large group of them from 84 villages led by a lady called Amrita Devi laid down their lives in an effort to protect the trees from being felled on the orders of the Maharaja (King) of Jodhpur. After this incident, the maharaja gave a strong royal decree preventing the cutting of trees in all Bishnoi villages.
- ***Appiko Movement:*** The Appiko movement was a revolutionary movement based on environmental conservation in India. The Chipko movement (Hug the Trees Movement) in Uttarakhand in the Himalayas inspired the villagers of the Uttara Kannada district of Karnataka State in southern India to launch a similar movement to save their forests. In September 1983, led by Panduranga

Hegde, men, women and children of Salkani "hugged the trees" in Kalase forest. (The local term for "hugging" in Kannada is appiko.) Appiko movement gave birth to a new awareness all over southern India.

2.6. References:

1. Bhasin, Kamla (1993) *What is Patriarchy?*, New Delhi : Kali for Women
2. Bhasin, Kamla (2003) *Understanding Gender*, New Delhi : Women Unlimited
3. Seth, Mira (2001) *Women and Development: Indian Experience*, Sage Publication: New Delhi

2.7. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

Check Your Progress II

- 1) The Contrast
Environmental Educator
The Impact
The Gap
- 2) Technological barriers
Training and Skill
Passive attitude towards modernization
Credit facilities
Marketing System
Social barrier

Unit – 3

Issues of Gender Equity in Rural Areas, Practical and Strategic Needs of Women

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Describe gender discrimination*
- *Discuss about issues of gender equity in rural areas*
- *Distinguish between practical and strategic needs of women*

Structure:

- 3.1. Introduction
- 3.2. Issues of Gender Equity in Rural Areas
 - 3.2.1. Crop Production
 - 3.2.2. Livestock Development
 - 3.2.3. Fisheries Development
 - 3.2.4. Forest Resources
 - 3.2.5. Natural Resources
 - 3.2.6. Employment and Livelihoods
 - 3.2.7. Food Security and Nutrition
- 3.3. Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs
 - 3.3.1. Difference between Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs
- 3.4. Let Us Sum Up
- 3.5. Key Words
- 3.6. References
- 3.7. Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

3.1. Introduction:

Gender refers not to male and female, but to masculine and feminine – that is, to qualities or characteristics that society ascribes to each sex. Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs. The essence of equity is not identical treatment-treatment may be equal or different, but should always be considered

equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Equity is a means for achieving gender equality.

3.2. Issues of Gender Equity in Rural Areas:

Women have been neglected throughout the years in every field: social, cultural or economic and when it comes to rural women, the negligence is in greater quantity. Following are some of the issues of gender equity found in rural society:

3.2.1. Crop Production:

Women make major contributions to crop production. Women's roles in crop production are expanding: the outmigration of young men from rural areas in some regions has led to permanent changes in women's responsibilities and tasks. Yet women have the least access to the means for increasing output and yields, and for moving from subsistence farming to higher-value, market-oriented production. The lack of women's participation in commercial crop production is often not a preference, but the result of limited access to inputs and markets. Women's adoption of new crop production technologies is also strongly affected by who controls and ultimately owns the crop: men often move into "women's" crop production when it becomes more profitable.

3.2.2. Livestock development:

Males and females of all ages participate in small-scale animal production. Men usually own and manage large animals, such as cattle and buffalo, while women are almost always responsible for poultry and small ruminants, such as goats. In fact, their livestock is often one of the few sources of income over which women have complete control.

Although all household members are involved in livestock production, gender discrimination denies women access to resources, rights and services. Male livestock keepers also have far better access to training and technology. Extension programmes are usually oriented towards men's livestock, and extensionists lack the incentive and communication skills needed to work with often illiterate women. The negative impact of gender discrimination on productivity is more obvious in the livestock sector than in most other areas of agriculture.

Low-cost investments in poultry and small animal production- which is easily managed and has a quick rate of growth and return- can provide women with new income generating activities. Because poor rural women spend most of

their income on buying food and other household things, that can do more to improve family welfare than expanding men's cattle herds.

3.2.3. Fisheries development:

Capturing fish in coastal and deep-sea waters is almost always a male domain, and carries with it high occupational health and safety risks. Women's most prominent role is in post-harvest, processing and marketing. But much of women's contribution to fisheries is "invisible". Gender discrimination stems from the low value attached to women's work and is perpetuated in their limited access to credit, processing technology, storage facilities and training. Without training and storage technology, many women traders are unable to keep fish fresh, and suffer considerable post-harvest losses. Women from fishing communities who become wage earners in the seafood export industry are found to be paid less than men, and are away from their homes for longer periods, making it more difficult for them to fulfill their domestic roles.

3.2.4. Forests Resources:

It is generally found that trees and forests are more important to rural women's livelihoods than to those of men. These rural women in some areas derive their income from forests. For both men and women, access to forest resources is becoming complex, as rights based in negotiable customary law give way, increasingly, to government action to protect threatened forest habitats by restricting human encroachment.

Restrictions on access affect men and women in different ways. Forests can be crucial to farming women's survival strategies. As a result, they are becoming more reliant on forest foods and income from fuel wood. During conflicts and natural disasters, displaced rural people also become more reliant on forest products and services. Given their responsibility for meeting household food and fuel needs, depletion of forest resources increases burdens on women especially.

3.2.5. Natural Resources:

Women manage natural resources daily in their roles as farmers and household providers. Despite their reliance on natural resources, women have less access to and control over them than men. Usually it is men who put land, water, plants and animals to commercial use, which is often more valued than women's domestic uses. Gender inequality is most evident in access to land. Custom prohibits women from owning land in many countries. Frequently

women have only use rights, mediated by men, and those rights are highly precarious. Landless rural women often depend on common property resources for fuel wood, fodder and food. Women farmers have limited access to irrigation networks or, when they do, to irrigation management decisions: membership of water user's association is often linked to land ownership.

Women's limited water entitlements force them to use subsistence agricultural practices that may lead to soil erosion. Addressing the gender dimensions of natural resources management will help policy makers formulate more effective interventions for their conservation and sustainable use.

3.2.6. Employment and Livelihoods:

As agriculture shifts from subsistence to commercial production, the future of small-scale producers in developing countries depends on their being able to diversify into new income generating activities, including off-farm employment. Gender roles reduce rural women's participation in labour markets and confine them to lower paid and more precarious employment in agriculture.

Women farmers face systematic discrimination in access to the resources and services needed to improve their productivity, such as credit, secure land title and education. When off-farm employment is available, women continue to suffer gender discrimination. In India, the average wage of female farm workers is 30% lower than that of men. Low-paid tasks in agro-processing are generally "feminized", while men are more likely to have jobs that require training and earn higher wages. Rural wage employment can help women escape from poverty by increasing their income and strengthening their household bargaining power.

3.2.7. Food Security and Nutrition:

Women play a decisive role in food security, dietary diversity and children's health. While men grow mainly field crops, women are usually responsible for growing and preparing most of the food consumed in the home and raising small livestock, which provides protein. Rural women also carry out most home food processing, which ensures a diverse diet, minimizes losses and provides marketable products. It is generally found that women are more likely to spend their incomes on food and children's needs- research has shown that a child's chances of survival increase by 20% when the mother controls the household budget. But gender inequalities in control of livelihood assets limit women's food production.

Women's access to education is also a determining factor in levels of nutrition and child health. Further, the physiological needs of pregnant and lactating women also make them more susceptible to malnutrition and micronutrient deficiencies. Twice as many women suffer from malnutrition as men, and girls are twice as likely to die from malnutrition as boys. Maternal health is crucial for child survival- an undernourished mother is more likely to deliver an infant with low birth weight, significantly increasing its risk of dying.

Conclusion:

The above issues give us an overall view of gender equity in rural area. Gender equity is related to several factors, including ownership and control over land; access to diverse types of employment and income generating activities; access to public goods (such as water, village commons and forests), infrastructure, education and training, health care and financial services and markets; and also opportunities for participation in political life and in the design and implementation of policies and programmes. In rural societies, and elsewhere, thus gender equity is an imperative issue. Keeping in view of these issues, the strategy of empowering rural women requires a crosscutting and culture-bound approach which will be capable enough to address the diversity of social structures that govern rural women's lives.

3.3. Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs:

Caroline Moser makes the conceptual distinction between practical gender needs and strategic gender needs. Understanding of these two needs provide a better comprehension to gender and development.

Practical Gender Needs are called PGNs. These are the needs women identify in their socially accepted roles in the society. PGNs do not challenge, although they arise out of gender division of labour and women's subordinate position in society. PGNs are a response to immediate perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often the inadequacies in living conditions such as health care, water provisions and employment are included in PGNs. Thus, practical gender needs relate to women's traditional gender roles and responsibilities and are derived from concrete life experiences. PGNs are related to immediate needs of living. These needs can be fulfilled by providing inputs such as food, installation of wells, making health care facilities. Although the situation of women may be improved by meeting their practical gender needs, this alone is not sufficient to change existing gender roles and social relationships between men and women. Strategic Gender Needs are called SGNs. These are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position in the society. They vary according to particular contexts, related to gender based division of labour, distribution of power and controlling authority. They include issues like legal rights, domestic

violence, equal wages and women's control of their bodies. Meeting the SGNs ensure women greater equality, emancipation and empowerment, because, they challenge the subordination of women and existing roles. According to Moser, understanding and identifying these two types of needs can enable for better policy.

Strategic Gender Needs addresses issues of equity and empowerment of women. The focus is on systematic factors that discriminate women. Though it is difficult to identify strategic gender needs in comparison to practical gender needs, yet it is instrumental in moving towards equity and empowerment of women. Social and political reforms can only respond to the strategic gender needs of women.

3.3.1. Difference between Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs:

Following are the differentiation between Practical Gender Needs (PGN) and Strategic Gender Needs (SGN):

- Practical Gender Needs tend to be immediate and short term whereas, Strategic Gender Needs tend to be long term.
- Practical Gender Needs are unique to particular women whereas, Strategic Gender Needs are common to almost all women.
- Practical Gender Needs are related to daily needs, food housing, income, health, children etc. whereas, Strategic Gender Needs are related to disadvantaged position, subordination, lack of resources and education, vulnerability to poverty and violence etc.
- Practical Gender Needs can be easily identifiable by women whereas, Strategic Gender Needs aim at reducing the disadvantages of the women by empowering and emancipating them but, they are not easily identifiable by them and require policy intervention.
- Practical Gender Needs can be addressed by provision of specific inputs such as food, hand pumps, clinics etc. whereas, Strategic Gender Needs can be addressed by consciousness raising, increasing self confidence, education, strengthening women's organizations, political mobilization etc.
- Practical Gender Needs can be addressed by involving women as beneficiaries and perhaps as participants whereas, Strategic Gender Needs involve women as agents or enable women to become agents.

- Practical Gender Needs can improve condition of women's lives whereas, Strategic Gender Needs can improve position of women in society.
- Practical Gender Needs do not alter traditional roles and relationships whereas, Strategic Gender Needs can empower women and transform relationships.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the major issues of gender equity found in rural society?

Ans.

2) What are the difference between Practical Gender Needs and Strategic Gender Needs?

Ans.

3.4. Let Us Sum Up:

Gender equity means fairness and impartiality in the treatment of women and men, according to their respective needs. The essence of equity is not identical treatment- treatment may be equal or different, but should always be considered equivalent in terms of rights, benefits, obligations and opportunities. Equity is a means for achieving gender equality.

While assessing the needs for gender and development, it was found that Strategic Gender Needs addresses issues of equity and empowerment of women. The focus is on systematic factors that discriminate women. Though it is difficult to identify strategic gender needs in comparison to practical gender needs, yet it is instrumental in moving towards equity and empowerment of women. Social and political reforms can only respond to the strategic gender needs of women.

3.5. Key Words:

- ***Gender Equity*** refers to fairness of treatment for women and men, according to their respective needs.
- ***Gender Mainstreaming*** is the current international approach to advancing gender equality and equity in society. At the national level, it involves incorporating a gender perspective into all policies, plans, programmes and projects to ensure that these impact on women and men in an equitable way.
- ***Gender Needs*** are the shared and prioritized needs identified by women that arise from their common experiences as a gender group. These needs can be classified as strategic or practical needs.
- ***Practical Gender Needs (PGN)*** is a response to immediate and perceived necessity, identified within a specific context. They are practical in nature and often concern inadequacies in living conditions such as water provision, health care and employment.
- ***Strategic Gender Needs (SGN)*** are the needs women identify because of their subordinate position in society. They vary according to particular contexts, related to gender divisions of labour, power, and control, and may include issues such as legal rights, domestic violence, equal wages and women's control over their bodies.

3.6. References:

1. Bhasin, Kamla(2003)*Understanding Gender*,New Delhi, Women Unlimited
2. Gopalan, Sarala (2002) *Towards Equality- the Unfinished Agenda, Status of Women in India*. National Commission for Women: New Delhi
3. Sen, Sujata (2012) *Gender Studies*, New Delhi

3.7. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Crop Production
Livestock development
Fisheries development
Forests Resources
Natural Resources
Employment and Livelihoods
Food Security and Nutrition
- 2) Following differences are as follows:
 - i. Practical Gender Needs tend to be immediate and short term whereas, Strategic Gender Needs tend to be long term.
 - ii. Practical Gender Needs are unique to particular women whereas, Strategic Gender Needs are common to almost all women.
 - iii. Practical Gender Needs are related to daily needs, food housing, income, health, children etc. whereas, Strategic Gender Needs are related to disadvantaged position, subordination, lack of resources and education, vulnerability to poverty and violence etc.
 - iv. Practical Gender Needs can be easily identifiable by women whereas, Strategic Gender Needs aim at reducing the disadvantages of the women by empowering and emancipating them but, they are not easily identifiable by them and require policy intervention.
 - v. Practical Gender Needs can be addressed by provision of specific inputs such as food, hand pumps, clinics etc. whereas, Strategic Gender Needs can be addressed by consciousness raising, increasing self confidence, education, strengthening women's organizations, political mobilization etc.

- vi. Practical Gender Needs can be addressed by involving women as beneficiaries and perhaps as participants whereas, Strategic Gender Needs involve women as agents or enable women to become agents.
- vii. Practical Gender Needs can improve condition of women's lives whereas, Strategic Gender Needs can improve position of women in society.
- viii. Practical Gender Needs do not alter traditional roles and relationships whereas, Strategic Gender Needs can empower women and transform relationships.

Unit – 4

Concept and Significance of Gender Sensitization

Learning Objectives:

After completion of this unit, you should be able to:

- *Describe about the significance of Gender Sensitization*
- *Discuss about the process of Gender Sensitization*
- *Explain the implication of Gender Sensitization*

Structure:

- 4.1. Gender Sensitization: Concept
- 4.2. Significance of Gender Sensitization
- 4.3. Gender Sensitization Process
 - 4.3.1. Change in perception
 - 4.3.2. Recognition
 - 4.3.3. Accommodation
 - 4.3.4. Action
- 4.4. Gender Sensitization Strategy
 - 4.4.1. Target audience
 - 4.4.2. Methodology
 - 4.4.3. Content
- 4.5. Sensitization through education
- 4.6. Implications of Gender Sensitization
- 4.7. Let Us Sum Up
- 4.8. Key Words
- 4.9. References
- 4.10. Check Your Progress – Possible Answers

4.1. Gender Sensitization: Concept

Gender has become an important subject in agriculture research and development. At a time when we are aiming to put our economy on high trajectory growth path, it is important that we address the gender issues because these have implications for development. Gender bias is one such issue that all societies are beset with. It is manifested in myriads of forms. An array of problems that we face today in realms of social and economic development can, in some way or the other, be linked to gender bias. A bias-ridden society entails

high cost for different kinds of social and economic transactions, access and use of information in decision making. Therefore, creating a socio-cultural climate that discourages gender biased practices and promotes rational behaviour and action on part of men and women is very significant in this context. To this end, gender sensitization should be seen as an important action point. However, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, the first Prime Minister of independent India has said *“In order to awaken the people, it is the woman who have to be awakened. Once she is on move, the family moves, the village moves, the nation moves.”*

4.2. Significance of Gender Sensitization:

Sensitization is by far the most effective and non-confrontationist approach or reforming the society. Gender sensitization is the process of changing the stereotype mindset of men a women – a mindset that strongly believes that men and women are ‘unequal entities’, and hence have to function in different socio-economic space.

Gender sensitization increases the sensitivity of people at large towards women and their problems. In the process, it creates a class of responsive functionaries at different level, from policy making to grass root level, who are convinced that any form of gender bias is an obstacle on the way of attaining an equitable social and economic order and therefore consider addressing gender related issues in their situation as a matter of priority.

Gender is a social construct that denotes the social relation between men and women leading to differential position and importance in the society. The role script prescribed for men and women in a giving society has systematically resulted in women’s sub-ordination which women themselves have accepted without realizing its implications. Therefore, gender sensitization should seek to change not only the impression of men towards women i.e. the way men think of and treat women, but also the attitude of women i.e. way women think of men and of themselves and their behaviour in this context.

Its goal is essentially to create a value system in society that accords explicit and spontaneous recognition to the contributions of women in socio-economic development, and respects their wisdom; a system that makes women sensible and courageous enough to recognise their own contribution and make them feel proud of it.

4.3. Gender Sensitization Process:

Gender sensitization programmes are generally organised for groups of people. The very aim of such programmes is to bring a definite orientation in the

thinking, practices and approach of individuals concerning gender. Insights from monitoring of gender sensitization programmes conducted under different gender related projects in rural areas suggests that gender sensitization process that individuals, particularly the men, undergo involves four stages namely, change in perception, recognition, accommodation and action. These changes take place in response to certain intervention i.e. sensitization courses or training.

4.3.1. Change in perception:

Gender sensitization, in first instance, tends to change the perception that men and women have of each other. It creates a mindset in men that no longer sees in women the stereotypical image. The impression that women are a 'weak and unequal entity' no more clouds the minds of common men. Rather, they are seen as responsible and equal partners in socio-economic development. At this stage men realize the ill-effects of prevailing biases against women on family and society. The general perception of men and women on the rigid gender division of labour and other orthodox practices relating to gender begin to die down. Women also tend to develop the perception that they are no subordinate to men and they have an equally important role to play in decision making at household, community and organizational level.

4.3.2. Recognition:

Persons exposed to gender sensitization also start behaving differently. They look at the positively endowed qualities of women. At this stage the male folk begin to recognize the virtues of women and their importance to the family and society. There is open and spontaneous appreciation for women's involvement in multifarious activities. The men, who were reluctant to acknowledge women's contribution, come forward under the influence of sensitization to recognize their contribution. As a result women's contributions become more and more visible. Further, women's talents and capabilities that were going unnoticed and unexplored become subject of attention. Women too become more conscious of their capability and contribution, and take pride in the same.

The message that gender sensitization conveys is loud and clear. Women do possess wisdom and therefore they must be involved in decision making process. They have concerns and therefore they should be treated with dignity and given equal chance in sharing of social and economic benefits. Women, cutting across socio-economic boundaries, tend to see their problems in larger perspective of women development and come forward to recognize the efforts of fellow women. They even visualize the important role that men can play in their socio-economic development.

In a nutshell, such as orientation marks the beginning of a definite realignment in gender relations. Social image of women improves and their concerns are shared by men.

4.3.3. Accommodation:

The barrier between men and women starts crumbling down and the society slowly gets over the perennial problem of adjustment between them. Men tend to rationalize their behaviour by shedding their ego as far as gender relations are concerned. Instead of complaining or reacting to the behaviour of women, men learn to exercise patience and restraint, and take the things in a positive way. The difference between men and women narrows down as men allows women to function in a comfortable environment in the available socio-economic space. Problem creators, i.e. those who were discouraging and obstructing women in their socio-economic participation, become supporters of women empowerment. In the family, women start gaining importance as their opinions and suggestions are counted for overall development and management of family. At community and organizational level too, women are encouraged to play their role in matters of management. It is also observed that women, on their part, tend to underplay the problems with their male counterpart and wish to solve their problems through dialogue.

4.3.4. Action:

Gender sensitized persons become instruments of change as far as status of women in the society is concerned. They become action oriented and alert to see that women are neither neglected nor discriminated against and they get their due status in the society. Conscious efforts are made to create a favourable climate that allows nurturing and flourishing of women's talent and provides more flexibility and freedom to women. Moreover, sensitized persons become more inclined to take such steps that would make the gender equations more even and balanced. A number of affirmative actions are initiated to bring improvement in conditions of women. Women also become open votaries of women empowerment and organize themselves for collective action against different forms of bias and discriminatory practices. They tend to become proactive to gain a respectable position in family and in the society.

At different levels, from top echelons of decision making down to the household, different kinds of measures may be initiated. There could be gender sensitive policies and programmes to allow meaningful participation of women in development and decision making process, and foster equitable sharing of benefits. Some of the actions that are making visible impact are gender focused programmes and policies by different Ministries of Government and Department under National Policy on Women, initiatives like identifying and

addressing gender concerns at organisation level and gender budgeting. All these are testimonies to the shift in approach that has taken place in recent years. Similarly, actions could also be in the form of research and extension initiatives and linkages to reach out to the women with appropriate technologies and institutional innovations on which several organizations are working.

Similarly, it is also important that action should reflect at other levels, importantly at household level. Very often the persons involved in gender development argue, “Is there a need for restructure of gender roles?” Women normally find themselves sandwiched between several demanding tasks and feel overburdened and exhausted. Can male members come forward to support women in completing household chores? Gender sensitization has a role to play. Men who are sensitized do volunteer to share the burden of women and try to complement the efforts of women. Importantly, they can encourage and support women in their fight for equality. Ultimately we have a situation where both men and women complement each other within the family and outside.

4.4. Gender Sensitization Strategy:

Forms and intensity of gender bias varies greatly according to the socio-cultural and economic contexts. Therefore, in order to bring desired changes in people and in the society, we need to develop a well thought-out gender sensitization strategy considering the prevailing socio-cultural, economic and psychological situation of target group. The strategy basically involves three components; selecting the target audience, deciding the content and deciding the methodology. Since the content and methodology of the programme are decided according to the target group, one should be clear about the composition and characteristics of the target groups before designing the sensitization programmes.

4.4.1. Target audience:

Sensitization programmes should target not only the collective consciousness of men in society to create more space for women but also those women who directly or indirectly tend to act against the larger interest of women by trying to conform to the traditional socio-cultural norms. For example, elderly women from families can be educated about ill effects of gender bias so that they develop a favourable attitude towards younger generation. Similarly, socially and economically progressive women in village or locality can be sensitized to encourage and support the underprivileged women.

Different programmes can be designed targeting different groups. Men and women could be taken either together or separately in the target group. They

could be from similar background or from different background. Even both men and women from different age-groups could be considered either separately or together. For example, separate sensitization programmes can be designed for researchers, policy makers and personnel associated with social and economic services delivery system. Even there can be programmes in rural areas wherein men and women from different age groups and from same households can be involved in participatory discussion in an enabling environment so as to make them realize the adverse effects of gender bias depicting real life experience.

4.4.2. Methodology:

Methodology part deals with overall designing of the programme, its structure, form and style of presentation, language to be used etc. Since reaching the target audience, impressing upon them and changing their traditional mindset are crucial to make the programme effective, a great deal of thought should go into deciding the methodology.

Gender sensitization materials need to be developed for different category of people; men, women and children of different age groups and background. We will inevitably require some gender sensitive modules containing case studies; situation analysis etc. to sensitize planners, researchers and middle level functionaries. Even gender sensitive materials could include leaflets, booklets, posters and videos on different theme areas. Organization of sensitization camps in rural areas coupled with sustained campaign by mass media, and plays will go a long way in creating a healthy environment in rural areas as far as gender relations are concerned.

4.4.3. Content:

The content part basically means the topics, theme areas or issues to be considered for the programme. Topic should be relevant and content should have the power to communicate the intended message to the audience, and should be easily understandable by them.

Content of the programme can be decided depending on its very purpose. It could be to sensitize people about ill-effects of gender bias and discriminatory practices on women, men, family and society. Gender sensitization may focus on spreading the message, 'how women play important role in family and in the society' and 'how both men and women in their mutually supportive role can contribute immensely to family welfare, growth and development of their villages'. Contents should initiate friendly debate among larger audience on the ill effects of gender bias and what can be done to remove gender bias. It can highlight the conduct of men and women in households based on case studies and even spread the message of some kind of affirmative action. To

make them more effective, findings from existing studies can be used for designing sensitization programmes. At the same time more and more research should be undertaken to address the issue of gender bias and its consequence in varying situations. In fact, the content, structure and method of gender sensitization measures can draw upon the research findings.

4.5. Sensitization through education:

Education is an important vehicle of social change and students, particularly children, can become important instruments in the process. Topics relevant in the context of gender sensitization should be introduced in school curriculum to sensitize the children on the prevailing gender biasness in our society and the way it is impeding the socio-economic development. This calls for somewhat higher doses of social since including gender studies in educational institutions. To make students awakened to the realities, both boys and girls can be encouraged to debate and discuss the gender issues and examples from real life experiences. Such an exposure will bring a definite change in attitude and perception of students towards gender. While boys, as they grow, can become more sensitive to and more concerned about issues affecting the girls and women, the girls and women, on the other hand, will become more vigilant against prevailing biases and awakened to the emerging opportunities. At the same time, we can expect more friendly relationship between boys and girls or men and women characterized by spontaneity in adjustment and collective efforts to find solutions to gender problems. This would create a long term impact on society by reducing abuses and violence against girls and women. Can we not create a social climate that would hold discrimination against girls and women a sin or taboo?



Source: www.mapsofindia.com

4.6. Implications of Gender Sensitization:

- Gender sensitization can contribute to women empowerment by hastening the process of both horizontal and vertical flow of ideas, knowledge, information and technology.
- It can reduce the chances of gender conflict and promote gender harmony thereby creating a congenial climate wherein both men and women can perceive and play their role in mutually complementary mode.
- Lack of sensitization at different levels, i.e. household, project and programme levels, is an important reason for poor implementation and poor outcome of development interventions. Gender sensitization, therefore, can foster meaningful participation and better integration of women into development process and can lead to better impact on women of different projects, programmes and policies.
- Gender sensitization can induce restructuring of gender roles based on efficiency and can help realize higher roles based on efficiency and can help realize and outside work through rational and effective use of resources including available time.

To conclude, gender sensitization should pervade all levels, from top to down at household level. The good thing is that the persons at top level of management and policy making are becoming more and more sensitized on the issue. However, a large part of the system and large segment of our population are not really sensitive to gender concerns. This calls for serious efforts to launch gender sensitization programmes for R & D organizations, and for the people at large to achieve gender equity in sharing of benefits. To begin with, selected personnel at different levels involved in research, extension and rural development should be given necessary orientation and training and they in turn can carry on such sensitization and in villages. As meaningful participation of women is paramount for good outcome of rural development programmes, gender sensitization should be made in-built into the broad framework of rural development process. In this way, the message of working towards gender equality can be propagated across our social, economic, research and development systems. We can visualize a situation where both men and women should be in readiness to perceive each other's needs and act in a more cohesive way to harness their combined potential. In ultimate analysis, gender sensitization is very much required to create gender synergy at household, organizational and community level for producing more output and attaining gender equality.

Why Gender Sensitization is important?



- Women play fundamental role in family
- Women play an essential role towards the food and nutrition security of their families and communities
- Women work for 16-18 hours per day
- Play significant role of multitasking in productive and household work.
- Play the stressful responsibility of family networking and social and moral justice.

Source: Vigyan Prasar, Dept. of Science & Technology, Govt. of India

Check Your Progress IV

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answers.

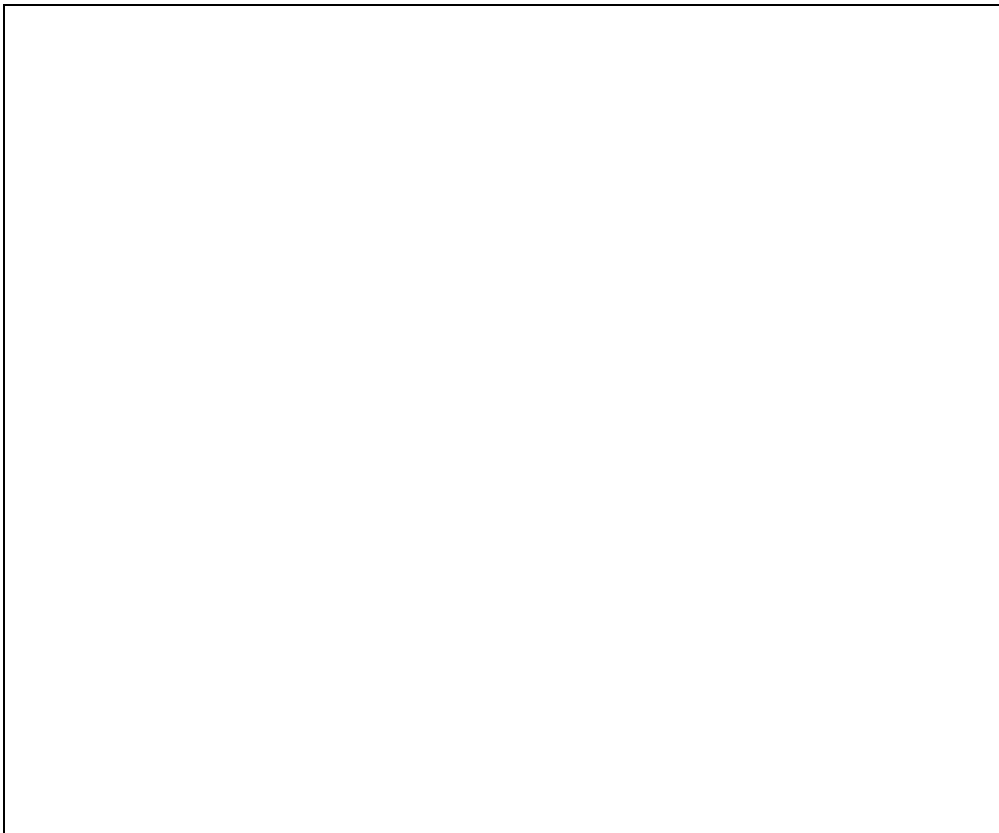
b) Check your answers with the possible answers provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the processes of Gender Sensitization?

Ans.

2) What should be the strategy to be adopted for Gender Sensitization?

Ans.



4.7. Let Us Sum Up:

In this unit we have discussed the concept of Gender sensitization, which is the process of changing the stereotype mindset of men a women – a mindset that strongly believes that men and women are ‘unequal entities’, and hence have to function in different socio-economic space.

It was suggested that gender sensitization process that individuals, particularly the men, undergo involves four stages namely, change in perception, recognition, accommodation and action. These changes take place in response to certain intervention i.e. sensitization courses or training.

As human being is the center stage of all development, the gender issue can no more be neglected if we are to make real development of a nation. Here we discussed women as a constituency of development and various perspectives on women’s development. Development of women implies their access in overcoming the underlying structural inequalities. Gender in development is the approach that seeks to redress women’s status through affirmative action in improving the qualities of women’s lives.

4.8. Key Words:

- **Gender:** Gender refers to the way members of the sex groups are perceived, evaluated and expected to behave or the socially defined roles expected of males and females.
- **Gender division of labour:** Gender division of labour means an overall societal pattern where women are allotted one set of gender roles, and men allotted another set.
- **Empowerment:** Empowerment is a process of awareness and capacity building leading to greater participation, greater decision making power and control, and to transformative action.

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4.10. CHECK YOUR PROGRESS – POSSIBLE ANSWERS:

Check Your Progress IV

- 1) Change in perception
Recognition
Accommodation
Action

- 2) Target audience
Methodology
Content