

Block

4

HUMAN SEXUALITY AND COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

UNIT 14**Sexuality: Issues, Attitude and Behaviour** 5**UNIT 15****Alternate Sexuality and Sexual Identities** 24**UNIT 16****Intimate Relationships** 42**UNIT 17****Marital Harmony** 50**UNIT 18****Separation, Divorce and Future Options** 59

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BLOCK 4 HUMAN SEXUALITY AND COUPLE RELATIONSHIPS

The previous Blocks of this Course clarified various concepts of applied social psychology. Units under the previous Block dealt with adaptation of individuals in varied life situations. In this Block, “Human Sexuality and Couple Relationship” you will be introduced to various perspectives relevant in today’s dynamic times. This Block consists of five Units.

Unit 14 is on “*Sexuality: Issues, Attitude and Behaviour*”. The Unit begins with the conceptual background on sexuality. Biological bases of sexuality, sexual orientation, Indian views on sexuality, distinction between gender and sexuality have been adequately highlighted in this Unit. Meaning of sexual development through the life span has been discussed. Various myths and misconceptions related to sexuality have been addressed in the Unit. You will understand the interpersonal dimensions of sexuality and changing societal attitude towards sexuality.

Unit 15 is “*Alternate Sexuality and Sexual Identities*”. As the name suggests, the focus is on alternate sexuality existent in the society. This Unit continues the discussion on human sexuality. Then the Unit further discusses the sexual identity and misconceptions and stereotypes related to sexual identities. The Unit explains the concept of sexual orientation. After studying this Unit you will understand the concept of alternate sexuality.

Unit 16 is entitled “*Intimate Relationships*”. The intimate relationships in and outside marriage have been discussed. Family ties, love, commitment, power and cohabitation are focus of the Unit. The Unit highlights the points of concern in intimate relationships.

Unit 17 is “*Marital Harmony*”. The Unit focusses on the marital relationship. The Unit outlines various theories related to marital and family relationships. It focuses on commitment and trust in marital relationships. The Unit provides guidelines and understanding on the complex marital relationship.

Unit 18 is on “*Separation, Divorce and Future Options*”. As this Block comes to an end we focus on the current social issue – separation and divorce. The discussion on separation and divorce becomes important with the rampant increase of the same. It focusses on the factors influencing separation and divorce and the issues related to it thereafter. Adjustment, coping and alternatives of the same are outlined.

UNIT 14 SEXUALITY: ISSUES, ATTITUDE AND BEHAVIOUR

Structure

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 - 14.2.2 Biological Basis of Sexuality
 - 14.2.3 Sexual Orientation
 - 14.2.4 Indian Perspective on Sexuality
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14.1 INTRODUCTION

When we hear the term “sexuality”, we immediately associate it with the act of having sex. That association is very obvious and correct to some extent but sexuality is a much more broader term which includes not only this but also one’s being of a particular sex, identification of self as a sexual being and performing behaviours in accordance with the societal rules for the specific sex. In this unit, we will study diverse notions about sexuality, trace the concepts and ideas related to it in a historical perspective and build up an understanding about dimensions of sexuality at the personal, interpersonal and societal levels. In addition, this unit will help you understand the differential perspectives on sexuality as related to gender, cultural and religious contexts with focus on the Indian context. Since sexual behaviour involves some degree of risk and responsibility, some of the misconceptions associated with sexuality are also described so as to reduce the fears related to these aspects.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Gain conceptual clarity about the meaning of sexuality;
- Understand the role of gender in influencing attitudes and behaviours related to sexuality;
- Gain an understanding of processes of development of attitude towards sexuality so as to promote healthy attitude;
- Learn about general misconceptions related to one's own body;
- Understand the importance of healthy and appropriate sexual practices so as to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted diseases; and
- Get oriented towards understanding issues related to sexuality at personal, interpersonal and societal levels.

14.2 CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND

In the present section, we will first build up a conceptual understanding of sexuality, overview its historical perspective and examine the notions of sexuality in a cross cultural framework with special focus on its perception in the Indian context.

14.2.1 Introduction to the Term Sexuality

Sexuality, in its literal meaning, includes all sexual feelings, attitude and activities (Macmillan Dictionary). Human being is as much a sexual being as it is a social being. Sexuality is not just the domain of human beings; even animals are sexual in nature. However, human sexuality includes a very important component of rationality along with physical, biological, emotional and behavioural components. In its broadest sense, sexuality is interwoven with all aspects of being human (Kally, 1998). It is important to understand sexuality to understand the true nature of human beings since, like other human needs, sex is also one of the basic human needs. It acts as a drive for seeking personal fulfilment and for perpetuation of species.

Human sexuality has always been an issue of curiosity, debate, repression or aggression. It has been a subject of contrast and contradictions. The factors which affect values and beliefs related to sexuality include the cultural and social context across the time frame and the economic and political ideology. While sex and all facets connected to it were sometimes considered dirty and private, there is no doubt that in today's world, due to fast pace of changes in all societies, there are shifts in values related to sexuality. In Indian culture specifically, though sex may be a prohibited topic for open discussion in the family setting, there is definitely more openness in communication about sexuality between various members of the family and with friends nowadays.

Being a sexual human being amounts to far more than the sexual organs with which we were born and the ways in which these organs are activated by sexual arousal. The other dimensions of sexuality include the social, cognitive, emotional and ethical perspectives related to this aspect. All these aspects deeply touch our day to day life and we need to be aware about these.

14.2.2 Biological Basis of Sexuality

The foetus in the first six weeks of its life is sexually neutral. After this time, depending on whether it has inherited XY or XX chromosomes, it will develop into a boy (XY) or a girl (XX). The mother always passes on the X chromosome; it is the father who determines the sex of the child by passing on either a Y or X chromosome through the sperm. The presence of the Y chromosome causes the neutral internal sex organ (gonad) to develop the testis; its absence results in the gonad develop into an ovary. The testis then starts to secrete androgens (male hormones). These hormones lead to the development of the male external sex organs. Without androgens, the external sex organs develop into female ones. There are also other biological factors which affect sexuality among individuals such as prenatal factors, factors of infancy and childhood, factors at puberty.

There Are More Than Two Sexes

Most cultures generally recognize two sexes. One can either be a male (having male genitalia and a pair of testes) or a female (having women's genitalia and a pair of ovaries along with other reproductive organs). Many of the forms we fill out for different purposes have only two categories listed out for sex. However, there are documented cases of individuals who have the physical characteristics of both the male and female. Medical investigations have revealed the existence of intersexuality, a term that refers to those having mixture of male and female anatomical characteristics, often reflected in the form of ambiguous genitalia. At least three major subgroups of intersexes exist: true hermaphrodites, who have one testis and one ovary, male pseudo hermaphrodites who have testis and some female genitals but no ovaries and female pseudo hermaphrodites, who have ovaries and some male genitals but no testis (Kelly, 1998).

In some historical periods, intersexuality was accepted as third sex distinct from male and female. In many societies, alternative social status or gender roles are available for intersexed individuals. The American Plains Indians ones assigned the social status of "berdache" to men who didn't have the skill or interest for typically masculine, aggressive pursuits. The berdache was considered to hold special powers and served as a shaman for healing practices or in sacred ceremonies (Crapo, 1996).

In India, you must be aware that the third gender called "hijra" (eunuch) in popular terms includes elements of both males and females. They are considered sacred and it is generally believed that they should not be displeased else their curse might bring in bad luck. They are typically seen singing and dancing on occasions of child birth and marriage. The present generation of Indians is increasingly accepting the third sex and with increase in awareness, these individuals have been integrated in the mainstream of public life.

14.2.3 Sexual Orientation

One of the central tasks of adolescence, particularly late adolescence, involves achieving a personal identity and a major component of this is one's sexual identity. Although children label themselves as being one sex or the other from the earliest years on, sexual orientation doesn't become firmly established until adolescence. It is then that sexual experimentation embellishes and confirms or

disconfirms these earlier labels. Late adolescence brings the additional task of infusing relationships with emotional intimacy.

Sexual orientation refers to the attraction individuals feel for members of the same or the other sex. Those with a heterosexual orientation are attracted to people of the opposite sex; those with a homosexual orientation are attracted to the members of their own sex, and bisexually oriented people are attracted to individuals of both sexes. Heterosexuals are often referred to as straight, homosexual men as gay and homosexual women as lesbian.

Sexual Orientations

Heterosexual: Attractions or activities between males and females, considered normal in all cultures.

Homosexual: Term traditionally applied to affectional and sexual attractions and activities between members of the same gender.

Bisexual: Individual attracted to both sexes.

This definition underscores that several sexual attractions are important in defining sexual attractions as actual behaviour. An isolated sexual experience doesn't label one as homosexual. Sexual orientation reflects a prolonged sexual preference.

14.2.4 Indian Perspective on Sexuality

The family in Indian society provides for the satisfaction of the basic fundamental needs of hunger and sex and makes it possible to perpetuate the species through reproduction. In the Indian social and cultural environment, though there is a vast diversity across the length and breadth of the country, still there are many households composed of joint, nuclear or extended families. In these families, most of the individuals experience a great deal of social pressure for conformity to norms. Though the scenario is fast changing, especially in urban areas, it is still seen that in most of the families, discussion of sexuality is a taboo. Any discussion or even portrayal of any action vaguely related to sexuality by media is generally objected to. However, this doesn't mean that there are no sexual interactions; there is simply no discussion of it. Moreover, the dominant Indian middle class culture views heterosexuality as the norm and till sometime back, homosexuals (gay or lesbians) were objects of stigmatization.

The cultural norm for India is that marriageability depends on virginity, that sexuality is expressed only in marriage and premarital conception has no place within community. Extramarital relations are strongly disapproved by the community and it is felt that sexuality should find expression only with one's legitimate sexual partner. While sexual communication is strongly and actively discouraged, families do take pains and care to ensure privacy and space for the married partners in order to facilitate sexual interaction between them. While sexual urges are normally subordinated to social norms in the joint family system, except for rare rebellious behaviour or outbursts, the present newly found freedom has instigated more openness and casualness in matters of sexual behaviour, especially in urban areas. Expressions and feelings that would have otherwise been considered scandalous and in need of control are now accepted as natural.

The tribal people of India have varied religious and social practices, often with a more natural approach to sexuality and age old practices of premarital sex and premarital experimental cohabitation. The entire set of beliefs and norms related to sexuality are different in most of the tribal communities of India where more permissiveness and openness regarding this is seen. Open discussion of issues related to one's body, preparation of a sexually active adult by providing sexual experiences during development period especially during adolescence and young age (some tribes have dormitories where young adults can stay overnight and enjoy sexual activities without any prohibitions) are generally seen in several tribal groups. Some of them also sanction premarital and extramarital relations openly. Recently, however, due to the spread of awareness regarding HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, some of these practices are undergoing a change.

14.2.5 Attitude towards Sexuality

There have been significant shifts in sexual attitude spanning various periods of history and social change. Unlike Eastern cultures that until recently had a long tradition of positivity and enjoyment in relationship to sexuality, Western cultures have seen a prevalence of sexual negativity that has been rooted in social, moral and religious belief systems. This fundamental distrust of human sexuality and its power has led to the development of some fundamentally hostile attitude towards sexuality in the western parts of the world (Bullough and Bullough, 1995).

It is not a simple matter to study human beings' attitudes with a great degree of objectivity, especially regarding an issue as complex as sexuality. One thing that attitudinal research has found is that human attitude, particularly about sex can't be easily classified in any single way; there are many different factors involved in their creation and expression. Sociologists have grouped people into three categories based on what seem to be their fundamental assumptions about the purposes of sex. The *procreational or traditional category* includes those people who see the primary purpose of sexual activity to be reproductive. They tend to disapprove of any sex outside marriage as well as sexual activity between members of the same gender. Beyond these attitudes, the group seems rather split on other issues such as pornography and abortion.

A second category of attitude has been termed *relational*, since people in this group tend to view sexual activity as a natural component to intimate and loving relationships. As might be expected, this group is generally accepting of sex within the context of a loving and committed relationship – marriage or otherwise but has strong negative attitude towards extramarital sex or “cheating” on a partner.

The final attitudinal category is called *recreational* and the people in this group consider the primary purpose of sex to be pleasure. They tend to believe that any sexual activity between consenting adults would be acceptable and tend to have mixed views on issues such as abortion and same gender sexual activity.

We may conclude therefore that we live in a time when there is no single predominating set of social attitudes relating to human sexuality. Since we have no clear identifiable societal or cultural sexual norm, our culture continues to send mixed messages of sexual permission and restriction. This pattern is becoming increasingly typical throughout the world.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Fill in the blanks:

- a) _____ and _____ factors affect values and beliefs related to sexuality.
- b) In most of the families, discussion of sexuality is a _____.
- c) _____ have testes and some female genitals but no ovaries.
- d) _____ is a biologically oriented term and refers to an individual being a male or a female.

14.3 GENDER AND SEXUALITY

14.3.1 Distinction Between the Terms “Gender” and “Sex”

Sex is a biologically oriented term and refers to an individual being a male or a female (usually it is not only these two categories but there is also a third sex). In another sense, sex may denote the actual process of having intercourse with another person.

Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. These attributes, opportunities and relationships are socially constructed and are learned through socialization process. They are context / time specific and changeable. Gender determines what is expected, allowed and valued in a woman or man in a given context. In most societies, there are differences and inequalities between women and men in responsibilities assigned, activities undertaken, access to and control over resources as well as decision making opportunities. Gender is part of the broader socio-cultural context. Other important criteria for socio-cultural analysis include class, race, poverty level, ethnic group and age.

The conceptual distinction between sex and gender developed by Anne Oakley (<http://www.indiatogether.org/2007/oct/opi-sexedu.html>) is a useful analytical tool to clarify ideas and has now been almost universally taken up. According to this distinction, sex is connected with biology, whereas the gender identity of men and women in any given society is socially and psychologically (and that means also historically and culturally) determined. Biological and physical conditions (chromosomes, external and internal genitalia, hormonal states and secondary sex characteristics) lead to the determination of male or female sex. To determine gender, however, social and cultural perceptions of masculine and feminine traits and roles must be taken into account.

14.3.2 Gender as Related to Sexuality

Gender Roles

The gender role of a person consists of the behavior that is socially defined and expected of that person because of his or her being a male or female. In all Indian cultures, rigid and mutually exclusive roles have been traditionally assigned to men and women. Gender roles are an integral part of any society. They reflect attitudes and values of the population towards men and women

and often affect individual behaviour and relationships. India has predominantly been a patriarchal society (a society where father's name is carried on through generations) and hence it has traditionally been more of a masculine society.

There is a unique fear associated with growing sexuality among young girls. Despite new currents very often in Indian culture, a woman's body is not seen as an object of pride and pleasure, but as something that is made impure every day, an abode of sinfulness. In typical north Indian Punjabi families, famous researcher Prof. Veena Das observed that there is tremendous fear of the growing power of sexuality in young growing prepubertal girls. Often they are directly instructed to cover their bodies properly. Women as reflected in popular novels and clinical practices, frequently view their sexuality as a capacity to redress a lopsided distribution of power between the sexes (Kakar, 1989:13).

There are separate rules governing sexuality for males and females. As per the traditional view, while male's body is always pure, female's body becomes polluted during periods of menstruation and after every sexual intercourse. While men may choose to lose virginity at any time without losing respect, female's virginity is the basic premise for determining her chastity and character. The way the woman uses her body language to interact in day to day life forms the essence of her status and honour. An Indian feminist Dr. Sarojini Sahoo (<http://womenissues>) has written extensively about the internal lives of women. According to her, the sexual dichotomy extends even to the fact that when a woman becomes pregnant due to an intercourse, forced or voluntary, the male partner is not blamed for his role. It is the female who has to face society's wrath.

14.3.3 Sexual Repression

Women are denied the right to express themselves as sexual beings. They are discouraged from taking an active role in sexual activities or even allowing themselves to experience the sexual act as pleasurable. Even today in Eastern countries, you will find many married women who have never experienced an orgasm. In a study conducted by Sudhir Kakar (1989) on lower SES women, it was seen that the sexual act lasted for barely a few minutes and there was nothing pleasurable in that for women since it was devoid of any foreplay. The women submitted to their male partners owing to the fact that it was their duty to satisfy their husbands. Females are not expected to even express or admit that they have any sexual feelings or needs. This is not allowed even in the privacy of her bedroom with her husband due to the fear that the husband might perceive her as a "bad" (unchaste) woman.

There are gross negative expressions associated with women's bodies, in particular genitalia, in all cultures which are reflected through abuses or folk lore. Women's bodies are seen as objects that can be defiled / made dirty and impure by men and need to be guarded. Women are socialized to remember that they should not be open to their sexual desires. In the case of married women, there are many restrictions with respect to her sexuality whereas her male partner is free from these restrictions.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Differentiate between sex and gender.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. How will you relate gender roles with sexuality?

.....

.....

.....

.....

14.4 SEXUALITY AT PERSONAL LEVEL

14.4.1 Sexual Development through the Life Cycle

Many people can't imagine that everyone – babies, children, teens, adults and the elderly are sexual beings. Some believe that sexual activity is reserved for early and middle adulthood. Teens often feel that adults are too old for sexual intercourse. Sexuality, though, is much more than sexual intercourse and humans are sexual beings throughout their life.

Sexuality in Infants and Toddlers:

Children are sexual even before birth. Males can have erections while still in the uterus and some boys are born with erection. Infants rub their genitals because it provides pleasure, although boys will not ejaculate until puberty. By about age two, children know their own gender. They are aware of differences in the genitals of males and females and in how males and females urinate.

Sexuality in Children aged 3-7 years:

Preschool children are interested in everything about their world, including sexuality. They may practice urinating in different positions. They are highly affectionate and enjoy hugging other children and adults. They begin to be more social and may imitate adult social and sexual behaviour such as holding hands and kissing. Many young children play "doctor" during this stage, looking at other children's genitals and showing theirs. This is normal curiosity. By age five or six, most children become more modest and private about dressing and bathing.

Children of this age are aware of marriage and understand living together, based on their family experience. They may role play about being married or having a partner while they play "house". Most young children talk about marrying

or living with a person they love when they get older. School age children may play sexual games with friends of their same sex. Most sex play at this age happens because of curiosity.

Sexuality in Preadolescents aged 8-12 years:

Puberty is the time when the body matures sexually. It begins between the ages of 9 and 12 for most children. Girls begin to grow breast buds and pubic hair as early as 9 or 10. Boys' development of penis and testicles usually begins between 10 and 11. Children become more self conscious about their bodies at this age and often feel uncomfortable undressing in front of others, even a same sex parent.

Masturbation increases during these years. Preadolescent boys and girls don't usually have much sexual experience, but they often have many questions. They usually have heard about sexual intercourse, petting, oral sex, anal sex, homosexuality, rape, incest and they want to know more about all these things. The idea of actually having sexual intercourse, however, is unpleasant to most preadolescent boys and girls.

Same gender sexual behaviour is common at this age. Boys and girls tend to play with friends of the same gender and are likely to explore sexuality with them. Masturbating together and looking at or caressing each others' genitals is common among preadolescent boys and girls. Such same gender sexual behaviour is unrelated to a child's sexual orientation.

Sexuality in Adolescents aged 13-19 years:

Once youth have reached puberty and beyond, they experience increased interest in romantic and sexual relationship and in genital sex behaviours. As youth mature, they experience strong emotional attachments to romantic partners and find it natural to express their feelings within sexual relationship. There is no way to predict how a particular teenager will act sexually. Overall, most adolescents explore relationship with one another, fall in and out of love and in some cultures, participate in sexual intercourse. Initial sexual intercourse experiences are usually important (and sometimes defining) events in the lives of young people.

Adult Sexuality:

When adolescents become adults, they consider sexual relationship, marriage and parenthood. These are the signs of maturity. They seek information and clues about sexual life from different sources such as parents, peers, religious leaders, health providers, teachers, magazines, books and mass media. But most of the information they obtain usually is incorrect, incomplete or misleading.

Adult sexual behaviour is extremely varied and in most cases remains part of an adult's life until death. At around age 50, women experience menopause, which affects their sexuality in that their ovaries no longer release eggs and their bodies no longer produce estrogens. They may experience several physical changes, vaginal walls become thinner and vaginal intercourse may be painful as there is less lubrication and the entrance to the vagina becomes smaller. Many women use estrogen replacement therapy to relieve physical and emotional side effects of menopause. Use of vagina lubricants can also make vaginal intercourse easier. Most women are able to have pleasurable sexual intercourse and to experience orgasm for their entire lives.

Adult men also experience some changes in their sexuality, but not at such a predictable time as with menopause in women. Men's testicles slow testosterone production after age 75 or 80. Erections may occur more slowly once testosterone production slows. Men also become less able to have another erection after an orgasm and may take up to 24 hours to achieve and sustain another erection. The amount of semen released during ejaculation also decreases but men are capable of fathering a baby even when they are in their 80's and 90's. Although adult women and men go through some sexual changes as they age, they do not lose their desires or their ability for sexual expression. Even among the very old, the need for touch and intimacy remains although the desire and ability to have sexual intercourse may lessen.

14.4.2 Myths and Misconceptions related to Sexuality

Despite today's relatively open attitudes towards sex, considerable ignorance and myth surround sexual functioning. Ignorance concerning sexual functioning is by no means limited to adolescents. Many of their parents are surprisingly uninformed too. Countless adults can't accurately name the parts of their own genitals or those of the opposite sex. Some concerns are listed below.

Bigger is Better: Many boys don't know about the size of their penis. They don't know what size is normal and are sure theirs is too small. This concern is fueled by large variations from one boy to the next in the timing and rate of growth. Size assumes added importance as a result of the common misconception that penis size is related to sexual adequacy which is simply untrue.

Breasts Size: A common concern among adolescent girls concerns their breasts size. Many notice that one breast is slightly larger than the other. Girls may wonder if it's normal for one breast to be smaller than the other and what they can do about it. Size of breast does not have any relationship with sexual performance.

Capacity for Sexual Pleasure: Perhaps the most pervasive cultural myth among adolescents is that males experience more sexual pleasure than females. The fact that females take longer to reach orgasm may contribute to this myth. Once they reach orgasm, however their capacity to achieve additional orgasm exceeds that of males.

Intact Hymen and Virginity: Another common misconception is that the presence of a hymen (a delicate layer in the vagina) indicates virginity. The hymen is actually likely to tear in most girls during childhood with active play or curious exploration. Some girls are not even born with a hymen and in others, intercourse only stretches the hymen and doesn't rupture it. It is very unfortunate that in India, many males consider their wives unchaste if there is no vaginal bleeding during first sexual intercourse. In effect, virginity has nothing to do with breakage of hymen.

Masturbation: Masturbation refers to an act of artificial stimulation of genitals in order to derive sexual pleasure. Masturbation is not confined to childhood and adolescence or to single persons. It is not necessarily a substitute for sex with a partner. It can be as physically sexually satisfying as shared sex. Masturbation is a good way to learn about sexual feelings and responsiveness. It does not lead to weakness, mental illness or physical debilitations. Males don't eventually run out of semen if they masturbate frequently. Masturbation doesn't lead to same gender orientation and behaviour and it is not physically essential.

Intercourse during Menstruation: Numerous cultural taboos exist regarding intercourse during menstruation. Misconceptions range from fears of impotence to loss of virility. There is no factual basis for any of these fears (Delaney, Lupton and Toth, 1977).

14.5 INTERPERSONAL DIMENSIONS OF SEXUALITY

As we know, sexual attraction between individuals mainly of opposite sexes, has been the basis of perpetuation of species since times immemorial. One's perception of self as a sexual being and others' perception of individuals' sexuality are important dimensions affecting intimate relations between two sexually involved individuals. Let us now understand how sexuality forms one important dimension towards development of couple relationship.

14.5.1 Sexuality as the Basis for Couple Relationships

Marriage between two persons belonging to different sexes, involving some kind of social, religious or civil ceremony is generally the rule in India for formation of couple relationships. However, in a diverse cultural and religious milieu like India, there exist some other patterns of sexual bond formation which include premarital relations, extramarital relations, live in relationships and in the present generation, homosexual relations. In a relationship defined by marriage, it is given to understand that the man and the woman must be able to satisfy their sexual needs and desires.

On the other hand, the males constantly have a doubt in their minds that whether they shall be able to satisfy their wife's sexual desires. In one of the studies (Collumbien and Hawkes, 2000) it was seen that men linked their sexual health concerns to the quality of the marital relationship. They expressed concerns about their abilities to satisfy their wives. It is generally felt that if a husband is not able to satisfy his wife, she may be attracted to another man thus bringing in bad name to the family (family honour is also linked with female sexuality ironically). Besides, sexuality is often used as a powerful tool by the husband or wife to determine power positions to get the other person agree on certain issues.

In India, there is a general disapproval of the erotic aspect of married life. The sexual code of conduct for the householder husband endorses the expectation that physical love and passion are shame ridden affairs and these should be evident only during couple's private moments. The mythological and religious teachings of various communities in India contain chapters on the right code of daily life and the thrust of the message seems to be "No Sex in Marriage, We're Indian" (Kakar, 1989: 19). This is however changing now at a gradual pace but the major ethos reflected in our public life conveys this message. Despite all these, the fast changing norms regarding other couple relationships mentioned earlier do point out the increasing acceptance and tolerance towards these, each of which depicts different facets of sexuality.

14.5.2 Related Issues

Sexual Abuse

Due to pressure of social change and the loss of the holding power of traditional taboos, sexual abuse seems to be increasing in India. However, there is a growing

awareness about sexual abuse in the society. Girls, who are near attaining their puberty or have just attained it, are often objects of older men's attractions. Although it is socially disapproved, some instances have been reported where parents because of their poverty, accept a bride price for the marriage of a very young daughter to an older man seeking a young girl as a second wife. In spite of rigorous efforts by the government in educating the people, it is still an accepted practice, especially in rural areas, to arrange marriages of young girls.

Incest

Repressed sexuality has also been a factor in what in the West might be considered widespread incest. In India's extended family system, sex between brother-in-law and sister-in-law for example or between cousins, or uncles or nieces, or aunts and nephews is common, although hard statistics are not available. The tradition of "*niyoga*" depicts the possibility of a sexual relationship between a woman and the younger brother of her husband.

Sexual Harassment

Poverty forces many rural girls around 10 years to be employed as housemaids in rich and middle class homes. In addition to the economic exploitation, some of these girls also face sexual harassment by males in these households. Since these girls are in no position to resist sexual advances, most sexual harassment acts are not reported or complained about to the police. College girls and young working girls face the problems of harassment. The problem of eve teasing, old fashioned pinching, fondling and sexual harassment of women on the street has become so serious in recent years that the government has had to promulgate a law prohibiting this behaviour.

Rape

Sexual exploitation of girls is another problem faced by females in India. Few cases of rape are actually reported to the police because of the negative consequences to the future life of the rape victims. Young Indian women who are known to be victims of rape are viewed as outcasts and families disgraced, even though they were not in any way responsible for the attack. The spread of Western culture, exposure to films with lots of sex scenes and pornographic materials are all contributory factors in increasing the number of rape cases in India.

14.5.3 Sexually Transmitted Diseases

The term sexually transmitted disease (STD) is now used to refer to all the infections that can be caught through sexual contact or sexual intercourse, including the venereal diseases. Venereal diseases are a legal term and include only three diseases Syphilis (the "pox"), Gonorrhoea (the "clap") and Chancroid (soft "sore").

Syphilis

This is an infectious contagious disease spread by sexual contact. It is caused by an organism called the spirochete. This can be seen under a microscope but has never been grown outside the body. It thrives in areas like the mouth, the genitalia and the anal region. The disease is divided into three stages:

- Primary stage.
- Secondary stage
- Tertiary stage (according to the severity)

Gonorrhoea

This is an acute infection of the genitor urinary tract. It is spread by sexual intercourse. The germ that causes it is called the gonococcus. The incubation period is 2-10 days. Infection passes between the urethra of the man and the urethra or cervix in the woman. If the man is homosexual, it can be transferred from the urethra to the rectum of another man and vice versa. As the urethra, cervix and rectum are lined with a single layer of cells; the gonococcus penetrates this layer and multiplies. The vagina being thicker walled is not penetrated.

HIV/AIDS

HIV infection is the most serious and life threatening sexually transmitted disease (STD). HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, causing it to break down. This in turn leaves the body defenceless against infections, eventually resulting in death from any of a number of secondary, opportunistic infections. HIV infection progresses through several stages, the last of which is AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome). The virus can be transmitted by exposure to infected blood, such as through sharing contaminated needles for injecting drugs or through blood transfusions from an infected person, as well as by sexual contacts. HIV infection can be passed from the infected pregnant mother to her unborn child. A number of practices can significantly reduce the risk of sexually transmitted HIV infection. The only completely effective one is abstinence. For sexually active persons, the following precautions can significantly reduce the risk of exposure to HIV infection:

- ❖ Avoid the exchange of body fluid.
- ❖ Use of latex condom
- ❖ Be discriminating

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- Note:** a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

Write brief notes on:

1. Sexual abuse

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2. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's)

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3. Sexual Repression

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4. HIV/AIDS

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14.6 CHANGING SOCIETAL ATTITUDE TOWARDS SEXUALITY

The last 20 years or so have seen profound changes in society's attitude towards sex and related matters. Sex, contraception, abortion and venereal diseases are now not only subjects for serious professional study but also for open public discussion for newspaper and magazines articles, and for television and radio.

Couples now expect to enjoy sex and are presenting themselves for treatment where there are sexual difficulties. Attitudes towards female sexuality, in particular, have significantly altered. Female sexuality is now being given some recognition (it's only "some", since complete recognition is still pending). Many more women now are able to admit that they are sexually active beings, that they have sexual needs and that they did/ didn't enjoy sex. Sex for them is not just a means of satisfying their partners or producing babies, it also is a means of personal pleasure. There is a change in young person's perception of sex since it is no longer a tabooed word for them. With society becoming more liberal now, they are getting information related to sexuality on television channels, through movies, newspapers or even public discussion. Young people brought up in this atmosphere naturally talk about sex more openly and honestly with their peers, though to a lesser extent with their parents and teachers, than did their counterparts a decade ago. They are also more inclined to discuss and reflect on sensitive issues such as homosexuality, abortion or even contraceptives. They are also increasingly more accepting of premarital sex and a survey by a reputed newspaper revealed a lower age of experiencing first sexual intercourse in Indian adolescents especially in urban areas. Today, the society is comparatively more open to providing sex education to young children and parents are feeling inclined to discuss sexual matters more frankly with their children.

With the advent of new technology, couples are expecting to enjoy a sexual relationship free of fear of unwanted pregnancy. Birth control methods are expected to be safe, convenient and effective.

We have seen that previously somewhat Victorian attitude to sex prevailed but now these changes have brought in an era of liberation in true terms. However, since each of the liberties provided also carry a responsibility along, we must remember that though we need to accept and enjoy sex as an important force in our lives, we need to be careful in certain practices so as to avoid harming ourselves and the society due to our actions.

14.7 LET US SUM UP

This Unit introduced you to the concept of sexuality. As you know, sexuality includes all sexual feelings, attitudes and activities. Let us now briefly review what we learnt in this Unit.

- ❖ Sexual orientation refers to the attraction individuals feel for members of the same or the other sex. There are three types of sexual orientation – heterosexual attraction between males and females, Homosexual which means sexual attraction between members of same gender, and Bisexual orientation means people are attracted to individuals of both sexes.
- ❖ Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationship between women and men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men. Gender roles consist of the behaviour that is socially defined and expected of that person because of his or her being male or female, whereas sex is a biologically oriented term and refers to an individual being a male or a female.
- ❖ Humans are sexual beings throughout their life from infancy to old age. Puberty is a time when the body matures sexually between the ages of 9 and 12. Girls begin to grow breast buds and pubic hair as early as 9 to 10. Boys begin to develop penis and testicles in the age of 10-11.
- ❖ Adult sexual behaviour is extremely varied and in most cases, remains part of an adult's life until death. At around age 50, women experience menopause, which affects their sexuality in that their ovaries no longer releases eggs and their bodies no longer produce estrogens. Men testicles show testosterone production even at age 75 or 80. Erection may occur more slowly once testosterone production slows.
- ❖ There are many myths related to sexuality like size of penis and breast have relationship with sexual performance. These myths have been proved to be untrue.
- ❖ The diseases that can be caught through sexual contact or sexual intercourse including the venereal diseases are called sexually transmitted diseases (STD's).
- ❖ The concept of sexuality is undergoing tremendous change owing to socio economic, technological and cultural factors.

14.8 GLOSSARY

Adolescence	: The development period of transition from childhood to early adulthood, entered at approximately 10-12 years of age and ending at 18-22 years of age.
Androgen	: A male hormone, such as testosterone, that effects physical development, sexual desire and behaviour.
Bisexual	: Refers to some degree of sexual activities with or attraction to members of both sexes.

Ejaculation	: Muscular expulsion of semen from the penis.
Estrogen Replacement Therapy	: Administering estrogen injections to increase sexual interest in elder women.
Foetus	: The term given to the embryo after two months of development in the womb.
Gay	: Refers to persons who have a predominantly same gender sexual orientation and identity. More often applied to males.
Gender	: Significance of being male or female.
Gender role	: The outward expression and demonstration of gender identity, through behaviours, attire, and culturally determined characteristics of femininity and masculinity.
Heterosexual	: Sexual attraction or activities between males and females.
Homosexual	: Term traditionally applied to affectional and sexual attraction and activities between members of the same gender.
Intersexuality	: A combination of female and male anatomical structures, so that the individual cannot be clearly defined as male or female.
Lesbian	: Refers to females who have a predominantly same gender sexual orientation and identity.
Masturbation	: Self stimulation of the genitals.
Menopause	: A time in mid life when menstruation ceases.
Menstruation	: Phase of menstrual cycle in which the inner uterine lining breaks down and sloughs off: the tissue, along with some blood, flows out through the vagina; also called the period.
Orgasm	: Pleasurable sensations and series of contractions that release sexual tension, usually accompanied by ejaculation in men.
Puberty	: Growth processes, including the skeletal growth spurt and maturation of the reproductive system, that begins in early adolescence and transform children into physically and sexually mature adults.
Pornography	: Photographs, films, or literature intended to be sexually arousing through explicit depictions of sexual activity.
Sexual individuality	: The unique set of sexual needs, orientation, fantasies and activities that develop in each human being.

Sexual revolution	: The change in thinking about sexuality and sexual behaviour in society that occurred in the 1960's and 1970's.
Secondary sex characteristics	: Physiological signs of sexual maturation (such as breast development and growth of body hair) that do not involve the sex organs.
Sperm	: Reproductive cells produced in the testes; in fertilization, one sperm unites with an ovum.
Testes	: Pair of male gonads that produce sperm and male hormones.
Testosterone	: Major male hormone produced by the testes; it helps to produce male secondary sex characteristics.

14.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. a) Cultural, social.
b) taboo.
c) Male pseudo hermaphrodites
d) Sex

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Sex is a biologically oriented term and refers to an individual being a male or a female, whereas Gender refers to the social attributes and opportunities associated with being male and female and the relationships between women and men, girls and boys, as well as the relations between women and those between men.
2. The gender role of a person consists of the behaviour that is socially defined and expected of that person because of his or her being male or female whereas sexuality is the art of having sex.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Sexual Abuse seems to be increasing in India; however, there is a growing awareness about sexual abuse in the society. Girls, who are near attaining their puberty or have just attained it, are often objects of older men's attractions. Although it is socially disapproved some instances have been reported where parents because of their poverty, accept a bride price for the marriage of a very young daughter to an older man seeking a young girl as a second wife.
2. Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STD's) refer to all the infections that can be caught through sexual contact or sexual intercourse, including the venereal diseases. Venereal diseases are a legal term and include only three diseases

Syphilis (the “pox”), Gonorrhoea (the “clap”) and Chancroid (soft “sore”).

3. Sexual Repression: The women often submit to their male partners owing to the fact that it was their duty to satisfy their husbands. Females are not expected to even express or admit that they have any sexual feelings or needs. This is not allowed even in the privacy of her bedroom with her husband due to the fear that the husband might perceive her as a “bad” (unchaste) woman.
4. HIV/AIDS: It is the most serious and life threatening sexually transmitted disease (STD). HIV is a virus that attacks the immune system, causing it to break down. This in turn leaves the body defenceless against infection, eventually resulting in death from any of a number of secondary, opportunistic infections. HIV infection progresses through several stages, the last of which is AIDS (Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome).

14.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Analyze your own views about sexuality. What attitudinal category would you place yourself in?
2. Introspect and think about your own development. At what time did you get to notice that you are a sexual being? How did you feel about it?
3. Do you share your sexual experiences with a friend? What all are the contents of your sexuality?

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UNIT 15 ALTERNATE SEXUALITY AND SEXUAL IDENTITIES

- 15.1 Introduction
- 15.2 Sex in Ancient India
- 15.3 Understanding Human Sexuality
 - 15.3.1 Biological Aspects
 - 15.3.2 Sociocultural Aspects
 - 15.3.3 Psychological Aspects
- 15.4 Sexual Identity and Gender Identity
 - 15.4.1 Definition of the Terms Used to Describe Sexual Identity
 - 15.4.2 Common Misconceptions and Stereotypes About Sexual Identities
 - 15.4.3 Roles and Identity
- 15.5 Sexual Behaviour
- 15.6 Sexual Orientation
- 15.7 Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity
- 15.8 Future Directions
- 15.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 15.10 Glossary
- 15.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 15.12 Unit End Questions
- 15.13 Further Readings and References

15.1 INTRODUCTION

India played a significant role in the history of sex, from writing the first literature that treated sexuality as a science, to in modern times being the origin of the philosophical focus of new-age groups' attitudes on sex. It may be argued that India pioneered the use of sexual education through art and literature. As in all societies, there was a difference in sexual practices in India between common people and powerful rulers, with people in power often indulging in hedonistic lifestyles that were not representative of common moral attitudes.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand and define alternate sexuality;
- Develop an awareness regarding different types of alternate sexuality;
- Analyse the reactions of people towards alternate sexuality within the society and culture; and
- Know the historical background of alternate sexuality in India.

15.2 SEX IN ANCIENT INDIA

India as a whole has as diverse a set of sexual 'behaviours' as any other society, such as, homosexuality, transgenderism, exhibitionism and prostitution etc. even though modern India society places greater taboo and emphasis of privacy on sex. When the Islamic and Victorian English culture arrived in India, they generally had an adverse impact on sexual liberalism in India. Within the context of the Indian religions, such as Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism, sex is generally either seen as a moral duty of each partner in a long term marriage relationship to the other. In modern India, a renaissance of sexual liberalism has occurred amongst the well educated urban population, but there is still discrimination and forced marriage incidents amongst the poor.

The first evidence of attitudes towards sex comes from the ancient texts of Hinduism, Buddhism and Jainism, the first of which are perhaps the oldest surviving literature in the world. Ancient texts reveal moral perspectives on sexuality. These texts support the view that in ancient India, sex was considered a mutual duty between a married couple, where husband and wife pleased each other equally, but where sex was considered a private affair. It seems that polygamy was allowed during ancient times. In practice, this seems to have only been practiced by rulers, with common people maintaining a monogamous marriage. It is common in many cultures for a ruling class to practice polygamy as a way of preserving dynastic succession.

Indian society is multicultural and multilingual, with a wide range in income and standard of living among the population. In working with sexual health issues in India, an assumption is often made that same-gender sexual behaviours must mean the person is a homosexual, or gay, while male to female sexual behaviour must mean that the person is heterosexual. In these discourses, procreative "heterosexuality" is seen as 'normal', while other behaviours are seen as perverse or foreign. However, these constructs seem to have little historical validity in India. The denial of variation in history in Indian discourses had given rise to a prevailing construction of sexuality, where a procreative and penetrative sexual ideology is the only sexuality that is seen as relevant. There was more social acceptance of alternative sexual natures in 1970's and more space emerged for sexual minorities to live their lives without repression. The status of women in marriage and the norms and traditions controlling their behaviour so clearly establish male superiority in Indian culture.

15.3 UNDERSTANDING HUMAN SEXUALITY

In layman's terminology, human sexuality is how people experience and express themselves as sexual beings. The study of human sexuality encompasses an array of social activities and an abundance of behaviours, series of actions, and societal topics. Biologically, sexuality can encompass sexual intercourse and sexual contact in all its forms, as well as medical concerns about the physiological or even psychological aspects of sexual behaviour. Sociologically, it can cover the cultural, political, and legal aspects; and philosophically, it can span the moral, ethical, theological, spiritual or religious aspects. Human sexuality is derived from the sum total of individual's biological make-up, life experiences, knowledge,

behaviour and attitudes, influenced by a myriad of physical, psychological, interpersonal, and cultural factors. Human sexuality is an activity with numerous symbolic meanings to the individual and the understanding of human sexuality is important for clinicians. Despite advances in the treatment of human sexual problems, lacunae remain in our knowledge of human sexuality. In particular, our knowledge of female sexuality has consistently lagged behind that of male sexuality. In fact, relatively little is known about the relationship among sexual behaviour, sexual attitudes, sexual fantasies, and marital functioning of women.

In a study done soon after the independence of India, sex was considered taboo and sexual matters were generally not discussed in the family. In many parts of India a large number of young girls with low literacy levels got married during their early adolescence. Indian girls were found to lack independent authority to control their sexuality or reproduction. After marriage, control of female sexuality got shifted from the father to the husband. Their lack of adequate knowledge about sexual matters and contraception resulted in early and successive pregnancies and sexual disharmony. In India, since the 1980s, there is an apparent change in attitudes towards sexuality. Expressions and feelings that would have been termed scandalous and in need of being tamed to adhere to socially accepted rules, values, and practices, are now accepted as natural.

15.3.1 Biological Aspects

The biology of human sexuality examines the influence of biological factors, such as heredity, hormones, and sexual dysfunction. The biological perspective helps to analyze the factors, and ultimately aids in understanding them and using them to deal with sexual problems.

15.3.2 Sociocultural Aspects

Human sexuality seems as part of the social life of humans, governed by implied rules of behaviour and the status quo. This focus narrows the view to groups within a society. The sociocultural aspect examines the influences from social norms, such as politics and the mass media etc. These sorts of media can help to bring about massive changes in the social norm e.g. sexual revolution, the rise of feminism etc.

There is a close link between constructed sex meanings and racial ideologies. Sexual meanings are constructed to maintain racial-ethnic-national boundaries by denigration of “others” and regulation of sexual behaviour within the group. Any adherence or deviation from such approved behaviours exert a great pressure by the society.

15.3.3 Psychological Aspects

The psychological aspects of sexuality focus on psychological influences that affect sexual behaviour and experiences. The approach of Sigmund Freud was psychoanalytic which gave emphasis on concepts of psychosexual development and Oedipus complex. Behaviour theorists such as John B. Watson and B. F. Skinner examined the actions and consequences and their ramifications. Social-learning theorists use similar concepts, but focus on cognitive activity and modelling.

Not surprisingly, developmental changes in sexuality during adolescence are closely tied to the achievement of physical maturity during puberty. During adolescence, the expression of sexual urges interacts closely with two other needs: the need for security, or freedom from anxiety, and the need for intimacy, or close relationships with others. Teenagers are intensely and passionately engaged in establishing intimate relationships that are independent of their families, developing social skills, experimenting with new social role, and establishing a unique personal identity. Adolescent sexual activity has increased over the past 30 years. The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases among adolescents is high, and AIDS is of major concern. Effective sex education programmes actively involve adolescents.

Sexual behaviours and values are important components of all cultures. Societies may differ greatly in the meanings they attribute to sex, their sexual permissiveness, the expression of their sexual values, their views on contraception and pregnancy control, and the health issues they face. Despite their infinite variety and the individual differences within each culture, some broad generalities can be identified. Their commonalities and differences in behaviours and beliefs are determined by cultural, socioeconomic and historical contexts, and, in recent years, by globalization and technological advancement. By social comparison, people form their attitudes toward sexual issues and determine what is sexual and sexually acceptable. A society's general level of sexual permissiveness most likely originates from complex interactions between several cultural factors. For example, a culture's technological sophistication, the influence of particular faiths, and the importance of economic exchange at marriage may all have impacts on the place of sex in a society. Acceptable forms of sexual expression are also determined by the importance placed on reproduction. Engaging in homosexual activity, for example, may be viewed more negatively in those cultures that hold procreation but not pleasure as an acceptable motivation for sex. Many cultures see sexual expression as natural and beneficial.

Sexually permissive cultures hold positive attitudes toward sexual development and believe it as essential for healthy social adjustment. There are usually fewer social restrictions placed upon sexuality. Children in these societies are not as sheltered from sexual knowledge. By contrast, sexually *restrictive* cultures attempt to limit both the occurrence of sexual expression and the ways it can be expressed. Sex itself is either seen as holding a unique and dangerous power, or is considered harmful because it is closely connected with negative outcomes. Adults in restrictive societies generally try to limit children's understanding of sexuality for longer periods of time. Sexual abstinence before marriage is stressed for one or both sexes; most often women. Males are typically permitted at least some greater amount of sexual freedom as compared to females.

When inequalities in sexual freedom are found, sexual activity and associated pleasure tend to be more valued by the gender whose behaviour is less restricted. This describes what is referred to in Western literature as the sexual "double standard". Human nature includes a significant degree of diversity and adaptability. Gender is a social construct that varies considerably in history and different cultures. Even sex includes a lot more variation than most people realize, since biology can do some pretty peculiar things under certain circumstances. Sexuality incorporates still more possibilities. It can be observed under some circumstances; people are generally more tolerant of men who engage in casual sex or unusual

sex practices than of women who do so. In most African and Asian nations, a double standard is still frequently reported. Sexual expression varies widely from one culture to another. These differences include but are not limited to cultural views and behaviours related to premarital and extramarital sexuality, homosexuality, transgenderism, genital modification rituals, contraception and birth control, and issues related to the HIV/AIDS pandemic.

In agrarian and hunter-gatherer societies, marriage is often the only acceptable way for sexual activity while in industrial societies, the increasingly permissive attitudes toward premarital sexual activity can partly be explained by women's empowerment through oral contraception and advances toward economic equality between men and women. Yet, despite the prevalence of more permissive attitudes, for most young people in industrial societies, sex is still expected to involve some level of affection and commitment between partners. Globalization and rapid technological development are increasing the rate of such changes and forces all cultures to reexamine their beliefs about issues related to sexual permissiveness and sexual expression. Not surprisingly, most of the world's births occur in developing nations. In industrial societies, the situation of women is quite different. Success of pregnancy prevention is increased by gains in equality of rights, economic independence, and access to modern contraceptives that do not require the cooperation of the male partner.

There is a small, but growing, movement of people whose sense of personal identity is separate from that of their family, kin group, and community and who are beginning to create new forms of sexual identity. They may call themselves lesbians, gay men, homosexuals or bisexuals. These evolving and emerging identities are arising with the growth of urban, industrialized, and commercial cultures concomitant with which is a rising sense of individuality, personal privacy, and private space.

This cultural change appears to be associated with the development of nuclear family lifestyles, the expansion of education etc. It is mostly people from these backgrounds who meet, socialize, discuss and debate the issues of sexual identities.

15.4 SEXUAL IDENTITY AND GENDER IDENTITY

Typically when sex and gender are not used synonymously, sex refers to biological or physical state of being male or female, such as determined by chromosomes or genitals, and gender refers to the social status of being male or female.

Sexual Identity and Gender Identity are similar in some ways and very different in others. Both refer to how one thinks of a person. **Gender roles** refer to the clothing, behaviours, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc., that are considered appropriate or inappropriate for members of each sex.

Gender identity refers to how one thinks of one's own gender: whether one thinks of oneself as a man (masculine) or as a woman (feminine.) Society prescribes arbitrary rules or gender roles (how one is supposed to and not supposed to dress, act, think, feel, relate to others, think of oneself, etc.) based on one's sex. These gender roles are called feminine and masculine.

Sexual identity refers to how one thinks of oneself in terms of whom one is sexually and romantically attracted to, specifically whether one is attracted to members of the same gender as one's own or the other gender than one's own. Society prescribes arbitrary rules that one should be sexually and romantically attracted to members of the other gender than one's own, and should not be attracted to members of the same gender as one's own. Anyone who does not abide by these arbitrary rules may be considered different in society based on one's sexual and gender identity. Every human being is different. Most men like women and most women like men sexually. But there are males and females who like the same sex. Then there are men and women who are sexually attracted to both men and women. There are men out there who feel they are trapped in male bodies but they are actually women. There are women who feel just the opposite. At one time, such men and women were considered 'abnormal', 'deviant' and 'perverse'. Now, medical research has come to the conclusion that a whole range of sexual desires and behaviours exist in human being. One can be homosexual or bisexual or transsexual. Problems arise only when society discriminates and penalizes a person with non-conventional sexual orientations.

For the last several decades the term *gender* has come into common usage particularly as a synonym for *sex*. The term has proved useful in many ways. In casual conversation, the words *gender* and *sex* are used interchangeably and it seems to make little difference. The term *sex* is related to anatomical structure, the term *gender* is related to an imposed or adopted social and psychological condition. The term *sex*, since classical times, has been used to designate matters related to biology and medicine when male, female or bisexual were in context.

The term *gender* has generally been used in social or cultural contexts, in distinction from biological ones. This was particularly associated with language. The word *gender* has acquired the new and useful connotation of cultural or attitudinal characteristics (as opposed to physical characteristics) distinctive to the sexes. Gender is to sex as feminine is to female and masculine is to male.

Human nature includes a significant degree of diversity and adaptability. Gender is a social construct, and as such varies considerably over history and in different cultures. Even sex includes a lot more variation than most people realize, since biology can do some pretty peculiar things under certain circumstances. Sexuality incorporates still more possibilities. Sexuality is a term that can have a thousand different definitions, because for every person the word has a slightly different concept of what the word means. However, to understand sexuality as it impacts everyone, we need a definition that everyone can relate to, and understand. This is the clearest, most concise and accurate definition of sexuality. Like so many other aspects of life, sexuality and sexual identity are defined and influenced by a myriad of outside factors.

Sexuality is the desire for pleasurable experiences that involve physical contact or stimulation of various parts of the body. Sexuality often involves an attraction towards others, a desire to share physical experiences with them. Sexuality, for many, involves emotions and mental restrictions, and is not solely based on their sexual drive. Sexuality can involve certain behaviour restrictions as well.

A person's **sexual identity** defines their limits, boundaries and flexibility as a sexual being. It has three essential components :

- *Desire*: The (mostly uncontrollable) feelings a person has towards sexual activities and the people/material that person wants to share the activities with,
- *Behaviour*: The actual sexual activities the person engages in, whether these activities were desired or not,
- *Identity*: The definition that the person consciously assigns to their sexuality.

It's no wonder that very few people have a perfectly clear understanding of their own sexual identity. Sexual identity can change over time. A huge part of sexual identity involves the gender that a person is attracted to. Gender, after all, is another aspect of being human. There is so much emphasis placed on gender in modern societies, whether it be gender as an identity or gender as an attraction. There are so many roles and expectations of behaviour for people concerning their gender they are attracted to, possibly more than any other aspect of their identity. That's one main reason why so many people consider their gender attractions to be the most "important" or most "prominent" part of their sexuality and sexual identity.

15.4.1 Definition of the Terms Used to Describe Sexual Identity

- **Straight**: Feeling sexual attraction or desire towards *only* members of the opposite sex.
- **Gay**: Feeling sexual attraction/desire towards *only* members of the same sex. Can refer specifically to men, but can also encompass both men and women.
- **Lesbian**: A specific term for gay women. Women who have sexual attraction *only* towards other women.

These three definitions all refer to a sexual attraction that is exclusively geared towards one sex. They are also limiting in that only people who identify as "male" or "female" can use them.

- **Bisexual**: A bisexual person is attracted to both men and women. This does *not* mean they are attracted to them equally. Many bisexual people are attracted to more people of one gender than of the other. Their preferences may change over time, as well; for example, a person may be mainly attracted to women during adolescence, but may begin to prefer men during middle age.

Majority of people will classify their sexual identity as one of the above but there are people who may have **less common sexual identities**. These are:

- **Bi-curious**: Bi curious persons usually desire people of the opposite sex, but are curious to know what a sexual encounter with a person of their gender would be like. They also feel at times some sexual attraction towards members of the same sex, and want to call themselves "bisexual" or "straight", as they have only had sexual experiences with the opposite sex.
- **Pansexual**: A pansexual person is one that is attracted to *all* genders. They are attracted to people who are male, female, transgendered or intersexed. They do not consider any of these traits a hindrance to sexual attraction.

- **Transgendered:** A person who does not follow the expected roles of the gender they were assigned from infancy. Often they will adopt the expected behaviours of the opposite gender; for example, a transgendered male may dress in conventional women's clothing and identify as a woman. Some may even have their sex biologically altered, using hormone therapy or gender reassignment surgery to physically appear as the gender they wish to be. A person's transgendered status does not directly affect their sexual preferences (a male who identifies as a woman may be attracted to females, males, both or all genders), but many transgendered people do identify as gay males or lesbian females.
- **Intersexed:** A person whose genitalia are "ambiguous" and do not fit into the standard definitions of male or female. They may identify as a man or a woman, or as both or neither. Intersexed people may possess clearly developed genitalia of both sexes, partially developed genitalia of both, or more development of one sex than the other. For example, one intersexed person may have a fully developed penis but also contains ovaries within the body; another may have mostly female genitalia but with an abnormally large clitoris; another may possess both a penis and a vagina. There are nearly infinite possibilities.

15.4.2 Common Misconceptions and Facts About Sexual Identities

Misconceptions

- People identifying as gay or straight are very rarely attracted to other genders.
- Gay people are "diseased".
- People who establish one of these identities for themselves remain gay or straight (in behaviour, identity, desire, or a combination) for their entire lives.

Facts

- There is *no* conclusive scientific evidence to support the theories that a person's sexuality is determined by childhood factors, such as: the lack of a mother/father figure, spending more time with the opposite/same sex, or not following traditionally "male" or "female" roles such as a girl playing sports or a boy playing with dolls. The causes that influence a person's eventual sexual identity are almost entirely unknown. Some genetic links have been discovered, but yet the evidence to prove it are not strong enough.
- A person's morality is not determined by their sexual identity. People do not commit crimes "because of their gayness". Being gay does not increase anyone's likelihood of being a criminal.

15.4.3 Roles and Identity

Men's roles are typically associated with strength and dangerous occupations while women's roles are associated with child rearing and nurturing. In today's context these distinctions are increasingly changing. What was seen as a man's job at one time came to be seen as anyone's job today. In different cultures

these aspects of life are changing. Nowadays many of the cultural and social differences in role expectation and behaviour patterns of man and woman are accepted and recognized by society.

Sexual identity speaks to the way one views him or her self as a male or female. This inner conviction of identification usually mirrors one's outward physical appearance and the typically sex-linked role one develops and prefers or society attempts to impose. *Gender identity* is recognition of the perceived social gender attributed to a person. Typically a male is perceived as a boy or a man where boy and man are social terms with associated cultural expectations attached. Similarly, a female is perceived as a girl or woman. The distinctions made between boy and girl and man and woman are of age and usually again represent differences in societal expectations that go along with increases in maturity.

Gender and *gender role* refers to society's idea of how boys and girls or men and women are expected to behave and should be treated. *Gender roles* are those behaviours imposed overtly or covertly by society.

15.5 SEXUAL BEHAVIOUR

During adolescence and adulthood, interest in sex is biologically, psychologically and socially inevitable.

Stages of Sexuality

Many psychologists believe that human sexuality develops in three steps:

- **Autosexuality** - Love of one's self
- **Homosexuality** - Love of members of one's own sex
- **Heterosexuality** - Love of members of the opposite sex
- **Autosexuality**

In the autosexual stage, the child become aware of himself of herself as a source of sexual pleasure and consciously experiments with masturbation. The autosexual stage begins as early as 3 years of age and continues until the child is about 6 or 7, although in some children it lasts for a considerably longer period of time.

Masturbation is probably universal to human sexual experience. Although most people still consider it an embarrassing topic, it has always been a recognized aspect of sexuality, legitimate or not. Many myths surround masturbation: It causes one to go mad; it causes hair to grow on one's palms; it causes one to reject sex with anyone else. No research evidence shows that masturbation has any intrinsic bad effects. Although most psychiatrists feel that no intrinsic harm exists in masturbation and also believe it to be a normal, healthy way for adolescents to discharge their sexual drive, some teens (mainly boys) feel such a sense of shame, guilt and fear that they develop the "excessive masturbation" syndrome. In summary, most psychiatrists argue that masturbation in childhood is not only normal but helpful in forming a positive sexual attitude. However, it can at times become an obsessive behaviour during adolescence.

- **Homosexuality**

Around age 7-13 the best friends for most of the children are those of the same sex with whom they want to be intimate.

Causes of Homosexuality

A number of suggestions have been put forth about why people become homosexuals. The three most often cited explanations are :

- The psychoanalytic theory of homosexuality

Freud's psychoanalytic theory of homosexuality suggested that if the child's first sexual feelings about the parent of the opposite sex are strongly punished, the child may identify with the same sex parent and develop a permanent homosexual orientation.

- The learning theory of homosexuality

The learning theory of homosexuality offers another explanation. According to this theory, most people learn to be heterosexual, but for a variety of little understood reasons, some people learn to be homosexual.

- The Genetic Theory of Homosexuality

These theories argue that how the foetus brain reacts to sex hormones during the second to sixth month of gestation period may create a genetic tendency toward homosexuality. They argue that persons born with this tendency (called a predisposition) can be influenced by the environment to either select or avoid homosexuality. The majority developed a homosexual identity during adolescence or adulthood.

- **Heterosexual Behaviour**

The great majority of teenagers move into the third stage, heterosexuality, at about 13 or 14 years, with girls preceding boys by about a year.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Give one word for the following:-

a) Loving one self

b) Loving members of same sex

c) Loving members of opposite sex

15.6 SEXUAL ORIENTATION

Sexual orientation refers to “an enduring emotional, romantic, sexual, or affectional attraction toward others,” usually conceived of as classifiable according to the sex or gender of the persons whom the individual finds sexually attractive. The most common form exists along a continuum that ranges from exclusive heterosexuality (being sexually attracted to members of the opposite

sex) to exclusive homosexuality (being sexually attracted to members of the same sex) and includes various forms of bisexuality (being sexually attracted to members of either sex). There is also a much less common one but still exists, asexuality (being sexually attracted to members of neither sex).

Sexual identity and sexual behaviour are closely related to sexual orientation, but they are distinguished, with identity referring to an individual's conception of themselves, behaviour referring to actual sexual acts performed by the individual, and orientation referring to "fantasies, attachments and longings." *Sexual identity* may also be used to describe a person's perception of his or her own sex, rather than sexual orientation. The term *sexual preference* has a similar meaning to *sexual orientation*, but is more commonly used outside of scientific circles by people who believe that sexual orientation is, in whole or part, a matter of choice. Varying definitions and strong social norms about sexuality can make sexual orientation difficult to quantify.

One's sexual identity, gender identity, and gender roles are aspects of life tangentially related to a person's *sexual orientation*. *Sexual orientation* refers to the sex a person prefers. To describe orientation, the terms *heterosexual*, *homosexual*, and *bisexual* are used. Individuals that engage in same-sex behaviours do not necessarily exhibit any particular concomitant sexual identity or gender identity. Males that engage in homosexual behaviours, for instance, can be comfortable in their male bodies and have no gender atypical behaviour patterns. The same for lesbians; they can be quite pleased with their sex and gender roles. For most people their identity, orientation and gender are in concert. A typical male, for example, acts in a masculine manner and shows a combination of biologically and socially determined gender behaviour patterns but prefers to have sexual interactions with females. The reverse is true with females. There is no conflict in such gender and sexual roles.

15.7 SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY

Gender identity came to be increasingly seen as a phenomenon distinct from sexual orientation. The majority of transgender people today identify with the sexual orientation that corresponds with their gender; meaning that a transwoman who is solely attracted to women would often identify as a lesbian. Female-attracted transmen often consider themselves straight men, yet some participate in the lesbian community.

For these reasons, the terms gynephilia and androphilia are occasionally used when referring to the sexual orientation of transgender and intersex people. The third common term that describes sexual orientation, bisexuality, makes no claim about the subject's sex or gender identity. Sexual orientation probably is not determined by any one factor but by a combination of genetic and hormonal influences.

Genetic

Twin studies indicate that male homosexuality may have a genetic component while at the same time indicating that genes are unlikely to be the *only* determining factor.

Hormones play a role in foetal sex differentiation, and also influence the sexual orientation that emerges later in the adult. Foetal hormones may be seen as the primary determiner of adult sexual orientation.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality is “sexual desire or behaviour directed toward a person or persons of one’s own sex.” Homosexuality has a number of causal factors that influence its ultimate origination in individuals which will be addressed shortly. In addition, homosexuality has a variety of effects on individuals and society.

Same-sex sexuality involves two individuals of the same sex. It is possible for a person whose sexual identity is heterosexual to get involved in sexual acts with people of the same sex. They hide their sexuality in “the closet”. The term “closet case” is a derogatory term used to refer to another homosexual who hides his or her homosexuality or bisexuality.

15.8 FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Globalization and rapid technological development are increasing the rate of changes and forcing all cultures to reexamine their beliefs about issues related to sexual permissiveness and sexual expression.

Under the influence of globalization, beliefs about individualism, human rights and gender equality are having a growing impact on the sexual behaviours and attitudes of people from developing nations. If consumerism makes possible an expanding array of lifestyle choices, and an individual is defined by the choices he makes, then there are alternate sexualities one can “consume” as well. It is in that context that the emergence of sexual minorities becomes a marker of incipient globalization.

Sexuality and HIV/AIDS

The awareness of the link between sexuality and health is not new. Every year, it is estimated that millions of new cases of curable sexually transmitted diseases occur worldwide. Yet, it is only since the first diagnosed case of AIDS that sexually transmitted diseases have come to the forefront of global health concerns. Since the early 1980s, HIV/AIDS has emerged as the most devastating sexually transmitted disease in the world’s history.

Developing Societies

Women in developing countries are at a significant risk of HIV because they usually are less educated and do not have the societal position or financial means to obtain contraceptives. Their disadvantage is further compounded by the fact that HIV is more easily transmitted from men to women. Furthermore, the only known effective barrier to HIV infection i.e. condoms requires male cooperation.

In Western countries, since the 1980s, gay/bisexual men have been recognized as high-risk populations for HIV/AIDS. Globalization has propelled the societies of the world in an interaction that transforms cultures and redefines the sexuality of every nation. It has simultaneously positive and negative effects. It encourages the sharing of perspectives and medical advancements that can help societies

to adopt sexual norms and beliefs that are compatible with a healthy life. However, it facilitates the spread of disease and reduces cultural diversity in the human sexual experience. Hopefully, both healthy sexuality and gender equality will, in the future, become a part of every distinct society, and discrimination will become a rarity in the lives of individuals who belong to stigmatized groups such as homosexuals, transgendered and victims of HIV/AIDS.

15.9 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you studied about the concept of alternate sexuality and various types of sexual identities. You learned that the concept of sex and sexuality is ancient. You learnt about the impact of various aspects — biological, socio-cultural and psychological factors on human sexuality. Difference between sexual identity and gender identity is outlined. You learnt various types of sexual identities. Common misconceptions and stereotypes about sexual identities have also been enumerated.

15.10 GLOSSARY

Androgenous/Androgeny	: One who is / the quality of simultaneously exhibiting masculine and feminine characteristics.
Bigendered	: One who switches between masculine and feminine gender roles from time to time.
Bisexual	: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions to members of both the same and the other sex, or who identify as members of the bisexual community.
Butch	: 1) Masculine or macho dress and behaviour, regardless of sex or gender identity. 2) A sub-identity of lesbian or gay, based on masculine or macho dress and behaviour.
Come out	: To disclose one's own sexual identity to another.
Cross Dresser (CD)	: One (regardless of the motivation) who wears clothes, makeup, etc. which are considered (by the culture) appropriate for the other sex but not one's own.
Double standard	: The belief that the standards for female sexual behaviour should be higher than those for males.
Drag Queen	: Transvestite who employs dramatic clothes, makeup, and mannerisms, often for other people's appreciation.
Feminine	: The gender role assigned to females.

Gay (man/male) (community)	: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of the same sex (as oneself).
Gender	: It is defined as a social or psychological category, characterized by the common practices of men and women. For example, the fact that women wear skirts and dresses in Western society while men traditionally do not is a gender issue.
Gender dysphoria (GD)	: Unhappiness or discomfort experienced by one whose sexual organs do not match one's gender identity.
Gender neutral	: Clothing, behaviours, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. which are considered appropriate for members of both sexes.
Gender role	: Arbitrary rules, assigned by society, that define what clothing, behaviours, thoughts, feelings, relationships, etc. are considered appropriate and inappropriate for members of each sex.
Gender identity	: Refers to how one thinks of one's own gender: whether one thinks of oneself as a man (masculine) or as a woman (feminine). Society prescribes arbitrary rules or gender roles (how one is supposed to and not supposed to dress, act, think, feel, relate to others, think of oneself, etc.) based on one's sex. These gender roles are called feminine and masculine.
Heterosexual (het)	: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of the other sex (than oneself).
Homophile (community)	: Obsolete term for gay male (community).
Homosexual	: Sexual attraction to members of one's own sex.
Identity	: How one thinks of oneself. One's internal self, as opposed to what others observe or think about one.
Lesbian	: A woman who has significant sexual and romantic attractions to members of the same sex.
LesBiGay (community)	: Contraction of "lesbian, bisexual, and gay." Colloquial term for the sexual minority community or its members. Often spelled with capital "B" and "G" to prevent misinterpretation as "lesbian and gay."

Masculine	: The gender role assigned to males.
Monogendered	: One who is comfortable in only one gender role.
Monosexual	: One who has significant sexual and romantic attractions primarily to members of one sex. Straight, Gay, Lesbian. Someone who is not Bisexual.
Neuter	: 1) One who has neither a penis nor a vagina, occasionally used to mean androgenous.
Sex	: It is defined as the biological difference between males and females, prior to any social conditioning.
Sexual orientation	: How one thinks of her/himself, in terms of being significantly attracted to members the same or the other sex.
Sexually transmitted disease (STD's)	: A class of diseases that are transmitted through sexual behaviour.
Sexual identity	: Refers to how one thinks of oneself in terms of whom one is sexually and romantically attracted to, specifically whether one is attracted to members of the same gender as one's own or the other gender than one's own.

15.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. a) Autosexuality
b) Homosexuality
c) Hetrosexuality

15.12 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Due to STDs there may be decline in early sexual activity? Discuss.
2. Why do you think we are seeing such widespread changes in the sexual aspects of our lives?
3. What do you understand by sexual identity and gender identity?

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UNIT 16 INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Structure

- 16.1 Introduction
- 16.2 Family Ties
- 16.3 Love and Commitment
- 16.4 Cohabitation
 - 16.4.1 Effects of Cohabitation
 - 16.4.2 Cohabitation and Marital Success
- 16.5 Extramarital Sexuality
- 16.6 Power in Intimate Relationships
 - 16.6.1 Personality and Stereotypes
 - 16.6.2 Bases of Marital Power
- 16.7 Points of Concern in Intimate Relations
- 16.8 Let Us Sum Up
- 16.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 16.10 Unit End Questions
- 16.11 Further Readings and References

16.1 INTRODUCTION

Rita is married to Shyam since last 15 years. Shyam is a Bank manager and Rita is an HR manager at a reputed company. They are getting along very well with each other. They are totally dedicated to each other. They share love which is intense, affectionate and loyal. This is an example of intimacy among couples.

Intimacy refers to the warm, close feelings of bonding we get when we love someone. Intimacy is a primary human need. Human companionship strongly influences the physical and mental well being of the couples. This Unit aims to go deeper into the intensity and loyalty, of man and woman relationship. The intense, passionate love does not last forever at the same high level. Instead it fades or transforms itself into a more enduring love based on intimacy.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Describe the importance of love and commitment in man-woman relationship; and
- Discuss how the couples maintain their intimate relations.

16.2 FAMILY TIES

Marriage and family usually furnish emotional security and support. In our families we generally find our strongest bond. These bonds can be forged from love, attachments, loyalty or guilt. The need for intimate relationships may hold unhappy marriages together indefinitely.

Marriage and family have become even more important as the source of companionship and intimacy. They have become haven in a heartless world. As society has become more industrialized, bureaucratic and impersonal, it is within the family that we increasingly expect to find intimacy and companionship. In the outside world, we are seen in terms of our roles e.g. teacher may see us as students, a politician views us as voters. Only among our intimates, we are seen on a personal level as Seeta or Gita. Before marriage our friends are intimates. After marriage the spouse is expected to be our most intimate partner.

16.3 LOVE AND COMMITMENT

In India, the concept of love is as old as the Hindu mythology itself. Among various Hindu deities, there is a God of love also named as Kamadeva. Perhaps no other faith glorifies the idea of love between the sexes as Hinduism. This is evident from the amazing variety of mythical love stories that abound Sanskrit literature, which is undoubtedly one of the richer treasures.

Love's greatest glory lies in the fact that it alone provides the strength, protection and encouragement without which full growth is impossible. But some people have confusion regarding the nature of love. They fail to appreciate the difference between falling in love and remaining in love. They assume that if one can fall in love, one is also capable of remaining in love. To fall in love is relatively easy but to remain in love requires the ability to build and maintain a stable relationship. To accomplish this task, you must know what you want, must have knowledge of your wishes and must maintain consistent feeling and respond to the change and growth of the partner in the relationship. Furthermore, it is important that the basis of love relationship rests in reality. If your love is based on unreal image of the partner the relationship may indeed be fragile. As contact with the loved one continues, the realities begin to break through. Imperfections appear, the unreal image is shattered and a gradual disillusionment with the love partner occurs resulting in diminution of love feelings.

To analyse the type of love in man-woman relationship, it is important to have basic understanding of love in its broader manifestation. In searching for the factors that are common to all types of love, the basic element is conscious or unconscious set of need satisfaction that one derives from a specific object or person. The essential experiences of love appear to be rooted in the needs that the man and woman have. Therefore love may be thought of as an emotional feeling that arises out of a complex composite of need satisfactions.

Let us now look at the relationship between need fulfillment and love. All love arises out of basic dissatisfaction with one self. Such dissatisfaction results in the creation of an ego ideal, that is an image of what one would like to be. The basic characteristic of ego ideal is perfectionism in all aspects.

The ego ideal continuously makes demands on the individual to measure up to these standards of perfection. Since the individual falls short of the fulfillment of the ego ideal, he has a pervasive sense of guilt. Hence he seeks another individual for the traits of his ego ideal and identifies with that person.

Love and commitment are closely linked in one's intimate relationships; they help to create and sustain each other. Love reflects the positive factors, such as caring and attraction that helps the couples to sustain in their relation. Commitment reflects the stable factors including not only love but also obligation and social pressure that helps maintain the relationship for better or for worse. Although love and commitment are related, they are not necessarily connected. It is possible to love someone without being committed.

Commitment is an important component of intimate love because it is a determination to continue a relationship or marriage in the face of bad times as well as good. It is based on conscious choice rather than on feelings. Commitment is a promise of a shared future, a promise to be together come what may.

• **Needs and the Man-Woman Relationship**

Needs are deemed to be mature when first they contribute to both the intellectual and emotional growth of the partner like the need to be appreciated and respected, to be close emotionally, to be creative and to be understood.

Second requirement for needs to be mature is that they are rooted in reality. For example, it is obvious that people who have a need to see love as a mystical force that solves all problems have unreal conceptions, hence their love involvements tend to be immature and childlike.

16.4 COHABITATION

In its technical sense, cohabitation refers to individuals sharing living arrangements in an intimate relationship; whether these individuals are married or unmarried. Cohabitation refers to relationships in which unmarried individuals live together and are sexually involved. Cohabitation and living together are often used interchangeably. A cohabiting relationship may be similar to marriage in many of its functions and roles but it does not have legal sanctions or rights.

Cohabitation is increasingly accepted at almost every level of society. It appears to be becoming part of the courtship process. Living together has become more widespread and accepted in recent years.

16.4.1 Effects of Cohabitation

1. **Different commitments:** Living together tends to be more transitory than marriage. When a couple lives together, their primary commitment is to each other. As long as they feel they love each other, they will stay together. In marriage the couple makes a commitment not only to each other but to their marriage.
2. **Finances:** A striking difference between cohabiting and married couples is the pooling of money as a symbol of commitment. Among most cohabiting couples money is not pooled. In fact one of the reasons couples cohabit rather than marry is to maintain a sense of financial independence.

3. Work: The man is not expected to support his partner in cohabiting relationship and the woman spends less time on housework than their married peers.
4. Societal support: Cohabitation receives less social support except from peers. It may be considered as inferior or immoral relationship — inferior because it does not symbolize lifetime commitment and immoral because it involves a sexual relationship without the sanction of marriage.

16.4.2 Cohabitation and Marital Success

There is no consensus on whether cohabitation significantly increases or decreases later marital stability. Although couples who are living together often argue that cohabitation helps prepare them for marriage, the research evidence accumulated indicates that while living together before marriage in an increasingly common phase of courtship, cohabitation has no particular advantage over traditional practices in assuring couple compatibility in marriage.

16.5 EXTRAMARITAL SEXUALITY

Extramarital sex consists of sexual interaction that take place outside the marital relationship. A fundamental assumption in marriage is that each person remains the other's exclusive intimate partner in terms of both emotional and sexual intimacy. Extramarital relationship violates that assumption. People who engage in extramarital affairs have a number of different motivations and these affairs satisfy a number of different needs. Research suggests that extramarital affairs are related to two variables; unhappiness in the marriage and premarital sexual permissiveness. Generally speaking in happy marriages, a partner is less likely to seek outside sexual relationships.

Men and women who are not in an established relationship have different expectations. Men are more likely than women to separate sex from affection. Women generally view sex from a relational perspective. Women seek emotional relationships but men may initially seek physical relationship. Now comes the question — is love necessary for sex? In fact, love and affection are important and desirable for enduring relationships. Although sex without love may violate social norms, it is the least threatening form of extramarital sex. Even those who accept their partner having sex outside the relationship find it especially difficult to accept their partners having a meaningful affair. They believe that two intense romantic relationships cannot coexist and one would have to go.

16.6 POWER IN INTIMATE RELATIONSHIPS

Power is the ability or potential ability to influence another person or group. Most of the time we are not aware of the power aspects of our relationships. One reason for this is that we tend to believe that intimate relationships are based on love alone. Another reason is that the exercise of power is often subtle. A final reason why we are not always aware of power is that power is not constantly exercised. It comes into play only when an issue is important to both people and they have conflicting goals.

16.6.1 Personality and Stereotypes

Traditionally, husbands have held ultimate authority over their wives. A woman assumed her husband's identity, taking his last name on marriage and living in his house. The formal and legal structure of marriage makes the male dominant but the reality of marriage may be quite different. Sociologists make an important distinction between authority and power in marriage. Authority is based in law, but power is based in personality. A strong, dominant woman is likely to exercise power over a weak, passive man simply by the force of her personality and temperament. Wives may also exercise power in more subtle ways, as is often evident in the India context.

If you want to know how power really works in marriage, we must look beneath the stereotypes. Women have considerable power in marriage, although they often feel that they have less than they actually do e.g. in many households, women hold the power over their husbands and children. They have a strong hold on the household as well as the husband's other matters.

16.6.2 Bases of Marital Power

Power is not a simple phenomenon. Researchers generally agree that family powers a dynamic, multidimensional process. Generally speaking, no single member in the family is always the most powerful person in every aspect. Nor is power based on gender, age, relationship. Power often shifts from person to person depending on the issue. There are six bases of marital power:

1. Coercive power: Based on the fear that the partner will punish the other.
2. Reward power: Based on the belief that the other person will do something in return for agreement.
3. Expert power: Based on the belief that the other has greater knowledge.
4. Legitimate power: Based on the acceptance of roles; giving the other person the right to demand compliance.
5. Referent power: Based on identifying with the partner and receiving satisfaction by acting similarly; and
6. Informational power: Based on the partner's persuasive explanation.

16.6.3 Power Versus Intimacy

Power imbalance or the blatant use of power has a negative effect on intimacy. If partners are not equal, self disclosure may be inhibited, especially if the powerful person believes his or her power will be lessened by sharing feelings. Genuine intimacy appears to require equality in power relationships. Decision making in the happy marriage seems to be based not on coercion or 'tit for tat' but on caring, mutuality and respect for other persons. Unequal power in marriage may encourage power politics.

It is not easy to change unequal power relationships after they become embedded in the overall structure of a relationship. Yet they can be changed. Talking, understanding and negotiating are the best approaches.

Women may fail to recognize their power, because cultural norms theoretically put power in the hands of their husbands. For example, Renu, Ph.D. in Social

Sciences, wants to work in a college. But her husband is against her working outside and she decides to go for work inspite of her husband's strong 'no'. She has exercised her power although she still feels that her husband holds the power in the relationship.

16.7 POINTS OF CONCERN IN INTIMATE RELATIONS

1. **No need for a list of do's and don'ts :** There is no need for doing this and not doing that. Some people wish for a list of do's and don'ts for the intimate relationship in marriage.
2. **Common beliefs that can be detrimental to a healthy relationship:** Some common beliefs can be particularly detrimental to a healthy, mutually fulfilling relationship. Because husband and wife have differing sexual wiring, and complex emotional, spiritual and physical needs, it is important to consider such when determining what's okay in the intimate relationship. Examining the following examples can help couples better determine what will enhance and strengthen their marriage: Example "Once you're married, anything goes!"; Example "If you're concerned about a particular behaviour then discontinue it".
3. **Principles that help couples in intimate relations:** The following are some principles that can help couples determine for themselves what's okay and what isn't within the intimate relationship of their marriage:
 - ❖ No need to command in all things.
 - ❖ We cannot possibly address all the ways to sin
 - ❖ We need to follow the spirit of the law.
 - ❖ Couples can learn line upon line.
4. **Talk and discuss:** Lack of communication can also lose a relationship. Always talk and discuss the love, feelings, problems between yourself. Express your feelings of warmth, kindness, affection.
5. **Also be pleasant:** One smile can solve many problems. Be friendly to your partner. As a friend, guide and check your partner.
6. **Derive at common platform:** Adjustment in marriage is the basis of happy marriage. It is better to have listening skills between the partners. By talking you often come to the same conclusion.
7. **Accept the person as he/she is:** If you accept your partner as it is, you can like them for their unique qualities. The belief that an insensitive partner will somehow magically become sensitive after marriage, is an invitation to disappointment and divorce.
8. **Appreciate each other:** The magic words like 'I like you' and 'I love you' can do wonders in marriage.
9. **Do not feel bad about negatives in your interaction:** Many of our negations are habitual. When we were children, our parents used to give instructions like 'Don't leave the door open' or 'Don't leave your clothes

in the bathroom'. Once you become aware that negations are often automatic, you can change them.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Write two principles that help couples in intimate relationships.

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16.8 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, you have studied about intimate relationships. Need of love and of commitment in man-woman relationships has been discussed. The ways in which couples maintain their intimate relations has been outlined. Cohabitation and extramarital affairs and sexuality has been discussed. Further, the Unit focussed on power in intimate relationships.

16.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. a) No need to command in all things.
- b) We need to follow the spirit of the law.

16.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. What is the importance of love and commitment in intimate relationships?
2. What are the effects of cohabitation?
3. State 'true' or 'false':
 - i) Commitment in marriage help couples to continue marriage or relationships in good as well as in bad times.
 - ii) Cohabiting relationship is usually not accepted by the society.
 - iii) Unhappy marriage may lead to extramarital relations.
 - iv) Marriage success is not related to cohabitation.
 - v) Talking, understanding and negotiating are the best approaches for happy marriage.
 - vi) Power in relations shifts from person to person depending on the issue.
 - vii) Marriage and family are the sources of companionship and intimacy.

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UNIT 17 MARITAL HARMONY

- 17.1 Introduction
- 17.2 Concept of Marriage in India
- 17.3 Theories of Marriage and Family
 - 17.3.1 Hindu Views on Marriage
 - 17.3.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory
 - 17.3.3 Structural Functionism Theory
 - 17.3.4 Conflict Theory
 - 17.3.5 Family Systems Theory
- 17.4 Factors Influencing Mate Selection
- 17.5 Marital Adjustment and Compatibility
- 17.6 Types of Marital Adjustment
- 17.7 Marital Conflict and Maintenance of Marriage
- 17.8 Role of Counsellor and Family Therapist
- 17.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 17.10 Glossary
- 17.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 17.12 Unit End Questions
- 17.13 Further Readings and References

17.1 INTRODUCTION

Happiness in marriage is an epitome desired by all but achieved by very few. All mass media channels and film industry portray marital happiness. Fiction is away from reality which is very important for you as a counsellor and family therapist to know, understand and appreciate.

Success and failure in marriage influences one's personality and other social interactions. Society, at large, till date holds in high esteem people who are able to maintain a successful married life.

In this Unit, we will study about the factors that influence marital harmony. This Unit further introduces you to various issues necessary for maintenance of marriage.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to :-

- Know the key issues that influence marriage;
- Recognise the factors responsible for marital harmony; and
- Understand the concept of marital harmony in relation to counselling and family therapy.

17.2 CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE IN INDIA

Marriage in some form has been in existence from the evolution of man and society in the world. Marriage is one of the deepest and most complex web of human relations (Ratra et.al., 2006).

Definition

Marriage has been defined as a universal human institution that has been part of the social structure of all settled societies (Edward Westermarck, 1891).

According to Radha Krishnan (1956), marriage is not a mere convention but an implicit condition of human society; it is an adjustment between the biological purposes of nature and the sociological purposes of man.

Beavers (1985) writes that according to Karl Whittaker, a therapist, marriage results in producing hateful demons out of perfectly nice people while on the other hand marriage is the only way to get a Ph. D in interpersonal relationships.

Marriage is union of man (or men) and woman (or women) in a rite defined by social custom and law and carrying with it specific economic, sexual and child-care responsibilities (Ratra et.al., 2006).

Existence of a society is dependent on marriage among its inhabitants. Hence marriage is an important social institution in the world.

17.3 THEORIES OF MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

You have studied family theories in earlier courses in quite detail. We will briefly talk of these concepts.

17.3.1 Hindu Views on Marriage

According to Hindu religion, marriage is viewed as sacrament and not a contract. Hindu marriage is a life long commitment of one wife and one husband. With marriage, individuals enter the second life *ashram*, *Grihastha Ashram*. This helps the individual to live in the family and repay their debt to the ancestors. According to Hindu view point marriage would lead to spiritual growth.

Marriage is a bond between individuals and their families. It brings together individuals and families with different *Sanskaras* together for a life long bond or till death does them apart. Divorce and separation have not been conceptualized in the ideal Hindu marriage.

17.3.2 Symbolic Interaction Theory

Symbolic interaction theory emphasizes on how people interact with each other. The relationships among people play a key role under this theory. Symbolic interactionist's key focus is on the perceptions that we hold regarding understanding and communicating of our feelings to the partner (spouse) and vice-versa. Interactions take place through words, actions and non-verbal cues. This theory emphasizes individualism. The individual is viewed as a calculating being weighting

the costs and rewards of their relationships; though in reality, such rationale is not always possible in all our close relationships.

17.3.3 Structural Functionism Theory

Structural functionism theory focuses on the society and its functioning. It lays importance on society. It discusses the role of marriage and family in societal maintenance. It emphasises the functions and roles performed rather than interactions among the family members.

17.3.4 Conflict Theory

Conflict theory believes that life involves discord. This theory believes that individuals in a family and family per se are always in conflict with each other. According to this theory love, affection and conflict are key elements in marriage and family. Conflict among family members result because of differential power status among the family members. Some family members have more power as they are head of the family, high income earning etc. while some have less power. But all members have some kind of power in the family relationship which leads to conflict.

17.3.5 Family Systems Theory

Family systems theory views family as sub-divided into parts or consisting of sub-systems which together make a family. These sub-systems' inter and intra communication, interaction, coalition, relationship impacts the family as a whole. According to Minuchin (1981), for the family to function properly, the sub-systems should be distinctly separate and the boundaries of the sub-systems should not merge. For, if the boundaries blur, the family would become dysfunctional. The family structure and goal needs to be clear for healthy functioning of the family.

17.4 FACTORS INFLUENCING MATE SELECTION

At present, marriage in India is generally an arranged marriage. Love marriage or finding a mate by oneself is gaining momentum and a number of such marriages are being reported. Please recollect the various forms of marriages studied in Unit 6, Course 1, MCFT-006.

Here, we will discuss the other issues relevant in mate selection. Whether it is love marriage, or arranged marriage, there are certain factors which influence our choice in mate selection. These are :-

- *Life goals*: The ultimate aim of marriage and life, is the willingness to raise a family and perform other roles and responsibilities as relevant for the growth of the family.
- *Love*: If you love some one you want to live the rest of your life with that person. In the Indian context, love comes after marriage.
- *Similarity*: The partner may have similar likes and dislikes, value systems similar to you or it can be just the opposite. Depending on the need gratification of the person choice of mate is made.

- *Expectations*: The expectations of the persons from each other and from life influence marital happiness and compatibility of the same is a point of concern for marital stability.
- *Socio-economic status*: Marriages take place among varied socio-economic status. The background regarding the education, family values, cultural group, ethnicity and clan lineage are some of the factors which are considered at the time of marriage.
- *Temperament and Personality*: There are some qualities which were and are still appreciated among the two sexes. Female is liked to be warm, caring, submissive, etc. while male is liked to be confident, warm, caring and who can take decisions.

The other factors which promote mate selection are:-

- ❑ *Proximity*: The person selected has to have physical proximity. These days internet services and technology are also being increasingly used to narrow the physical distance.
- ❑ *Physical appearance*: Attraction towards another person may also depend on the personal choice and physical appearance.
- ❑ *Mutual preferences*: Individual choice and compatibility of interest, attitudes, likes, dislikes, hobbies play an important role in mate selection.
- ❑ *Finding the right person*: Most important is the factor of finding the right person at the right time.

17.5 MARITAL ADJUSTMENT AND COMPATIBILITY

Marriage in most parts of the world is followed by rituals. In the Indian sub-continent, these rituals play an important role in bringing the husband-wife as well as their families together. Marriage in all regions and religions is special and holds sacramental value in India.

There are certain factors which influence marital adjustment and compatibility in the marital/couple relationship:-

- *Readiness for Marriage*: Readiness for marriage means that the person is mentally, emotionally and physically prepared for marriage. There is minimum age limit for marriage which gives biological readiness and physical preparation for the marriage. The mental and emotional preparation is also related to gender role and responsibilities. Skills learning is related to gender role learning, education and professional skills attained.

Psychological preparation is related to being able to depend on the other, be dependable, happy disposition, honesty and consideration of the rights of others.

- *Marriage as a revolt against parents*: At times children who marry a person of their choice against parents' wishes might feel frustrated at not being able to fulfill parents' wishes and desires. This results at times in not being able to express affection to the spouse.

Also, sometimes youngsters especially females marry as a revolt to the parents; they feel that after marriage they can get freedom from the restrictions and responsibilities which were existent at their parental house.

- *Pregnancy*: When the individuals marry because of pregnancy before marriage may at times be an unwanted responsibility which the couple may or may not be ready to take.
- *Dating*: Dating helps to know each other. Dating and understanding also helps to discover oneself in the esteem held by the partner. Dating helps in understanding of the other sex and understanding and knowing the families of the partner from the partner's perception. Thus it helps to understand the spouse and his/her family.
- *Power distribution*: In family and couple relationship, power has to be decided. Any distribution of power which is not acceptable to any one of the spouses who feels subjugated constitutes a risk to marital harmony.
- *Family and friend relationships*: It should be cordial having mutual respect for each other. Any disrespect shown towards a close member of the spouse by spouse or in-laws leads to discord.
- *Money*: Agreement on how the spouses would spend money, who would have the control on the financial aspects is important.
- *Communication*: Interpersonal and intrapersonal communication have to be open and healthy.
- *Sex*: Sex plays an important role in the couple relationship. Generally, it is seen that sexual problems among the couple are not discussed in a straight forward way and spouses are not quite forth-coming to seek help for these problems. The sexual problems are seen to shade other parts of the couple's married life and bring unhappiness.
- *Working woman*: Dual earner couples have more adjustments to make and responsibilities on them are more; especially on women. Dual role responsibilities on women may cause stress on the couple. Though, Ratra (2006) reported that there is no difference in the marital harmony of working and non-working women.

17.6 TYPES OF MARITAL ADJUSTMENT

The marital bliss and happiness is the desired epitome of marriage but in reality few find it! Hence, the emphasis should be on marital balance which would encompass the power and communication pattern between the spouses, the understanding they share for their interpersonal relationship and personas to be shared with other family members. Spouses may adjust either for the welfare of family goal or for their own sake.

There are two types of marital adjustment. Marital adjustment is a process that would lead to a happy and satisfied life. Adjustment could be:-

'For' Adjustment: In 'for adjustment', couple spends time, energy, and efforts in rearing of the family. Both partners sacrifice for the family.

'We' Adjustment: In 'we adjustment', couple spends time, energy and efforts for understanding each other and with each other.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Explain types of marital adjustment.

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17.7 MARITAL CONFLICT AND MAINTENANCE OF MARRIAGE

Conflict in any relationship is quite natural and so it is in the marital relationships. Handling conflict to some extent depends upon the rearing and early childhood experiences of the spouse. As the individual has seen his/her parents resolve conflict, they would unknowingly imitate the same behaviour in the similar situations.

From early childhood we are taught to be prosocial in our acts and behaviour, to give more than we should expect. However, the values of helping, caring and sharing seem to be dissipating so fast, that now self-interest has become prime (Chadha, 2007). As we grow, our expectations from others become more concretized. At the time of marriage, we have expectations which may or may not be expressed clearly or vocalized. When the expectation of an individual is high and return of that expectation is low, problems begin and conflicts arise.

Handling these conflicts is one of the major areas of marital adjustment. The conflicts may be due to environmental factors, relational factors, or personal factors. Inter-marriages though on rise also bring certain adjustment issues which need to be dealt with.

Marital conflict can be resolved by various ways. Some of the prominent of these are:-

- ❑ *Concession:* Through accepting the spouse's view without presenting one's own viewpoints.
- ❑ *Accommodation:* Both the spouses agree on the disagreements and decide to live with it.
- ❑ *Compromise:* Both partners through mutual consensus reach to an agreement for family.
- ❑ *Aggression:* Through physical or verbal abuse.
- ❑ *Problem-solving skills:* Both partners have healthy discussion on for and against consequences and then reach an agreement.

Maintenance of marriage in the present times has become necessary with the rampant increase in the marital discords and breakdown. Influence of mass media

on the psyche of the individual leads to a higher expectation from life, spouse and in-laws.

The spouses need to reaffirm to each other the importance of the other person in their life irrespective of their age or number of years of marriage. Verbalization of the feelings, show of caring and loving attitude is necessary. Marriage relationship is balanced when both spouses work to contribute equally to maintain the relationship (Ratra et.al., 2006).

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. List methods to resolve marital conflicts.

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17.8 ROLE OF COUNSELLOR AND FAMILY THERAPIST

With the breakdown of joint families, children migrating away from parents due to work, education or personal differences, the role of family elders has been taken up by the counsellors and family therapist.

Pre-marital guidance and counselling: Here, the counsellor helps the individual to decide upon the right choices to be made, to understand the partner more, to understand your own expectations from the partner and life.

Marriage counselling: Here, the counsellor helps the partners to explore their problems and find solutions. Sex counselling is also given if necessary.

Family counselling: Here, the counsellor helps the spouses to understand the roles and responsibilities which have come up with parenting. Parent-child-school interactions are explored and problems solved. Adjustment with other family members of the spouses is another reason of concern for which counselling is sought.

Family therapy: Any problem which would require extensive therapeutic intervention would require specialised family therapist in that domain.

17.9 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have outlined the concept of marriage in India through Hindu view on marriage as well as through western theories on marriage. Factors influencing marital adjustment and mate selection have been discussed. Types of adjustment, marital conflict and maintenance of marriage have been described in the course

of this Unit. In the end of the Unit the role of counsellor and family therapist to maintain healthy marital and family relationships has been described.

17.10 GLOSSARY

‘For’ adjustment	: Here couple adjusts for the family.
Marital balance	: The balance which would encompass the power and communication pattern between the spouses, the understanding they share for their interpersonal relationship and personas to be shared with other family members.
‘We’ adjustment	: Here couple tries to understand each other and adjusts with one another.

17.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. There are two types of marital adjustment:-

‘For’ Adjustment: In ‘for adjustment’, couple spends time, energy, and efforts in rearing of the family. Both partners sacrifice for the family.

‘We’ Adjustment: In ‘we adjustment’, couple spends time, energy and efforts for understanding each other and with each other.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1. Aggression, concession, accommodation, compromise and problem solving skills.

17.12 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Describe theories of marriage and family.
 2. Highlight the role of maintenance of marriage with the help of an example.
 3. How would you resolve marital conflict with your spouse? Describe various methods to resolve marital conflict.
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UNIT 18 SEPARATION, DIVORCE AND FUTURE OPTIONS

- 18.1 Introduction
- 18.2 Separation and Divorce in India
- 18.3 Factors Influencing Separation and Divorce
 - 18.3.1 The Changing Nature of Marriage
 - 18.3.2 Increasing Independence
 - 18.3.3 Incompatibility
 - 18.3.4 Domestic Disharmony and Abuse
 - 18.3.5 Marital Infidelity
 - 18.3.6 Changing Laws
 - 18.3.7 Changing Societal Attitudes Towards Divorce
- 18.4 Issues Associated With Separation and Divorce
 - 18.4.1 Children
 - 18.4.2 Psychological Distress
 - 18.4.3 Social Network, Support and Stigma
 - 18.4.4 Resources
 - 18.4.5 Sexual Needs and Everyday Issues
- 18.5 Adjusting and Coping After Separation and Divorce
- 18.6 Alternatives and Future Options After Separation and Divorce
 - 18.6.1 Singlehood
 - 18.6.2 Single Parenting
 - 18.6.3 Co-Parenting
 - 18.6.4 Remarriage
 - 18.6.5 Intimate and Emotional relationships
 - 18.6.6 Patch Up or Establishing Continued Relationship with Former Spouse
- 18.7 Needs of the Reconstituted Individuals
- 18.8 Role of the Counsellor and Family Therapist
- 18.9 Let Us Sum Up
- 18.10 Glossary
- 18.11 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises
- 18.12 Unit End Questions
- 18.13 Further Readings and References

18.1 INTRODUCTION

You have studied in the previous Unit that marital harmony and personal compatibility is desired by most Indians. Individuals look forward to being successfully married and happy all their lives. Marriage has an inbuilt system of protection against most social vulnerabilities. Marriages used to be for lifetime and divorce was the extreme recourse. Problems were buried and adjusting

to each other and families was a virtue. Today divorce is a quick solution to marital problems. Individuals are focusing more on differences which in turn making marriages fragile.

It is important to be optimistic towards divorce and identify small changes which are significant e.g. the coming out of homosexuals in the forced heterosexual marriages. Divorce can be traumatic for one and an end of emotional suffering for another. For some it may mean a dead end and for others it may just open a new vista of life.

In this Unit you will study about the meaning of divorce and separation in India, reasons and issues associated with them. The Unit further focuses on the alternatives and future options after separation and divorce, followed by the needs of the reconstituted individuals and adjustments to divorce. You will also study about the crucial role of the counsellor and discover some useful tips for counselling.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Understand the nature of separation and divorce in India.
- Describe the factors influencing separation and divorce.
- Describe the issues associated with separation and divorce.
- Examine the domains of adjustment and coping after divorce.
- Recognize the alternatives, future options after divorce and needs of the reconstituted individual.
- Analyze the role of the counsellor and identify some tips for counselling.

18.2 SEPARATION AND DIVORCE IN INDIA

Sheetal and Rahul are newly weds. A few hours back they took vows together in front of the holy fire. Their wedding was a grand celebration. During the farewell (bidai), Sheetal's her mother tells her, "Now that is going to be your own house!" After a ritualistic welcome to Rahul's home, there is a special event of games organized for them. Games after marriage have their unique significance. Sheetal has a holy thread tied on her wrist which is tangled with many knots. Rahul is supposed to untangle and untie the thread without cutting the thread or breaking it. Patience is the desirable quality at this point of time. The significance behind this game is that; your life is tied with each other after marriage, just like the holy thread. Life will take its turns and there might be tangles due to the problems. Problems are inevitable, but one should take care that the problems do not further entangle. If at all they do one should have the skill, patience, intention and time to untangle them. If you break the thread, the relationship will break.

By reading the above vignette you must have understood that how the minutest of rituals in the marriage ceremony have an implied meaning that marriage is a 'permanent bond'. Think of some other rituals and ceremonies which you must have seen or experienced and try to analyze their meanings.

Traditionally marriage was essentially regarded as religious and permanent which is gradually becoming secularized in the modern era. The trend is towards making it consensual. Divorce was considered as a last resort which may not hold true now.

Marriages can be broken structurally and functionally. Separation, desertion and divorce are structural breakups. *Separation* can be judicial or emotional. In judicial separation the marriage is not yet dissolved and the partners cannot remarry till the case is finally decided. In an emotional separation the partners continue to remain married. But discontinue living with each other. Legal proceedings are not a part of such a separation. *Desertion*; either temporary or permanent is illegal and unofficial and is an irresponsible departure from the home on the part of either husband or wife, leaving the family to suffer for itself. *Divorce* is legal dissolution of marital ties or final termination of a bonafide marriage.

Separation and divorce are packaged together with severe stress, pain and loss for most individuals. When the packet is unwrapped the divorced individual grapples to find an emotional island in the sea of stress but the cultural taboos on exposing familial problems to outsiders inhibit people from discussing their family and marital conflicts with others. There is a tendency to accept happenings in one's life as *karma*, *kismet* or fate. Compromise, adjustment, duty and maintaining family honour are expected out of an individual to maintain and strengthen the marital bond. Culturally most Indians are conditioned to get into marital bliss. Very naturally we are reared, socialized and prepared to go in for marriage. There is hardly any objective of training to begin marital life or any preparation and expectation in the time of crisis situations like desertion, separation and divorce.

In the contemporary world, our society is undergoing rapid and massive changes and one major by product of these changes is the rising number of divorces. Divorces are not new in India. What is new and noteworthy is their growing number, variety of reasons and the gradually diminishing stigma around them.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Explain in brief the meanings of Separation, Desertion and Divorce.

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2. What qualities are expected out of an individual to maintain and strengthen the marital bond?

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18.3 FACTORS INFLUENCING SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

Rani and Asif have been married for five years. They live alone away from their parents. Rani has a higher degree in electronics. She did not opt for a career because she was pregnant soon after marriage and the next few years made her busy with child rearing. Asif is a businessman and has to travel a lot. Rani strongly feels the desire to resume her career again. They have discussions and conflicts almost on daily basis as to who will take care of the child if both of them are employed? What about another child? What about Rani's career goals and aspirations. What will happen if Asif stops traveling and starts taking care of their young daughter? Sometimes both feel so much frustrated with each that they want to end their marriage and live apart.

Rekha lives in a city slum. Her husband is a daily wager. He is an alcoholic. She has three children and they study in a primary school nearby. Every time he has some problem with the construction site supervisor he comes home and abuses Rekha and children verbally and physically. This went on for two years. One morning Rekha left the house with her three children never to come back.

Both the above situations, and may be many other experiences from your own life, may help you understand that all marriages cannot succeed; some might end in disharmony. Some marriages break functionally and some break structurally. It is very important to examine factors that affect people's decisions to divorce or separate from their spouse. Let us understand what these factors are.

18.3.1 The Changing Nature of Marriage

If you were to define marriage what will you say? What is your perception of a marital bond between two partners? Now ask the same questions to your parents and grandparents. The answers will be different!

You must have read in the previous units that marriage in the traditional Indian society was regarded essentially as permanent and religious. Originally marriage was perceived as a social institution for the practical purpose of economic support and responsible child rearing. Today marriage is slowly getting a new definition of a relationship which “may be”, “hopefully” permanent, or it may be semi-permanent or non-permanent. Rules of normative role prescriptions for wives, husbands or children are no longer the same as before and are continuously changing. Marriage in today's time entails continuous negotiation and renegotiation among the family members. Modern day challenges have forced people to make difficult decisions about roles of spouses. Expectations from each other are becoming clear-cut and well defined. The nuances of being committed in marriage are changing. Intimacy is essential but the concept of commitment is sometimes seen to be gradually eroding from intimate relationships.

Have you ever asked yourself “whether you want to be happier — free or married?” Probably not; because most of us are socialized to think in a way

that marriage brings happiness and the freedom to live life of your own choice. But with the changing times the three factors — happiness, personal freedom and marriage may not necessarily go together. Every individual consciously or unconsciously seeks comfort and fulfillment out of their lives. Don't you? In the hope of gaining these 'rewards', if the marital relationship acts as a 'cost', then there occurs a disequilibrium and opens up a possibility of divorce.

18.3.2 Increasing Independence

Traditionally, survival outside family was difficult. Due to the traditional joint households, family members remained economically bound to each other. The family as a domestic group was crucial for production and replenishment of human capital from generation to generation. So, what has changed in the recent years?

In the previous units you have read that though not functionally the joint family household structure is changing into a nuclear one. Due to a rapid **decrease in the size of Indian households**, people are faced with situations where they eventually become independent. Opportunities for the **employment of women have increased** and women are entering the work force in large numbers. What do you think? Employment of women contributes to divorce? No, but it does mean that employment gives an unhappily married woman the economic power, increased independence and self confidence to help her decide on divorce. It is also possible that women who are separated from their husbands and who are not happy in their marriage will enter employment in anticipation of the need to be self supporting. But for most women gainful employment does not mean decrease in domestic chores and obligations. This gives rise to overload and strain in one's role. Thus employment demands time, energy, and additional responsibilities in addition to the domestic work which they are already doing. During these times, insufficient emotional support and reduced household help on the part of husbands of employed women bring a possibility of divorce.

The nature and quality of social support is changing. Extended family members, relatives and friends played the role of emotional buffers lessening the burden of the couple. Indian families in many ways eased the tension between the married couple. In the changing times "outsiders" mostly play the peripheral role.

18.3.3 Incompatibility

Is compatibility between spouses necessary for a stable marriage? What compatibility are we talking about? Intellectual, sexual, gender roles or personality?

Intelligence and the institution of marriage are two most important characteristics of human beings that make them biologically and socially superior to the rest of the animal kingdom. It has been observed that individuals tend to select partners who are similar in personality traits to their own and this is true for intelligence as well. **Intelligence** and **personality** are indeed important factors for marital stability but think about this.

Jay and Sheela are married for ten years. They are highly intellectual and professional achievers. Both of them are leading an excellent and incomparable

professional life. Unconsciously there existed a competition between them where each one tried to outscore the other. This led to ego conflicts, difference of opinion on petty and unimportant issues. Their day started and ended with arguments, regarding spending leisure time together, child birth and rearing and roles. They decided to give their relationship some time. They are separated now and meet only on weekends. What would you think now?

It is very difficult to give a definite answer to this question. There are substantial data from longitudinal studies which reflect that intellectual similarity is an important factor for marital satisfaction. However, studies on conflict resolution in marriage indicate that it is not exactly intellectual compatibility, but whether one of the spouse is higher on intellectual capability, that is more important for peaceful and satisfactory life (Mittal, 2005).

Sexual incompatibility occurs when couples have different attitudes and different needs for sex, due to different levels of libido. Libido is profoundly affected by emotional and unconscious factors for both men and women. There may be underlying issues for each partner, which will begin to become apparent as the initial idealization phase of the relationship wears off and difficulties become apparent (Scarfe, 1987 in Davis & Whittaker, 2003).

Men and women tend to express love and sexual desire in different ways. This can become a battle of power in relationship. One wife removed herself from the marital bed after 25 years of going along with her husband's needs. Her shocked and dismayed husband found it very hard to adjust to his loss of power. Another contributory factor to sexual incompatibility is the arrival of children.

Sexual dysfunction is "the persistent impairment of the normal pattern of sexual interest or response" (Hawton, 1985 in Davis & Whittaker, 2003). A dysfunction may be primary, that is experienced continually since the beginning of a person's sexual activity or it may be secondary, where a problem occurs after a period of satisfactory sexual functioning. The sexual problem may occur in all settings (total) and it may also occur in one situation and not in another (Masters & Johnson, 1970 in Davis & Whittaker, 2003).

Successful sexual functioning is a complex combination of biological and psychological factors. It has to be seen as a psychosomatic process. Some of the male sexual dysfunctions are erectile dysfunction, premature ejaculation, orgasmic dysfunction or retarded ejaculation and dyspareunia. Some of the female sexual dysfunctions are orgasmic dysfunction, vaginismus, dyspareunia (painful intercourse).

Incompatibility may also arise due to **difference in career and personal goals**. Religious beliefs, cultural values and lifestyle differences may clash unless the partners are highly adaptive and flexible in nature. **Healthy communication is a key to unlock the tangle of incompatibility in marriage**. It is important to develop skills and abilities to manage or resolve conflicts.

18.3.4 Domestic Disharmony and Abuse

Traditionally, in all societies family was considered to be one of the most sacred institutions and a source of comfort and nurturance to its members. Yet in the

recent years there is an acknowledgement of the fact that family is a major seat of “violence”. What is recent are its acknowledgement and the realization of the multifaceted forms of expression and the legitimacy offered to it. Some problems present in the Indian family which may lead to separation or divorce are physical aggression, wife battering, female foeticide, infanticide, unequal distribution of food and deprivation of health care facilities, reproductive coercion or control, sexual abuse, marital rape, emotional abuse, verbal abuse etc. (Sriram, 1994)

Desertion and cruelty are among the major causes of separation and divorce. Some other reasons are quarrels between husband and wife, ill treatment by the husband or wife, conflicts with in-laws, and immoral conduct of spouse or inability to fulfill marital obligations due to disease or personal nature. Alcohol addiction and substance abuse prevent marital bliss because of the change in behaviour pattern which makes an adverse impact on peace and physical security.

18.3.5 Marital Infidelity

Geeta was hardly seventeen when she met Samir. They were attracted to each other. They had common friends so it was easier to meet on regular basis. They became very much attached to each other and expressed desire to their parents to get married. Sachin was from a different caste and lower socio economic status. Geeta's parents disapproved the relationship and forced her to marry someone else. She had no choice but to give in to the demand of her parents. But she continued to be in touch with Samir. She is married and has a child but experiences extreme emotional closeness to Samir. She lacked commitment in making her marriage work because she felt more loyal to Samir than her husband.

Marital infidelity is becoming increasingly common in marriages today. Some possible reasons for infidelity may be unhappy family life, loneliness, sexual incompatibility, dysfunction, dissatisfaction with one's partner, need for excitement, feeling neglect of need for more emotional closeness, low self worth, self esteem, opportunities etc. Sexual infidelity refers to sexual activity with someone other than one's partner. Emotional infidelity occurs when the partner channels emotional resources such as romantic love, time and attention to someone else.

18.3.6 Changing Laws

The new laws on marriage and divorce are responding to the reality and also in turn changing the format of marriage and divorce. Till the middle of 1950s the Hindu law did not permit divorce, though among some castes the local customs did sanction the dissolution of marriage. It was only a few decades ago that the law makers swung Hindu society from the rigidly reactionary position of ‘sacramental marriage’ to the acutely modern notion of ‘divorce by mutual consent’.

On all India level, the Special Marriage Act was passed in 1954 and the Hindu Marriage Act in 1955 which legally permitted divorce to Hindus, including Sikhs, Jains and Buddhists but excluding the Scheduled Tribes. The Hindu Marriage Act was amended in 1976 and 1981.

In the year 1936, an Act was passed for Parsis in India called the 'Parsi Marriage and Divorce Act'. Under the Muslim law, the contract of marriage can be dissolved either with the intervention of the court or without its intervention. By the judicial decree, the divorce can be obtained either on the basis of the Dissolution of Muslim Marriage Act, 1939, or on the basis of the Muslim law. Without court's intervention, marriage can be broken either by husband at his will (*talaq*) or by mutual consent of the husband and wife (*khula* or *kohl* and *mubarat*).

The Indian Christian Marriage Act 1872 was amended in 1891, 1903, 1911, 1920 and 1928. The church does not approve and appreciate divorce but Christians practise divorce too. The Indian Divorce Act, 1869, was the first legislation in respect to dissolution of marriages for Christians. It refers to conditions under which divorce may be obtained. Even today getting a divorce can often be more difficult than getting married even if the divorce is by mutual consent. But the laws today are creeping into the privacy of the marital home. Equality is now the lens that the judiciary and parliament are looking through in their new interpretation of marriage and divorce laws. Some examples of it are Domestic Violence Act 2005, the Hindu Succession Act 2005, compulsory registration of marriage, marital rape in the list of violence, indifference, frigidity, abstinence from sex counted as cruelty. The new laws are making the process of seeking divorce easier compared to the past.

18.3.7 Changing Societal Attitudes Towards Divorce

If someone asked you "Do you ever intend to marry?", like most people you would have respond to this question with a "Yes". But what if someone asked you, "Do you anticipate ever being divorced?", after pondering over the question for a while you might respond with a "no", "don't know", "may be", or "yes". If you would have had to answer the same question ten years earlier, it is quite possible that you would have said "no" in shock and disbelief. Hardly anyone, prior to entering marriage seriously entertains the possibility that their marriage might one day end in divorce. But reality cannot be denied. There is rapid change in cultural attitudes and values towards divorce. The social constraints that kept the unhappy partners from separation operate less strongly now. This does not imply that the social stigma attached to divorce no more exists. The stigma is very much present. But the influence of media, changing nature of legal system, personal experiences, hearsay experiences have brought in a notable change to create more positive and healthy attitudes towards divorce. The fear of stigma and social disapproval and victimization is lessening due to decreased social, legal and moral constraints. This makes it possible for an unhappy couple to consider the possibility of divorce. To say that there are no social constraints against divorce any more is probably an overstatement, but yes, constraints have nevertheless weakened!

After reading the above factors which influence separation and divorce, it must be clearer to you as to why marriages fail or are failing. The factors mentioned above are not the only ones. The dynamics of marriage and divorce may vary from individual to family to caste, socio economic status etc. Also the causes may differ depending upon at what point of time in marriage they occur i.e. in the first few years of marriage, mid-stage or late in life.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Read the below statements and decide whether they are 'true' or 'false':

- a) If the wife is employed the relationship will end in divorce one day.
- b) The social, legal and moral constraints for seeking divorce have weakened today.
- c) The changing laws of marriage and divorce are only a reflection of the present day realities.
- d) Lack of commitment to make the marriage work may be a possible reason for divorce.

18.4 ISSUES ASSOCIATED WITH SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

From a large number of potential life events, divorce is one of the most stressful. Divorce in itself is a multifaceted event containing numerous dimensions. Marriage creates a state of legalized intimacy between two persons. No other relationship can replace the feeling of being married.

As you know very well that Indian family is a system of interdependent and reciprocal relationships. Thus, any problem or crisis which affects one family member will have an impact on all the family members and reactions of each member of the family will, in turn, affect all other family members.

Thus in a family where a couple is experiencing marital conflict or is in process of separation or divorce, the impact of marriage breakdown will be felt by all the family members. It not only entails a breakdown of ties between the spouses, but it also disturbs parent - child, sibling - sibling and man-woman in-law relationships drastically. Let us together understand the issues of separation and divorce.

18.4.1 Children

Parental conflict is detrimental to the well-being of children and has profound effect on the overall development of children throughout their formative years as well as in later years. It is likely that when these children attain adulthood they may face problems in their own married life. The process of separation and divorce becomes so strenuous that at times it impairs the ability of parents to understand and meet the developmental and emotional needs of their children. During the period of marital tension, both parents are so caught up with the intensity of their own conflicts and their struggle for emotional and physical survival that they may often parent their children with less intensity, attention and care. It may happen that parents force children to take sides in a quarrel, use them as pawns, overprotect or overindulge in their children with the fear of losing their affection, displace their anger and resentment on the children or may even blame their children for their problems. In India a number of couples

prefer to remain in maladjusted or unhappy marriages for the sake of children. However, even in such 'empty shell' marriages, the hostility and conflict between the parents affects the well-being of children and their perception of 'marriage'.

If you are asked to make a choice between your mother and father whom will you choose? This question may sound strange but imagine the psyche of the child whose parents are having a tussle over his / her guardianship!

Whether the divorcee is a parent or not affects the well-being of an individual. A higher level of psychological distress is experienced by a divorcee who is a parent compared to a non-parent. The custodian parent usually has greater influence on the child. The parent with visitation rights usually feels a loss of parental status, which may result in depression and regression. The single parent is faced with a new set of problems in rearing the child. Economic and time constraints add to the burden. The dynamics of parent-child interactions will change. It is important to talk with the child(ren) about life, divorce, feelings experienced by the parent etc. depending upon the age and maturity level of children.

18.4.2 Psychological Distress

One of the reasons it feels so good to be newly married is the rewarding sensation that out of the whole world you have been selected and one of the reasons that divorce feels so awful is that you have been de-selected. (Bohannon, 1970 p 33 in Hamanna & Riedman, 1991).

Our 'social self' demands appreciation and encouragement from significant others. The craving for recognition is obviously demanded between husband and wife where the relationship is most intimate. One of the major crises of divorce is an emotional one. In most cases the decision to repudiate the marriage is not arrived at together by the two spouses. The process actually begins much earlier before the couple actually deals with the divorce. Initially partners may deny the existence of marital problems and blame each other. But an emotional divorce or a withdrawal of emotional investment in the marriage by at least one partner or sometimes even both of them precede the physical divorce. Gradually the partners and other family members recognize that the marriage is disintegrating and experience ambivalent feelings. When the partner who initiates divorce reveals the feelings to the other partner, his / her world may come crumbling down and his / her dreams and aspirations may be shattered. Marital dissolution is a hard experience for partners as well as the family members. It may be comparatively less stressful for the partner who initiates divorce. A divorced individual often suffers from anxiety, depression, aggression, feelings of incompetence, rejection, inferiority complex and loneliness. A divorce can affect two individuals in very different ways. For one person it may be a starting point for a new and better life, but for the other it may be a trigger for a serious life crisis. Or it may also be that both partners may experience similar feelings.

The level of psychological distress is significantly higher in the time immediately after divorce. If it is accompanied with losing the custody of one's child(ren), then loss of parental status causes severe mental trauma or an emotional breakdown. If divorce happens in later life, then both partners may experience severe identity crisis, feelings of despair and sometimes have suicidal thoughts.

Traditionally the wives are responsible for their husbands' emotional needs so men may suffer more compared to women as far as the emotional domain is concerned.

The greatest problem of singlehood is loneliness. Loneliness may cause serious damage to one's emotional and mental health. Company of friends and family members may not fill the gap of loneliness and the individual may yearn for a 'certain' and 'intimate' type of relationship.

Continued bonds of attachment to a partner from whom one is divorced are associated with the symptoms of anxiety, depression, hostility and anger. Most divorcees adjust to their new life situation, but no matter how rationally a divorce is handled, it does include a sense of great loss and emptiness.

Psychological healing after divorce is a very slow process for most individuals. It may take months, years or even a lifetime!

18.4.3 Social Network, Support and Stigma

Divorce is believed to be the only family crisis during which social support falls away when needed the most. The reaction of parents and family members of the divorcing individuals is very crucial. Among the parental and familial behaviours harmful to divorce adjustment are punishing the adult child, psychologically repossessing the adult child, denying the divorce due to societal pressures, focusing solely on problems and future of grand children and personalizing the divorce and taunting the adult child if it was a marriage out of self choice.

A large number of both male and female divorcees continue to live with their parents after divorce. The issue of living arrangement is crucial when the wife continues to live with her family of orientation and the brother is married and has his subfamily. If a woman chooses to live alone, it is yet another challenging task accompanied by social speculations on one's character. Most men continue to live with their parents after divorce. Interpersonal social sphere is a major area of disruption and relationship with friends is a complex issue. Old friends may initially appear supportive and helpful. They rapidly place themselves at distances often as a result of conflicting loyalties to the two former spouses. Friends and relatives develop a number of attitudes towards the single person like ambivalence regarding the divorce, sexual attraction to the divorced person, stereotypes of divorced individual and an unconscious fear that the same will happen to us. They might view a divorced person as a possible threat to their relationship. Loss of friends is a significant stressor. The divorced individuals undergo change of attitudes and feelings regarding interpersonal involvement. A sense of vulnerability influences social activity and they feel they have less in common with their married friends.

Relationships with other people become altered by the introduction of the element of divorce into one's life. One becomes the victim of gossip and gets a label of "divorcee", "problem individual". Gossip in all its poisonous and malicious forms is highly irritating, psychologically disturbing and dangerous for one's mental health. Sometimes the person lives with the label all his / her life. At times one is compelled to terminate some social relations and cherished friendships. Surrounded with the loss of social support, network of friends and a tag of

divorcee a person is put in a situation where old values, definitions, schemes of life organization lose their validity and meaning!

18.4.4 Resources

Rema is 54 years old. Her husband is living in Mumbai. She left studies midway after marriage to play the role of a homemaker and always thought of her family as her asset. She did not have a bank account or balance of her own. Her husband was her main source of financial support. But one day it all came to an end. Her husband divorced her and remarried someone else. After 23 years of their relationship her marriage was suddenly void. Her family life fell off as if it was a tower made of a pack of cards. She had no money, no required qualification, no job and neither the age to overcome the loss.

Shekhar got married to Monica but soon realized that the relationship was not what he expected. She was too possessive and forced him to stay with her parents. One day she packed her bags and left never to come back. Shekhar was confused and heartbroken. For seven long years they lived in separation. In the span of seven years he bought a car and new house but still felt the emptiness. At the time of divorce being finalized, Monica demanded an alimony which was almost the sum he had made all his life (out of court settlement). Shekhar had the responsibility of his parents and pending installments. But still he gave away all what she had asked. At the end of it the only thing he had was peace of mind which he cherished.

The above two examples must have given you an idea that yet another effect of divorce and separation is the domain of resources. While men suffer more emotionally, women suffer more economically. Standard of living declines especially for women. Mothers with custody of children often experience economic hardship especially if they are unemployed. It is difficult to support self and children from the financial allowance (if received) from the former husband. This forces the woman to either find work for self or send the children for earning.

For men the alimony represents another economic problem. It is possible that men, whose income decreases following a divorce are forced to change, alter or curtail their activities and spend time alone. For poor people it is definitely impossible to support two households i.e. pay maintenance allowance to their former wives and also maintain selves and family with the remaining income.

Women more often receive custody of children and they lose a resource (the partner) who previously contributed to the household maintenance. Issues related to resources are inflated if the individual lives alone and not with the family. Issues also arise with the distribution of assets, belongings and properties which were jointly owned. This again will be interplayed with various factors like years of marriage, age of partner, health, income level and qualifications.

18.4.5 Sexual Needs and Everyday Issues

In most cases at the time of divorce and separation both partners are sexually active. Sexually instincts are very much present and do not die down after divorce. Having lost an intimate partner within marriage involves difficulty in curbing one's sexual desire. Suppressing the sexual desire may be followed by frustration. It may happen that an individual becomes disorganized in terms of

sexual behaviour as well as many other aspects of personality. Divorce does not leave the domain of one's habits and regular life unaffected. Tasks and roles which were shared are now to be carried out single handedly and more importantly skillfully. A lot of energy and time of the divorced and separated individual goes in doing routine tasks like cooking, banking, ironing, polishing of shoes, washing dishes, clothes, monitoring, supervising the maid and the list is endless. When marriage is broken, habits struggle to find their customary expression but their failure to do so bring unrest, irritation and dissatisfaction.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Why will the impact of divorce be felt by other family members apart from the couple?

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2. During the process of divorce, why are children the forgotten victims most of the time?

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18.5 ADJUSTING AND COPING AFTER SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

Adjustment and coping with divorce depends upon factors like presence of stressors in a person's life, availability of resources with the person to deal with the stressors and the perception of the stressor event.

Very often separation and divorce are a beginning of a series of disruptive change; as you have studied in this Unit. Children, economic hardships, social network, loss of support, stigma, dissatisfied sexual and emotional needs and other minor everyday issues cause tremendous stress to the individual. It is important to note that stress is not an isolated experience; rather it is influenced and it further influences the problems in other spheres.

The presence of stress is inevitable, but an individual's definition of the event plays a pivotal role in adjusting to the situation. People who hold conservative attitudes towards divorce are likely to be more depressed and less happy after the separation compared to people who have liberal attitudes. People who initiate

divorce or who want the marriage to end may experience happiness and a sense of mental well-being after divorce.

Availability of resources to cope with the stress hastens the process of adjustment. Resources like education, employment and income aid the person in rising above the situation. Educated people are at an advantage because they might have better problem solving skills. Their qualification makes it easier for them to seek employment. Employment provides individuals with financial independence and increase in one's self worth. Seeking further education and professional support is also a coping strategy.

Coping also involves re-alignment of social relationships and networks. You know the reasons why divorced persons pull away from their already existing and married friends. New intimate relationships, remarriage and similar friends make it easier for individuals to cope with negative feelings associated with divorce. As we have seen earlier, many individuals continue to maintain contact with their former spouses especially if they have children. Maintaining a contact with ex-spouse on a regular basis is sometimes a choice or a compulsion. When it is a choice, it acts as an effective coping strategy. Partners continue to remain friends and be at each other's side in times of need. Here adjustment is associated with the thought that "I have not lost him/ her completely".

A divorced individual is faced with adapting to a large number of negative life changes in a short time. This may overwhelm their ability to cope and lead to mental trauma. Most of the problems recede with time and the individual eventually reaches equilibrium and a reintegration into the society. Some may also require counselling and professional help to facilitate the process of adjusting to divorce and coping with the loss of the marital partner.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Fill in the blanks:-

- a) Adjustment and coping with divorce depends upon factors like in a person's life, ... with the person and the of the stressor event.
- b) Resources like, ... and aid the person in rising above the crisis of separation and divorce.
- c) Employment provides individuals with and increase in one's
- d) Coping involves of social relationships and networks.

18.6 ALTERNATIVES AND FUTURE OPTIONS AFTER SEPARATION AND DIVORCE

Incidents of crisis like past failures, rejection, loss, separation, divorce and guilt can leave scars in one's life and can undermine a new venture or an intimate relationship in future. Once the crisis "hits bottom", situation often begins to improve. Families and individuals look back and analyze the past times with an objective to return to some state of normalcy, make agreements and take decisions about the future. Future options and alternatives are explored either by trial and error or by thoughtful planning. Some individuals do not recover at all and become stagnant in their circumstance because divorce may be considered both as an adjustment to a family crisis and as a family crisis in itself.

Now, let us take a look at some possible alternatives and future options after divorce and separation. Options and alternatives may vary from being chosen or forced upon.

18.6.1 Singlehood

The moment a couple is separated or divorced, their status becomes 'single'. All divorced and separated individuals experience the status of singlehood at one point of time in life. Depending upon one's economic, emotional and socio-cultural condition, one may choose either to live with parents or alone. The presence of children also influences one's single status. Sometimes divorced individuals opt to remain single as they feel it is their moral obligation towards their children. A single person living with one's family of orientation is faced with new issues and dynamics.

18.6.2 Single Parenting

Mostly single parents are women, but increasing rate of divorces in India also increases the likelihood of single fathers. Socio-economic status is an important variable in causing stress to the single parents. Those fathers who seek custody perceive a more positive interaction with their children than fathers who just agree to assume the custody or are forced to.

18.6.3 Co-parenting

The alternative of co-parenting arises when both partners receive joint custody of children. It is possible if both partners desire it and are living in the same geographical location. These arrangements work best when parents are on friendly terms and enjoy open communication. Both partners share in decision-making and other responsibilities for child(ren). Children also live alternately with each parent on equitable basis. When there is a legal battle over child custody, it interferes with the ability to co-parent. The children live with either parent and their contact with the other parent mostly diminishes.

18.6.4 Remarriage

Marrying again after being divorced is an alternative that many individuals are choosing these days. When individuals remarry, they create complex sets of new relationships resulting in many different family configurations.

Due to social stigma and disapproval attached to 'divorce', an arranged remarriage is difficult in India especially if it's a woman. The situation worsens if there are children out of the previous marriage. It is easier to find a partner for remarriage if one is in love or selects a partner through self choice. Reality replaces fantasies and courtship before remarriage may differ in many aspects from courtship before first marriage. Persons involved may view themselves as mature adults and mostly know what they are looking for. At times they may be more cautious and be wary of repeating their previous marriage experience. The increased incidence of divorce and remarriage has led to greater cultural tolerance. But the society still tends to treat them as abnormalities and aberrations of the "natural" family. The rites of remarriage with their relative lack of rituals and ceremonies reflect this attitude.

18.6.5 Intimate and Emotional Relationships

Moving from a coupled "we" state to a single "me" state is an emotional roller coaster that most persons are ill prepared to navigate. The end of marriage creates an urgent requirement to fill the gaps of one's social, emotional and sexual needs. Seeking an emotional and intimate partner enhances self esteem, decreases loneliness, eases separation distress, facilitates establishment of social networks and provides partners who may share problems and concerns. The emotional support which was sought with the former spouse is searched elsewhere. Sometimes such relationships help in better adjusting to divorce. At times individuals fear new relationships thinking that it will be similar to their previous, failed marriage. Those who have continued attachments to the former spouse may experience guilt feelings that prevent them from engaging in satisfying intimate relationship. Marriage being the only universal sanction for sexual intercourse puts divorced and separated individuals under severe psychological stress. Society does not provide any positive reinforcement to the sexual needs and worth of single individuals. Sexual needs can increase the loneliness and desire for a new sex partner. It is likely that a person may start seeking sexual satisfaction with casual companions and have multiple sex partners.

18.6.6 Patch-up or Establishing Continued Relationship with Former Spouse

Mandeep and Sukhvinder separated and lived apart for a few years and got remarried to each other again. This happens rarely but happens. Partners live apart and come together again. This is more possible in divorce and separation after many years of marriage. Some partners continue to remain friends after separation and divorce. The likelihood of friendship and continued contacts depend upon the quality of relationship while married, attitude towards divorce, circumstances in which the divorce or separation occurred. Mostly it is the child(ren) who are the bridge between the two partners. A couple seeking divorce might come to you together, hold hands in the waiting area and look like they are best of friends. Difficult as it sounds, it is admirable that people can relate to their spouse on different levels. Many of these are couples who started out as good friends. If couples can't work out on one equation they don't want to lose on the spouse altogether. Another way to live happily ever after!

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Under what circumstances does the option of co-parenting work best?

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2. Is it easy to get remarried after divorce in India?

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3. What are the problems associated with single parenting?

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18.7 NEEDS OF THE RECONSTITUTED INDIVIDUALS

After reading what you have up till now, what do you think are the needs of the divorced and separated individuals? Do a quick free listing before you read further. Listed below are the needs of the reconstituted individuals which may vary from individual to individual.

- 1) Separation and divorce inflicts a painful emotional wound that must heal. **Reestablishing** one's **emotional balance** is an essential need for the divorced individual.
- 2) **Dealing with anger** is very essential. Individuals have feelings of betrayal or hostility towards their former spouse, or feel angry towards God, society, children etc. Aggression needs to have positive **catharsis**. Hitting the pillow, kicking the bed, crying and screaming may help. Bottled up feelings of anger may lead to self pity, self destruction and hatred which may hamper healing.
- 3) **Support** from **parents, kin and friends**. We are social beings and it is difficult to overcome in isolation. The role of 'significant others' in providing emotional support and warmth helps regain one's emotional equilibrium. One needs to feel that he / she is wanted, important and is secure.

- 4) **Support of society and community.** Being stigmatized, victimized and labeled as a 'wrong doer' is a threat to one's mental well-being. It brings intense feelings of personal failure and withdrawal from social contacts and functions. One needs to find recognition in the society on the basis of other factors and achievements rather than just the marital status.
- 5) One may be a great parent, but yet it may happen that in the time of emotional burden, children are unconsciously or consciously the forgotten victims. A divorced individual needs **help, support and guidance for child care.**
- 6) **Financial independence** is crucial for a good life with adequate standard of living.
- 7) Healing at one's **own pace.** Most people experience a period of mourning. Time is the only medicine to emotional pain. One must not pretend to be happy and resist feeling sad. Admit your feelings and give time to yourself because you deserve it. Let others know that you are healing.
- 8) **Acceptance of the fact** that you cannot get together again. Futile attempts in reconciliation with the spouse are painful and hamper adjustments to divorce. If you are in touch, maintain healthy boundaries.
- 9) **Pampering** one's own **self.** Be gentle with self. Do not indulge in self blame. Treat yourself with care, consideration and affection. Do things which you like. Listen to music, watch movies, sleep late, take a long shower, eat your favorite food, read a book and visit friends and relatives.
- 10) If you are **feeling happy**, acknowledge it. It is ok not to feel depressed.
- 11) **Good nutrition and rest.** Divorce can be accompanied by psychosomatic problems. Good nutritious diet and adequate rest is very essential. One needs to caution oneself of addictive habits like overindulgence in alcohol or cigarettes.
- 12) Satisfaction of one's **sexual needs** as sex is a basic need and most individuals are sexually active while they are divorced.
- 13) **Thinking positive** and rationally about the situation is important. Redefining the meanings of marriage and divorce is essential to adjust faster and better.
- 14) Seeking professional help may be a need which many a times the individual may not identify.

18.8 ROLE OF THE COUNSELLOR AND FAMILY THERAPIST

Well, by now you must be feeling fully equipped with the pathology of marital conflicts like separation and divorce and ready to go. But remember that while counselling individuals with divorce, you may be faced with a new learning each day. With the advent of rapid macro, micro and personal level changes you may be faced with a variety of problems. A client may come up to you and share a problem which you least expected and never thought it to be a problem.

You are clear with the fact that most marriages in India are between families than individuals. Therefore counselling should be based on Indian realities and not western. You also know that the traditional Indian society is not very keen on seeking help outside family. The family matters are kept within the family and its well wishers. Professional help is sought only when matters become too complicated for anyone to handle or when there is a threat to the individual or family. Where marriage is celebrated with announcement, divorce is kept a silent secret in India. Thus the role of the counsellor and family therapist is very crucial. It is also important what you are counselling for i.e. whether to help adjust with divorce, or for mediation or separation. Be clear with your role and then proceed.

Some Tips for Counselling:

- Counselling for separation and divorce in India has to be based on the understanding of concept and nature of marriage and divorce in the conventional as well as contemporary times. It is important to strike a balance between the two. The family, individual or couple (your client) may be in either stage or also in period of transition. Identifying and recognizing the client's definition and perception of the divorce and separation is very essential.
- Being open, neutral and comfortable with your own self is the most important step. Your personal reactions, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and values and ideas regarding divorce, separation, and gender roles should not create a bias for your clients. For example, one counsellor may believe that when a relationship threatens personal growth, loses its essence or suffocates an individual, one must quit or seek divorce; another may believe that being married is very important, and one should never seek a divorce; it's bad. Do not think on extreme ends.
- Do not take sides in lieu of your ideologies or personal assumptions. It is important to work as a team. For example, a man may feel threatened by a female counsellor if she always talks of women rights and feminism in an inflicting manner. On the other hand a female client may be threatened by a male counsellor fearing that he will have traditional ideas and will not be able to relate to her. Be yourself but don't be rigid. Step into another's shoes and don't just stand, walk a few steps and see how it feels.
- Develop a relationship of trust and confidentiality. Invest time in rapport building and understand your client's problems and needs. There is no harm in being a nonjudgmental listener. It is not compulsory to react to everything your client says. Work towards building a relationship of openness and frankness. Some clients are hesitant to share a few things like sexual incompatibility or an abusive relationship.
- Be close but at the same time maintain a distance. One woman was so lonely and shattered that she actually packed her bags and came to the counsellor's house in the middle of the night. You cannot take everyone home. Help your clients be strong, independent and detached from negative feelings for self and others.
- If your client is living in a fictional world, show him / her the reality. Real and practical life is different from good intentions and ideal dreams. But watering a dead plant may eventually lead to increase in frustration.

- Identify subtle factors that disturb the individual. This may range from taunting parents, suppressed sexual desires, inability to cope with the loneliness, stigma, feeling intimate towards a friend etc.
- Remember that the “former spouse” of your client is not the only source of stress.
- The cause and patterns of marital conflict in India vary according to socio-cultural and economic factors. Separation, divorce, abandonment and desertion may have different meanings and effects in slum populations, middle class, elite class or rural, tribal communities. So do not look at any problem in isolation. Place it in the societal, cultural, economic and political context.
- It is important to understand the client’s perception of the problem. An extremely disturbed client may ventilate for hours together for the first few meetings and just want you to listen. This may happen when a person is in a state of self pity. There are chances of exaggeration. The intention might be to gain sympathy, attention or cover up one’s faults.
- When some people come for counselling they know what they want and where they want to reach, but are unsure how to do it. Some of them do not know what is happening and where they want to go and why. Work it out together make the client, a write the advantages and disadvantages of possible alternatives, and ways and means to reach them. Work together and plan out the future.
- Help the person identify one’s own strengths and skills. During the entire process of counselling your effort should be make your client independent. Counselling cannot go on for a lifetime!
- Provide encouragement and praise at every effort made towards achievement.
- Your clients might ask you about information like future options, referral services, further education, and employment. Be equipped with information.
- There might be instances when your client says nothing but weeps continuously. It’s ok to cry. Provide comfort and the right emotional atmosphere.
- A marriage breakdown does not always mean one has to mourn all the time or feel sad about it. Some divorces may be a starting point for happy and fulfilling life. Let your clients recognize and acknowledge the presence of happiness, well-being, and peace of mind or euphoria.
- Things may not always happen the way you thought or planned them to be. You may be faced with failures and unexpected behaviours. Be focused and patient. Remember no lunch is free! Take it as a challenge.
- Keep a diary of your mistakes and try not to repeat them. Keep a diary of your learning and use it in future. Maintain a record of your achievements and praise yourself when you are low. You also need it. Remember you are not God! You are just another human being. Take great care of yourself because counselling is a big responsibility. If you are ok your clients are ok!

Check Your Progress Exercise 6

- Note:** a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided.
b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1. Why is counselling in India different from that of the West?

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2. Taking care of self is most important in the process of counselling and family therapy. Why?

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18.9 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit you studied about the concept of separation and divorce in India and the factors associated with it. You learned that all the rituals, ceremonies, dynamics and expectations of the Indian family system are focused towards maintaining the continuity of marital relationship. Separation and divorce are not the options which individuals and families look towards in a healthy manner. You learned about the different reasons why marriages fail. In the process of reading you must have realized that these reasons are not comprehensive and complete but may vary with individual personality traits and many other factors. There are numerous issues associated with separation and divorce which may be influenced by personal and cultural factors. Adjustment after divorce is difficult though not impossible. Divorced and separated individuals may explore future options which may suit them best and fulfill their needs to be reconstituted. The role of the counsellor and family therapist is crucial and challenging and has to be placed in the socio-cultural context and Indian realities.

18.10 GLOSSARY

Aberration	: Deviation, abnormality, oddness
Consensual	: Consent and willingness
Compatibility	: Well-matched, well-suited, similar in temperament, companionable
Libido	: Sexual desire
Nuances	: Degree, gradation

Psychosomatic	: Illness or disorder whose symptoms are caused by mental processes of the sufferer rather than immediate physiological causes
Stigma	: Shame, disgrace and dishonour
Significant Others	: Any person who has great importance in an individual's life and well-being

18.11 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1. Separation can be judicial or emotional. In judicial separation the marriage is not yet dissolved and the partners cannot remarry till the case is finally decided. In an emotional separation the partners continue to remain married but they live apart. Desertion; either temporary or permanent is illegal and unofficial and is an irresponsible departure from the home on the part of either husband or wife. Divorce is legal dissolution of marital ties or final termination of a bonafide marriage.
2. Compromise, adjustment, duty and maintaining family honour are expected out of an individual to maintain and strengthen the marital bond.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1.
 - a) False
 - b) True
 - c) True
 - d) True

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1. Indian family is a system of interdependent and reciprocal relationships. Any problem or crisis which affects one family member will have an impact on all the family members and reactions of each member of the family will, in turn, affect all other family members. Thus in a family where a couple is experiencing marital conflict or is in process of separation or divorce, the impact of marriage breakdown will be felt by all the family members.
2. The process of separation and divorce becomes so strenuous that at times it impairs the ability of parents to understand and meet the developmental and emotional needs of their children. During the period of marital tension, both parents may get so caught up with the intensity of their own conflicts and their struggle for emotional and physical survival that they may often parent their children with less intensity, attention and care.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1.
 - a) Presence of stressors, resources, perception
 - b) Education, employment and income
 - c) Financial independence, self worth
 - d) Re-alignment

Check Your Progress Exercise 5

Separation, Divorce and Future Options

1. The option of co-parenting works best when both partners desire it and are living in the same geographical location. It is important that parents are still good friends and share an open communication.
2. No, it is not easy to remarry after divorce in India. This happens due to the social stigma attached to the divorced individual. Arranged marriages are really difficult especially if the divorced individual is a female. The situation accentuates to create more problems if there are children out of the previous marriage. The Indian society still treats 'divorce' as a deviation to the accepted norm of 'family'.
3. Single parenting is associated with many problems. Women are faced with economic hardships especially if they are unemployed. Men find it difficult with resources like time, energy and the required skills to parent a child(ren) single handedly. If the option of single parenting is out of choice for either partner the psychological burden is lesser.

Check Your Progress Exercise 6

1. The meaning and significance of marriage and divorce in India are very different from that in the West. Issues related to marital life are considered a personal domain in India and people do not seek counselling as the first option. It is considered a taboo to share problems outside home. Thus one needs to keep in mind the Indian context and then go ahead or else all the efforts will be in vain.
2. Dealing with crisis which others are facing is less challenging if you are at peace with yourself. You can only make others comfortable if you are comfortable with your own self. You can persuade others to think differently if you are capable of it yourself. Charity begins at home!

18.12 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1. Discuss some marriage ceremonies and rituals in different religions which have an implied meaning of marriage being a permanent relationship.
2. Analyse the reasons as to why some marriages lead to divorce.
3. Explain the issues associated with separation and divorce.
4. Discuss in detail the domains of adjustment and coping after divorce and separation.
5. What are some of the alternatives and future options after separation and divorce?
6. List the needs of the reconstituted individuals after separation and divorce.
7. Evaluate the role of the counsellor, family therapist and mediator while dealing with individuals who are separated or divorced.

18.13 FURTHER READINGS AND REFERENCES

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MCFTE-001 MARITAL AND FAMILY THERAPY AND COUNSELLING

OPTIONAL PAPER 1

Block 1 : Assessment Methods

- Unit 1 : Interview Methods
- Unit 2 : Essential Skills for Family Assessment
- Unit 3 : Self Report Scales
- Unit 4 : Research Tools in Family Therapy

Block 2 : Marital Therapy

- Unit 5 : Emotion Focused Couples Therapy
- Unit 6 : Cognitive Behavioural Sex Therapy
- Unit 7 : Marriage Enrichment Techniques
- Unit 8 : Interviewing Skills and Circular Questioning in Assessment – A Case Study

Manual for Supervised Practicum (MCFTE-004)