

---

# UNIT 1 RURAL WOMEN: STATUS AND DEVELOPMENT STRATEGIES

---

## Contents

- 1.0 Objectives
- 1.1 Introduction
- 1.2 Socio-demographic Status
- 1.3 Social Status
- 1.4 Economic Status
- 1.5 Political Status
- 1.6 Critical Areas of Concern
- 1.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 1.8 Suggested Readings

---

## 1.0 OBJECTIVES

---

After studying this unit, you should be able to :

- 1 understand the overall status of rural women in India;
- 1 know socio-demographic characteristics of rural women;
- 1 understand economic status of women;
- 1 know the political status of women;
- 1 understand problems face by rural women;
- 1 suggest ways and means for their advancement.

---

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

---

On the threshold of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the country is witnessing a major ‘women’s upsurge’, which is the result of the cumulative and interactive effect of the sustained efforts of government, the women’s movement and the civil society at various fronts over the last two decades. In this process, an active and grassroots level leadership is emerging among women. If properly harnessed, this can be a very effective and catalytic agent for transforming the social conditions of women in the country. There are at least two positive indicators of this ‘upsurge’ and a negative one, which is indicative of women’s assertion – of their rights for justice, for equality of status and level of empowerment.

The provisional results of Census 2001, registering a change in female literacy – from 22% in 1971 to 54% in 2001 – indicates that India’s women have reached a ‘critical mass’ that foretells marked changes in human energy and social change. The second indicator can be derived from women’s participation in the panchayat and municipal elections after, the 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendments, both as candidates and as voters. Both these indicators have their cascading effect on society, cutting across caste, communities and religious groups. For example, women in the minority communities and some Adivasi groups have not only organised themselves, but have initiated dialogues within their own communities and with the state for improving their legal participatory rights within the family, the community,

and the state. The efforts of the Christian, Muslim and tribal women in various parts of the country are pointers in the direction.

The negative indicator is provided by the data on crime against women, which is on the rise even though much of the domestic violence against women are not fully captured by the statistics. As the women assert their rights in a male dominated patriarchal society, they have to face resistance and opposition leading to violence. The challenging task of social empowerment of women in India in the coming years is how best to further unfold the positive changes and counter the forces of violence in all its forms through a process of education, regulation and awareness.

The available results of the recent Census have brought the issues of population, health, education, employment and social security to the 'center stage'. The natural population pyramid of the country is changing. The sex-wise pyramids are becoming increasingly dissimilar, creating grave gender-based imbalances and disadvantages. The reverse employment pyramid of women, the sharp decline in sex-ratio of under seven population, more women than men in the 60+ age group, continuing sex-wise differentials in literacy, IMR and CMR, etc. are the issues, which need immediate and concerted attention during the Tenth Plan.

Several research studies, including National Family Survey (2000), were conducted, which revealed that there were many issues related to women, which needed attention. Some of these are:

- 1 Women had no access to political participation.
- 1 They lacked organisation in groups, and were consequently isolated.
- 1 They had no access to credit or resources.
- 1 They lacked education, vocational training, and skills to earn a livelihood.
- 1 Women's health and nutritional status was poor, with around 50% women aged 15-49 years being anemic.
- 1 Water and fuel were not easily available within their homes, and fodder was not easily available within a convenient distance.
- 1 In cases of medical emergencies, adequate medical attention was not available, leading to high mortality, especially maternal mortality. There is lack of good roads for speedy transportation.
- 1 In case of adverse life situations, social support measures are inadequate in rural areas, e.g. widowhood or disability.

A change in the status of the women is a good indicator of the pattern and direction of social change. If the direction of that change is towards a more egalitarian distribution of roles between men and women, in tune with the constitutional directives, then the direction of change is a wholesome one. If, however, the various modernizing processes result in an intensification of inequalities, then we are moving away from the spirit of the constitution.

Status is referred to as a position in a social system or a subsystem which is distinguishable from and, at the same time, related to other positions through its designed rights and obligation. However, status involves comparison and grading.

The Committee on the Status of Women recognized status as:

- 1 place in ritual hierarchy

- 1 financial position
- 1 independent job
- 1 educational background
- 1 political participation

In our attempt to highlight some of the major issues concerning the status of rural women, we shall broadly indicate two types of status, quantitative and qualitative. Quantitative indicators include vital statistics of birth and mortality rates, sex ratio, degree of participation in economic and political life, literacy and education. These being measurable, they might provide some broad trends. However, it is not possible to study them meaningfully without a qualitative appraisal and understanding of their limitations, especially in a field, such as women's studies. For example, socio-economic difference among women do not necessarily get reflected in macro data, such as national and state averages. The need for disaggregated data becomes compelling for developing a clearer concept of indicators of women's development. We shall discuss some of these data under two broad headings, viz., socio-cultural status and economic status, though both are interdependent.

---

## **1.2 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC STATUS**

---

The indicators we shall discuss in this section are mainly related to health, education, differential treatment given to women and the attitude of the society towards defining women's role and status.

Some of the factors affecting women's health are high female mortality rate in certain age groups, marked preference for sons and the consequent neglect of female infants, lower status of women and the general neglect of women at all ages. The other factors affecting the status are the adverse impact of frequent and excessive child bearing on the health of women, higher evidence of certain diseases in women and higher work burden and drudgery. A comprehensive view of the health and educational status of rural women is given in other units of this Block.

### **Society's Attitude towards Women**

Our customs and traditions still decide how women should dress and what norms will a widow follow. This indicates that women can not take decision by themselves. Purdah is found to be common in many parts. This custom creates a barrier in the participation of women in areas where men are important actors. While most men express disapproval of dowry, they are found to be opposed to an equal share between them and their sisters in parental property. The inequalities inherent in our traditional social structure, based on caste, community and class, have a very significant influence on the status of women in different spheres. Socially accepted rights and expected roles of women, norms governing their behaviour and of others towards them vary among different groups and regions. They are closely affected by the stage and methods of development and the position held by the group in the social hierarchy. This makes broad generalizations regarding women's status unrealistic.

Traditions and religions have a strong influence on women in guiding their lives from birth to death. It is also observed that these did not have a homogenous pattern and have undergone many changes and remodeling under the compulsions of changes in other spheres of life; especially economic and political. Nevertheless, the social

disabilities, although modified, continue. Marriage and motherhood continue to be the most honourable and religiously valuable achievement for women.

In some religious texts, women are found to be excluded from officiating at community worship. In matters of law relating to divorce, maintenance, custody and inheritance, women continue to stand at a disadvantage. Derogatory social practices and atrocities, such as rape, dowry, bride burning and so on, continue to affect women at large. They are the most vulnerable targets of political violence too. These are expressed in rape, killings of women, especially of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Other Backward Classes, who are increasingly participating in struggles for higher wages, land rights, rights to use forest produce like fodder and fuel and so on.

While the impact of various developmental policies, plans and programmes implemented over the last few decades have brought forth a perceptible improvement in the socio-economic status of women, problems like illiteracy, ignorance, discrimination and violence continue to persist even today. The following paragraphs give an account of achievements in the selected areas of demography and vital statistics; health and family welfare; literacy and education; work and employment; decision-making; political participation; etc.

### **Vital Statistics**

Women, as an independent target group, account for 495.74 million and represent 48.3 per cent of country's total population, as per the 2001 Census. Empowering women as a process demands a life-cycle approach. Therefore, every stage of their life counts as a priority in the planning process. Depending upon the developmental needs at every stage, female population has been categorized into five distinct sub-groups (population as projected for 2001). They include:

- 1 Girl children in the age-group of 0-14 years, who account for 171.50 million (34.6 per cent), deserve special attention because of the gender bias and discrimination they suffer from at such a tender age.
- 1 Adolescent girls in the age-group of 15-19 years, who account for 52.14 million (10.5 per cent), are very sensitive from the view-point of planning because of the preparatory stage for their future productive and reproductive roles in the society and family, respectively.
- 1 Women in the reproductive age-group of 15-44 years, numbering 233.72 million (47.1 per cent), need special care and attention because of their reproductive needs.
- 1 Women in the economically active age-group of 15-59 years, who account for 289.40 million (58.4 per cent), have different demands like those of education/training, employment, income generation and participation in the developmental process, decision making, etc.
- 1 The elderly women in the age-group of 60+ years, numbering 34.87 million (7.0 per cent), have limited needs mainly relating to health, financial and emotional support.

It is a widely known fact that women live longer than men. At the same time, it is also a fact that there are less number of women than men. In fact, in India, the

number of women per 1000 men has been decreasing over the years. In 1971, the figure was 930, which rose to 934 in 1981. In 1991, there were 927 women per 1000 men in India and in 2001, the figure has slightly improved to 933. It is projected that this figure will increase marginally in future and by the year 2016, there will be about 948 women per 1000 men.

With greater awareness about family planning, increased availability of family planning methods and more freedom in their use, the age-specific fertility rates have shown a decreasing trend over the years over all age-groups. In 1998, there were about 106 live births per 1000 women in the reproductive age-group (General Fertility Rate). The average number of children that a woman is expected to give birth to (Total Fertility Rate), during the entire child bearing age-group, if she experiences the current fertility pattern throughout, has also been decreasing continuously over the years. The Total Fertility Rate for 1998 was 3.2 with the figure for rural areas being slightly higher (3.5) than that in urban areas.

There has been a slight increase in the total female population of the country, from 407.1 million (48.1 per cent of total population) in 1991 to 495.7 million (48.3 per cent) in 2001. While the percentage increase of 0.2 is very marginal, increase in terms of absolute numbers was 88.6 million as against 77.1 million between 1981 and 1991. The growth rate of female population for the 1991-2001 decade was 21.79 per cent, which was 0.86 percentage points higher than that of males and 0.45 percentage points more than that of the total population. Yet, the demographic imbalances between women and men continue to exist till date.

The sex ratio, which represents the survival scene of women, registered a very marginal improvement, from 927 in 1991 to 933 in 2001. While the sex ratio in respect of all ages has increased, it has declined in the most crucial 0-6 age-group, from 945 in 1991 to 927 in 2001. Also, the same declining trend was reflected in most states, including the more economically advanced ones like Punjab and Haryana. This clearly points to the fact that economic growth may not necessarily bring about an improvement in the status of women. This, in turn, can be attributed to the discrimination that the girl child faces and the consequential problems of poor health and nutritional status. Added to these are the problems of female foeticide and female infanticide, incidences of which are on an increase.

**Table 1.1: Population by Sex and Decennial Growth Rate (1981-2001)**

*(Population in million)*

Census	Female		Male		Total	
	Population	DGR*	Population	DGR	Population	DGR
1981	330.0	24.93	353.4	24.41	683.4	24.66
1991	407.1	23.37	439.2	24.30	846.3	23.86
2001	495.7	21.79	531.3	20.93	1027.0	21.34

**Note:** \*Decennial Growth Rate

**Source:** Census of India, 1991 & Census of India, 2001: Provisional Population Totals, Registrar-General & Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

The expectation of life at birth in respect of females has been rising steadily (Table 1.3). It has increased from 55.7 years in 1981 to 65.3 at 2001, by-passing even the male life expectancy of 62.3 years and recording the highest ever increase of 5.6 years between 1989-93 and 1996-2001.

**Table 1.2: Sex Ratio (1981-2001)\***

Census	Sex Ratio
1981	934
1991	927
2001	933

**Note:** \*Sex Ratio : Females per 1,000 males

**Source:** Census of India, 2001 : Provisional Population Totals, Registrar-General & Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

**Table 1.3 : Life Expectancy at Birth (1981-2001)**

(in years)

Year	Females	Males
1981-85	55.7	55.4
1989-93*	59.7	59.0
1996-2001	65.3	62.3

**Note:** \* Based on the Sample Registration System Estimates.

**Source:** Census of India, 1991; and Census of India, 2001: Provisional Population Totals, Registrar-General & Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

## Health and Family Welfare

Women and men face somewhat different kind of health risks throughout their life span. Women are exposed to a particular or specific and major health risk due to child bearing. Good health and family planning services are important for the general well-being of the women, children and the entire family, giving women, in particular, an opportunity to decide when and how many children they want. Reduced infant mortality would give women a better chance to have the desired size of the family with fewer number of pregnancies. Discrimination against a female child is evident from the fact that girls experience higher rate of mortality in younger age-groups as compared to the boys. In 1998, the age-specific mortality rate for females in the age-group 0-4 years was 24.1 as compared to 21.1 for males. Moreover, in 1998, the female infant mortality rate was observed to be 73 as compared to male infant mortality rate of 70. Related to the problem of gender bias and the persistent discrimination against the girl child are the sex-related harmful practices of female foeticide and female infanticide leading to the most unwanted abortions and the present high rates of female infant mortality of 70.8 (1999), and female child mortality of 24.5 (1997).

While the Birth Rate has declined by 7.8 points from 33.9 in 1981 to 26.1 in 1999, the Death Rate has also declined by 3.8 points from 12.5 in 1981 to 8.7 in 1999 (Tables 1.5 & 1.6). Similarly, the effective mean age at marriage for females has also increased from 18.3 years in 1981 to 19.5 years in 1997 (Table 1.4). The Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1976, which raised the age of marriage for girls from 15 to 18 years has, no doubt, helped reduce child/early marriages and the consequent early pregnancies and birth of premature babies. At the same time, education and employment of women/girls have also played a very important role in raising the age of marriage.



**Table 1.4 : Mean Age at Marriage (1981-1997)***(in years)*

Year	Females	Males
1981	18.3	23.3
1991	19.5	23.9
1997	19.5	N.A.

**Source:** Sample Registration System Bulletins for respective years, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

**Table 1.5 : Birth Rate (1981-1999)***(per thousand)*

Year	Birth Rate
1981	33.9
1991	29.5
1999	26.1

**Source:** Sample Registration System Bulletins for respective years, Registrar General and Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

**Table 1.6 : Death Rate (1981-1999)***(per thousand)*

Year	Females	Males	Total
1981	12.7	12.4	12.5
1991	9.7	10.0	9.8
1999	8.3	9.0	8.7

**Source :** Sample Registration System Bulletins for respective years, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

However, while the female Death Rate has come down by 4.4 points from 12.7 in 1981 to 8.3 in 1999, the male Death Rate has come down by 3.4 points, i.e. from 12.4 in 1981 to 9.0 in 1991 per cent, which could have been prevented easily through better reproductive health care and nutrition. Despite the special sanction of the Medical Termination of Pregnancy (MTP) Act in 1971, illegal abortions continue to be performed by unauthorized persons like local quacks and untrained persons under unhygienic and unsafe conditions. In fact, abortions accounted for 8.9 per cent of the maternal deaths, which is quite high. Other causes of high morbidity amongst women are Reproductive Tract Infections (RTIs) and Sexually Transmitted Diseases (STDs), and greater susceptibility to cancer, malaria and tuberculosis and other diseases due to their lack of access to health care facilities. The highest number of maternal deaths in 1998 was due to haemorrhage (29.7 per cent), followed by anaemia (19 per cent) and sepsis (16.1 per cent).

In addition to the NNMB's data given above, the National Family Health Survey (NFHS)-II of 1998-99 shows that while 1.9 per cent of the adolescent married girls suffer from severe anaemia, 45.9 per cent of them suffer from moderate anaemia. If left undetected and untreated, this will lead not only to increased morbidity amongst mothers, but also to higher risk of low birth rate and higher pre-natal mortality. Poor child-rearing practices of these adolescent mothers will add to the

otherwise high mortality, morbidity and under/malnutrition amongst the infants and, thus, perpetuate the problems in the inter-generational cycle. The survey also shows that 51.8 per cent of women (15-49 years) suffer from nutritional anaemia, which can easily be prevented by providing better nutrition during their adolescent period and, more specifically, during pregnancy and lactation. Studies conducted by the Indian Council of Medical Research (ICMR), New Delhi, show that the prevalence of anaemia is the highest amongst pregnant women, ranging between 50 and 90 per cent. However, the NFHS II estimates the prevalence to be 49.7 per cent, which is substantially lower than earlier reports. What is more important is that the prevalence of moderate and severe forms of anaemia (< 8 gms per cent and < 5 gms per cent respectively) associated with adverse obstetric outcomes continues to remain high.

Although MMR has been declining from 468 in 1980 to 407 in 1998, it is still very high and, therefore, a matter of great concern (Table 1.7). The major causes responsible for this high rate have been detailed as follows (Table 1.8):

**Table 1.7 : Maternal Mortality Rate (1980-1998)**

(per one lakh live births)

Year	Maternal Mortality Rate
1980	468
1993	437
1998	407

**Source:** Sample Registration System Bulletins for respective years, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

**Table 1.8 : Percentage Distribution of Cause-Specific Maternal Mortality Deaths 1998**

Cause	Percentage
Haemorrhage	29.7
Anaemia	19.0
Sepsis	16.1
Obstructed Labour	9.5
Abortion	8.9
Toxaemia	8.3
Others	8.5

**Source :** Survey of Causes of Death (Rural), India, Annual Report, 1998, Registrar-General and Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

**Table 1.9 : Prevalence of Anaemia amongst Pregnant Women**

Category	Percentage
Normal (> 11 g/dl)	13
Mild (8-11 g/dl)	40
Moderate (5-8 g/dl)	34
Severe (< 5 g/dl)	13

**Source:** National Nutrition Monitoring Bureau (NNMB), 1996.

Gender disparities in nutrition are evident from infancy to adulthood. In fact, gender has been the most statistically significant determinant of malnutrition among young children and malnutrition is a frequent direct or underlying cause of death among



girls below age five. Girls are breast-fed less frequently and for shorter durations in infancy; in childhood and adulthood, males are fed first and better. Adult women consume approximately 1,000 fewer calories per day than men according to one estimate from Punjab. Comparison of household dietary intake studies in different parts of the country shows that nutritional equity between males and females is lower in northern than in southern states.

Nutritional deprivation has two major consequences for women: they never reach their full growth potential and are prone to anaemia. Both are risk factors in pregnancy, with anaemia ranging from 40-50 percent in urban areas to 50-70 percent in rural areas. This condition complicates childbearing and results in maternal and infant deaths, and low birth weight infants.

As adults, women get less health care than men. They tend to be less likely to admit that they are sick and they'll wait until their sickness has progressed before they seek help or help is sought for them. Studies on attendance at rural primary health centers reveal that more males than females are treated in almost all parts of the country, with greater differences in northern hospitals than southern ones, pointing to regional differences in the value placed on women. Women's socialization to tolerate suffering and their reluctance to be examined by male personnel are additional constraints in their getting adequate health care.

### **Maternal Mortality**

India's maternal mortality rates in rural areas are among the highest in the world. A factor that contributes to India's high maternal mortality rate is the reluctance to seek medical care for pregnancy – it is viewed as a temporary condition that will disappear. The estimates nationwide are that only 40-50 percent of women receive any antenatal care.

Even a woman, who has had difficulties with previous pregnancies, is usually treated with home remedies only for three reasons: the decision that a pregnant woman seeks help rests with the mother-in-law and husband; financial considerations; and fear that the treatment may be more harmful than the malady.

It is estimated that pregnancy-related deaths account for one-quarter of all fatalities among women aged 15 to 29, with well over two-thirds of them considered preventable. For every maternal death in India, an estimated 20 more women suffer from impaired health. One village-level study of rural women in Maharashtra determined on the basis of physical examinations that some 92 per cent suffered from one or more gynecological disorders.

#### **Check Your Progress I**

**Note :** a) Use the space given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

1) Write short notes on

a) Society's attitude towards women.

b) Maternal Mortality Rate.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

---

### 1.3 SOCIAL STATUS

---

Violence against women and girls is the most pervasive human rights violation in the world today. Opening the door on the subject of violence against the world's females is like standing at the threshold of an immensely dark chamber vibrating with collective anguish, but with the sounds of protest throttled back to a murmur. Where there should be outrage aimed at an intolerable status quo, there is, instead, denial and the largely passive acceptance of 'the way things are.'

Male violence against women is a worldwide phenomenon. Although not every woman has experienced it, and many expect not to, fear of violence is an important factor in the lives of most women. It determines what they do, when they do it, where they do it, and with whom. Fear of violence is a cause of women's lack of participation in activities beyond the home, as well as inside it. Within the home, women and girls may be subjected to physical and sexual abuse as punishment or as culturally justified assaults. These acts shape their attitude to life, and their expectations of themselves.

The insecurity outside the household is today the greatest obstacle in the path of women. Conscious that, compared to the atrocities outside the house, atrocities within the house are endurable, women not only continued to accept their inferiority in the house and society, but even called it sweet. In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India. Every 26 minutes, a woman is molested. Every 34 minutes, a rape takes place. Every 42 minutes, a sexual harassment incident occurs. Every 43 minutes, a woman is kidnapped. And every 93 minutes, a woman is burnt to death over dowry. One-quarter of the reported rapes involve girls under the age of 16, but the vast majority are never reported. Although the penalty is severe, convictions are rare.

#### **Women are Subordinate in Society**

Exposure to and interactions with the outside world are instrumental in determining the possibilities available to women in their daily lives. The situation of women is affected by the degree of their autonomy or capacity to make decisions both inside and outside their own household.

"The position of women in northern India is notably poor. Traditional Hindu society in northern rural areas is hierarchical and dominated by men, as evidenced by marriage customs. North Indian Hindus are expected to marry within prescribed boundaries: the bride and groom must not be related, they have no say in the matter, and the man must live outside the woman's natal village.

"Wife givers" are socially and ritually inferior to "wife takers", thus, necessitating

the provision of a dowry. After marriage, the bride moves into her husband's family. Such a bride is "a stranger in a strange place." They are controlled by the older females in the household, and their behaviour reflects on the honour of their husbands. Because emotional ties between spouses are considered a potential threat to the solidarity of the patrilineal group, the northern system tends to segregate the sexes and limit communication between spouses – a circumstance that has direct consequences for family planning and similar "modern" behaviours that affect health. A young Indian bride is brought up to believe that her own wishes and interests are subordinate to those of her husband and his family. The primary duty of a newly married young woman, and virtually her only means of improving her position in the hierarchy of her husband's household, is to bear "sons".

The perception that sons are the major source of economic security in old age is so strong in the north that "many parents, while visiting their married daughters, do not accept food or other hospitality from them. However, given women's low independent incomes and lack of control over their earnings, few can provide economic support to their parents even if parents were willing to accept it."

In the south, in contrast, a daughter traditionally marries her mother's brother or her mother's brother's son (her first cousin). Such an arrangement has a dramatic impact on women. "In southern India, men are likely to marry women to whom they are related, so that the strict distinction found in the north between patrilineal and marital relatives is absent. Women are likely to be married into family households near their natal homes, and are more likely to retain close relationships with their natal kin."

Over the past several decades, however, marriage patterns have changed markedly. Social, economic, and demographic developments have made marriages between close relatives less common, and the bride price has given way to a dowry system akin to that in the north. Nevertheless, as long as the underlying ethics of marriage in the South remains the reinforcement of existing kinship ties, the relatively favourable situation of southern Indian women is unlikely to be threatened.

### **Child Marriages**

Child marriages keep women subjugated. A 1976 amendment of the Child Marriage Restraint Act raised the minimum legal age for marriage from 15 to 18 for young women and from 18 to 21 for young men. However, in many rural communities, illegal child marriages are still common. In some rural areas, nearly half the girls between 10 and 14 are married. Because there is pressure on women to prove their fertility by conceiving as soon as possible after marriage, adolescent marriage is synonymous with adolescent childbearing: roughly 10-15 percent of all births take place to women in their teens.

The article cites a 1993 survey of more than 5,000 women in Rajasthan, which showed that 56 percent of them had married before they were 15. Barely 18 percent of them were literate and only three percent used any form of birth control other than sterilization. Sixty-three percent of the children under four years of age of these women were severely undernourished.

Each year, formal warnings are posted outside state government offices stating that child marriages are illegal, but they have little impact.

### **Dowry**

Women are kept subordinate, and are even murdered, by the practice of dowry. In India, 6,000 dowry murders are committed each year. This reality exists even

though the Dowry Prohibition Act has been in existence for 33 years, and there are virtually no arrests under the Act. Since those giving as well as those accepting dowry are punishable under the existing law, no one is willing to complain. It is only after a “dowry death” that the complaints become public. It is estimated that the average dowry today is equivalent to five times the family’s annual income and that the high cost of weddings and dowries is a major cause of indebtedness among India’s poor.

The article goes on to state, “So complete is the discrimination among women that the gender bias is extended even toward the guilty. In a bizarre trend, the onus of murder is often put on the women to protect the men. Sometimes, it is by consent. Often, old mothers-in-law embrace all the blame to bail out their sons and husbands.”

### **Inheritance**

Women’s rights to inheritance are limited and frequently violated. In the mid-1950s, the Hindu personal laws, which apply to all Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains, were overhauled, banning polygamy and giving women rights to inheritance, adoption and divorce. The Muslim personal laws differ considerably from that of the Hindus, and permit polygamy. Despite various laws protecting women’s rights, traditional patriarchal attitudes still prevail and are strengthened and perpetuated in the home.

Under Hindu law, sons have an independent share in the ancestral property. However, daughters’ shares are based on the share received by their father. Hence, a father can effectively disinherit a daughter by renouncing his share of the ancestral property, but the son will continue to have a share in his own right. Additionally, married daughters, even those facing marital harassment, have no residential rights in the ancestral home.

Even the weak laws protecting women have not been adequately enforced. As a result, in practice, women continue to have little access to land and property, a major source of income and long-term economic security. Under the pretext of preventing fragmentation of agricultural holdings, several states have successfully excluded widows and daughters from inheriting agricultural land.

### **Literacy and Educational Achievements**

The difference in the male and female primary enrolment has reduced to a great extent (104% for males and 85% for females in 2000) over the years, but still, there is a huge gap in their male and female literacy levels. In 2001, the male literacy rate was about 75% as compared to that of about 54% for the females. Even when the school enrolment reduces considerably from primary level to secondary level and above, both for boys as well as girls, the reduction is more for girls. Drop-out rates in different levels of school education are significantly more for girls as compared to boys. As observed in the NFHS-11, the cost of education has been reported to be the single largest factor for never attending school, both for boys as well as girls aged 6-17 years, who have never attended school. Education is not considered to be necessary for girls in about 13% of such cases, the figure being almost double to that of 7% for boys.

The past gains in women’s education as reflected in the female literacy rate shows an increase from 29.76 per cent in 1981 to 54.16 per cent in 2001. Also, it is encouraging to note that as revealed by the 2001 Census, for the first time, the absolute number of female illiterates has come down from 200.07 million in 1991 to 189.6 million in 2001. Similarly, the gap between female and male illiterates and drop-outs has also started narrowing down. Some states, however, continue to have very large inter-regional variations in education and there are still 299 districts with

lower female literacy levels than the national average. While Kerala recorded the highest female literacy rate of 87.86 per cent, Bihar recorded the lowest at 33.57 per cent in 2001.

**Table 1.10 : Literacy Rates by Sex (1981-2001)**

(in per cent)

Census	Females	Males	Persons	Male-Female Gap in Literacy Rate
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1981	29.76	56.38	43.57	26.62
1991	39.29	64.13	52.21	24.84
2001	54.16	75.85	65.38	21.69

**Note:** i) The literacy rates relate to the population aged seven years and above.  
ii) The 1981 Census Literacy rates exclude Assam. The 1991 Census Literacy Rates exclude Jammu & Kashmir.

**Source:** Census of India, 2001 : Provisional Population Totals, Registrar-General & Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

Similarly, the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for girls both at primary and middle levels have also increased from 64.1 in 1980-81 to 85.2 in 1999-2000 with respect to primary level and from 28.6 to 49.7 with respect to middle level during the same period. Between 1990-91 and 1999-2000, the GER of girls at the middle level has also increased from 47.8 to 49.7.

The number of women in higher education, which includes colleges, universities, professional colleges of engineering, medicine, technology, etc. has also increased from 1.32 million (33.0 per cent) in 1990-91 to 3 million (39.8 per cent) in 1999-2000. The number of women enrolled has shown an increase in both absolute and relative terms.

The drop-out rates, which have a direct bearing on the school retention rates, have also shown a definite declining trend from 1980-81 to 1999-2000, both in the case of boys and girls at all levels of school education. Although, the drop-out rates for girls at primary and middle levels reduced from 62.5 and 79.4, respectively in 1980-81 to 42.3 and 58.0 in 1999-2000, the rates are still higher than those for boys.

## 1.4 ECONOMIC STATUS

### Women work roughly twice as many hours as men

Women's contribution to agriculture – whether it be subsistence farming or commercial agriculture – when measured in terms of the number of tasks performed and time spent, is greater than men. “The extent of women's contribution is aptly highlighted by a micro study conducted in the Indian Himalayas, which found that on a one-hectare farm, a pair of bullocks works for 1,064 hours, a man for 1,212 hours and a woman for 3,485 hours in a year.”

In Andhra Pradesh, (Mies, 1986) found that the work day of a woman agricultural labourer during the agricultural season lasts for 15 hours, from 4 am to 8 pm, with an hour's rest in between. Her male counterpart works for seven to eight hours, from 5 am to 10 am or 11 am and from 3 pm to 5 pm.

Many maintain that women's economic dependence on men impacts their power within the family. With increased participation in income-earning activities, not only will there be more income for the family, but gender inequality would also be reduced. This issue is particularly salient in India because studies show a very low level of female participation in the labour force. This under-reporting is attributed to the frequently held view that women's work is not economically productive.

In a report of the National Commission on Self-Employed Women and Women in the Informal Sector, the director of social welfare in one state said, "There are no women in any unorganised sector in our state." When the Commission probed and asked, "Are there no women who go to the forest to collect firewood? Do any of the women in rural areas have cattle?" The director responded with, "Of course, there are many women doing that type of work." Working women are invisible to most of the population.

If all activities – including maintenance of kitchen gardens and poultry, grinding food grains, collecting water and firewood, etc. – are taken into account, then 88 percent of rural housewives and 66 percent of urban housewives can be considered as economically productive.

Women's employment in family farms or businesses is rarely recognized as economically productive, either by men or women. And, any income generated from this work is generally controlled by the men. Such work is unlikely to increase women's participation in allocating family finances. In a 1992 study of family-based textile workers, male children, who helped in a home-based handloom mill, were given pocket money, but the adult women and girls were not.

"Not only do women perform more tasks, their work is also more arduous than that undertaken by men. Both transplantation and weeding require women to spend the whole day and work in muddy soil with their hands. Moreover, they work the entire day under the intensely hot sun, while men's work, such as ploughing and watering the fields, is invariably carried out early in the morning before the sun gets too hot. Mies argues that because women's work, unlike men's, does not involve implements and is based largely on human energy, it is considered unskilled and, hence, less productive. On this basis, women are invariably paid lower wages, despite the fact that they work harder and for longer hours than do men.

### **The impact of technology on women**

The shift from subsistence to a market economy has a dramatic negative impact on women. The Green Revolution, which focused on increasing yields of rice and wheat, entailed a shift in inputs from human to technical. Women's participation, knowledge and inputs were marginalized, and their role shifted from being "primary producers to subsidiary workers."

Where technology has been introduced in areas where women worked, women labourers have often been displaced by men. Threshing of grain was almost exclusively a female task, and with the introduction of automatic grain threshers – which are only operated by men – women have lost an important source of income. Combined harvesters leave virtually no residue. This means that this source of fodder is no longer available to women, which has a dramatic impact on women's workload. In the same way as cattle dung is being used as fertilizer, there is less availability of fuel for cooking. Commercialization and the consequent focus on cash crops has led to a situation where food is lifted straight from the farm to the market. The income accrued is controlled by men. Earlier, most of the produce was brought home and stored, and the women exchanged it for other commodities. Such a system vested more control with the women.



## **Women have unequal access to resources**

Extension services tend to reach only men, which perpetuates the existing division of labour in the agricultural sector, with women continuing to perform unskilled tasks. A World Bank study in 1991 reveals that the assumption made by extension workers is that information within a family will be transmitted to the women by the men, which, in actual practice, seldom happens. “The male dominated extension system tends to overlook women’s role in agriculture and proves ineffective in providing technical information to women farmers.”

Mapping Progress, states, “In the farm sector, the process of mechanization of agricultural activities has brought in tendencies for gender discrimination by replacing men for a number of activities performed by women and also by displacing the labour of women from subsistence and marginal households. Women are employed only when there is absolute shortage of labour and for specific operations like cotton-picking and in food-processing industries being set up with foreign collaboration. There has already been a major shift from subsistence farming method of rice, millet, corn and wheat to cash-crop production of fruit, mushrooms, flowers and vegetables. This shift has led to women being the first to lose jobs.

A number of factors perpetuate women’s limited job skills: if training women for economic activities requires them to leave their village, this is usually a problem for them. Unequal access to education restricts women’s abilities to learn skills that require even functional levels of literacy. In terms of skill development, women are impeded by their lack of mobility, low literacy levels and prejudiced attitudes toward women. When women negotiate with banks and government officials, they are often ostracized by other men and women in their community for being ‘too forward.’ Government and bank officials have preconceived ideas of what women are capable of, and stereotypes of what is considered women’s work.

In India, during 2001, about 30.9% of women in rural areas and about 11.55% of women in urban areas were in the workforce as compared to about 52% of men in rural areas and 50.8 % of men in urban areas. This clearly indicates the wide difference in the participation of women and men in the economy.

The low female work participation rate of 25.7 per cent in 2001; their very low representation of 17.2 per cent in the organised sector in 1999; 14.5 per cent in public sector in 1999; 14.6 per cent in Government in 1997; the present high rate of 14 per cent of educated women being unemployed in 1999-2000; and finally more than 90 per cent of women struggling in the Informal/Unorganised Sector, speaks volumes about the most subtle way of discriminating women and their inaccessibility to employment.

Gender discrimination is also evident from the differences prevalent in the average daily wages of women and men as regular salaried employees as well as casual labourers. In urban areas, the difference is much wider (Rs. 25 more for men than women casual labourer) than that in the rural areas (Rs. 15 more for men than women casual labourer) during 1999-2000.

Consequently, the access of women particularly those belonging to weaker sections including Scheduled Castes/Scheduled Tribes/Other Backward Classes and minorities, majority of whom are in the rural areas and in the informal, unorganised sector – to education, health and productive resources, among others, is inadequate. Therefore, they remain largely marginalized, poor and socially excluded. While the female work participation rate increased from 19.7 per cent in 1981 to 25.7 per cent in 2001, still it is much lower than the male work participation rate in both urban and

rural areas (Table 1.12). There are wide regional variations amongst the major states, ranging from as high as 34 per cent in Mizoram to as low as 4 per cent in Punjab, as per the 1991 Census. (State-wise data for the 2001 Census is not yet available.)

**Table 1.12 : Work Participation Rates by Sex (1981 to 2001)**

(in per cent)

Census	T/R/U	Female	Male	Persons
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
1981	Total	19.7	52.6	36.7
	Rural	23.1	53.8	38.8
	Urban	8.3	49.1	30.0
1991	Total	22.3	51.6	37.5
	Rural	26.8	52.6	40.1
	Urban	9.2	48.9	30.2
2001	Total	25.7	51.9	39.3
	Rural	31.0	52.4	42.0
	Urban	11.6	50.9	32.2

**Source :** Census of India, 1991, Series I and Census of India, 2001 : Provisional Population Totals, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi.

Women's share in the organised work-force has also shown an increasing trend, from 2.8 million (12.2 per cent) in 1981 to 4.8 million (17.2 per cent) in 1999 (Table 1.12). Between 1991 and 1999, rise in the percentage points of women was 3.1. In contrast, the share of men has been declining. However, women's participation in the organised sector is still very low, as compared to men.

## 1.5 POLITICAL STATUS

The representation of women in the decision-making levels through the Premier Services viz., the Indian Administrative Service (IAS) and Indian Police Service (IPS), which stood at only 5.4 per cent in 1987, increased marginally to 7.6 per cent in 2000 [Table 1 (Annexure) : 18]. However, the figure is still very low, requiring not only affirmative action, but also special interventions to help raise the number of women at various decision-making levels.

The 73rd and 74th Constitutional Amendments in 1993 have brought forth a definite impact on the participation of women, in terms of absolute numbers, in grassroot democratic institutions viz. Panchayati Raj Institutions (PRIs) and Local Bodies. In fact, these amendments have helped women not only in their effective participation, but also in decision-making in the grassroot democracy. Of the 475 Zilla Parishads in the country, 158 are being chaired by women. At the Block Level, out of 51,000 members of Block Samitis, 17,000 are women. In addition, nearly one-third of the Mayors of the Municipalities are women. In the elections to PRIs held between 1993 and 1997, women have achieved participation even beyond the mandatory requirement of 33½ per cent of the total seats in states like Karnataka (43.45 per cent), Kerala (36.4 per cent) and West Bengal (35.4 per cent). However, the all India figures for women show that their representation in 2001 is still low.

Through the experience of the Indian Panchayat Raj Institutions (PRI), one million women have actively entered political life in India. The 73<sup>rd</sup> and 74<sup>th</sup> Constitutional Amendment Acts, which guarantee that all local elected bodies reserve one-third of their seats for women, have spearheaded an unprecedented social experiment, which is playing itself out in more than 500,000 villages that are home to more than 600 million people. Since the creation of the quota system, local women – the vast majority of them illiterate and poor – have come to occupy as much as 43 per cent of the seats, spurring the election of increasing numbers of women at the district, provincial and national levels. Since the onset of PRI, the percentages of women in various levels of political activity have risen from 4-5% to 25-40%.

According to Indian writer and activist Devaki Jain, “The positive discrimination of PRI has initiated a momentum of change. Women’s entry into local government in such large numbers, often more than the required 33.3%, and their success in campaigning, including the defeat of male candidates, has shattered the myth that women are not interested in politics, and have no time to go to meetings or to undertake all the other work that is required in political party processes..... PRI reminds us of a central truth: power is not something people give away. It has to be negotiated, and sometimes wrested from the powerful.”

Contrary to fears that the elected women would be rubber stamp leaders, the success stories that have arisen from PRI are impressive. A government-financed study, based on field work in 180 villages in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, and coordinated by the Center for Women’s Development Studies in New Delhi, has found that a full two-thirds of elected women leaders are actively engaged in learning the ropes and exercising power. Says Noeleen Heyzer, executive director of UNIFEM, “This is one of the best innovations in grassroots democracy in the world.”

Women leaders in the Panchayati Raj are transforming local governance by sensitizing the State to issues of poverty, inequality and gender injustice. Through the PRI, they are tackling issues that had previously gone virtually unacknowledged, including water, alcohol abuse, education, health and domestic violence. According to Sudha Murali, UNICEF Communications Officer in Andhra Pradesh, women are seeing this power as a chance for a real change for them and for their children and are using it to demand basic facilities like primary schools and health care centres.

The PRI has also brought about significant transformations in the lives of women themselves, who have become empowered, and have gained self-confidence, political awareness and affirmation of their own identity. The panchayat villages have become political training grounds for women, many of them illiterate, who are now leaders in the village panchayats. Says Sudha Pillai, joint secretary in India’s Ministry for Rural Development, “It has given something to people who were absolute nobodies and had no way of making it on their own. Power has become the source of their growth.”

By asserting control over resources and officials and by challenging men, women are discovering a personal and collective power that was previously unimaginable. This includes women who are not themselves panchayat leaders, but who have been inspired by the work of their sisters; “We will not bear it,” says one woman. “Once we acquire some position and power, we will fight it out...The fact that the Panchayats will have a minimum number of women [will be used] for mobilizing women at large.” It is this critical mass of unified and empowered women, which will push forward policies that enforce gender equity into the future.

**Table 1.12 : Women in Panchayati Raj Institutions (1995-2001)**

(Figures in thousand)

Year	Women	Men	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
1995#	318 (33.5)	630	948
2001@	725 (26.6)	1,997	2,722

**Note:** Figures within parentheses indicate percentage to total.

# Data refers to nine states – Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura and West Bengal.

@ For whole of India. (As on 18.10.2001).

**Source:** Ministry of Rural Development, GOI, New Delhi.

A quick review of the progress made by women has not only focused light on the gains, but also brought forth to surface certain critical areas of concern relating to women requiring attention of the Government during the Tenth Plan. They include: increasing burden of poverty; unequal access to primary health care, under/malnutrition, high rates of illiteracy and lack of training; lack of access and control on assets and resources; inequalities in sharing of power and decision-making; lack of access to information and media; increasing violence against women, adolescent and the girl child; persisting discrimination against the girl child, etc. Keeping these Issues/Concerns in view, the Tenth Plan suggests the following approach not only to strengthen, but also to speed up, the on-going process/efforts of empowering women.

Transforming the prevailing social discrimination against women must become *the* top priority, and must happen concurrently with increased direct action to rapidly improve the social and economic status of women. In this way, a synergy of progress can be achieved. As women receive greater education and training, they will earn more money.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note :** a) Use the space given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

1) What are the five main indicators of status of women in a society?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

2) What provisions have been given to women in the 73<sup>rd</sup> Constitutional Amendment?

.....

.....

.....
.....
.....
.....

## 1.6 CRITICAL AREAS OF CONCERN

**Malnutrition:** India has exceptionally high rates of child malnutrition, because tradition in India requires that women eat last and least throughout their lives, even when pregnant and lactating. Malnourished women give birth to malnourished children, perpetuating the cycle.

**Poor Health:** Females receive less health care than males. Many women die during childbirth of easily preventable complications. Working conditions and environmental pollution further impair women's health.

**Lack of Education:** Families are far less likely to educate girls than boys, and far more likely to pull them out of school, either to help out at home or from fear of violence.

**Overwork:** Women work longer hours and their work is more arduous than men's, yet their work is unrecognized. Men report that "women, like children, eat and do nothing." Technological progress in agriculture has had a negative impact on women.

**Unskilled:** In women's primary employment sector like agriculture, extension services overlook women.

**Mistreatment:** In recent years, there has been an alarming rise in atrocities against women in India, in terms of rapes, assaults and dowry-related murders. Fear of violence suppresses the aspirations of all women. Female infanticide and sex-selective abortions are additional forms of violence that reflect the devaluing of females in Indian society.

**Powerlessness:** While women are guaranteed equality under the constitution, legal protection has little effect in the face of prevailing patriarchal traditions. Women lack power to decide who they will marry, and are often married off as children. Legal loopholes are used to deny women inheritance rights.

India has a long history of activism for women's welfare and rights, which has increasingly focused on women's economic rights. A range of government programs have been launched to increase economic opportunities for women, although there appear to be no existing programs to address the cultural and traditional discrimination against women that leads to her abject conditions.

### Policy and Planning Focus

- 1 Given the diversity of the agro-ecological system and the resulting wide varieties of farming systems, it is important that state level efforts in gender planning are supported by gender/sex segregated data pertinent to local situation.
- 1 The current efforts on creating agricultural data and gender information in farming systems across the country should be co-ordinated and the available information should be fed into the planning process.
- 1 Planning at the local Panchayat level should be gender-sensitive and should have gender/sex-segregated information to support local development efforts.

- 1 Agricultural education institutions and training centers should develop regular curricula to integrate a gender approach in all technical areas of agricultural sector.
- 1 Existing policies related to target women and gender-equity should be widely communicated to all involved development work including women clientele.
- 1 Review of the land right policies and implementation of land distribution for gender equity and women's land rights.
- 1 Farmer's right initiatives should explicitly address concerns of women farmers.

### **Programme Focus**

- 1 Develop programmes to train Panchayat leaders in gender-integrative participatory approaches and local planning.
- 1 Develop programmes for rural women to build leadership skills for managing agriculture community-based development activities.
- 1 Develop economic and political literacy programmes for rural women to utilize development inputs effectively.
- 1 Support agriculture extension in-service training programmes and other relevant agricultural curricular activities to support gender-sensitive extension agents.
- 1 Put in place appropriate institutional mechanisms for information exchange and cooperation between the agencies that focus on women's affair and agriculture-related technical activities.
- 1 Support women-managed rural production and marketing ventures in horticulture, floriculture and post-harvest processing of commodities.
- 1 Provide technology training and input support to women to take advantage of emerging high-value agribusiness sector including bio-technology and forest products.
- 1 The issues concerning women should not be discussed separately without having any direct link with the overall development strategies while planning for women's development.
- 1 Women's development is inextricably linked to the development of other areas and sectors, such as agriculture, industry, land rights, forest policy and access to training and investment resources for their further participation in economic development.
- 1 Women, rather than the family, should remain the basic unit while formulating policies for women's development. Equal rights for both men and women.
- 1 Re-training women, so that labour displacing technologies leading to women's unemployment have minimal effect. Organisation and/or unionization of women workers.
- 1 Providing support systems, like Child Care facilities, so that women can enter the labour market. Land reforms and distribution of surplus land to the landless.
- 1 Agricultural land may also be registered in the joint names of husband and wife, and removing barriers to women's inheritance of agricultural land.
- 1 Ensuring employment for women in sectors where their role as workers will be socially recognized; their skill and security levels will help ensure economic dependence and resist all policies of general agricultural development, which are resulting in increasing casualisation of the female workforce.



- 1 Effectively removing the wage differentials between men and women. This would entail the linking of women issues to the issues and demands of the agricultural workers.

### **Check Your Progress III**

**Note :** a) Use the space given below for your answers.

b) Compare your answers with the text.

- 1) Mention five critical areas of concern signifying the status of rural women.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 2) Briefly describe the two main programme interventions for improving the status of women.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

---

## **1.7 LET US SUM UP**

---

In this unit, we have discussed the status of rural women on three planks viz., socio-cultural, society's attitude towards the role of rural women and economic. The economic status of rural women has been assessed in relation to agricultural and industrial sectors.

What is perhaps essential for us to know are the factors that have influenced the researchers, social scientists and the policy makers to generate information and data on women's status, which was hitherto invisible and to accept in principle such crucial contributions that the CSWI, Shram-Shakti and other reports have made in this regard. The data on the status of rural women have not only been revealing, but have also become compelling. They have exerted an enormous influence on the policy makers to redefine the strategies for women's development. The shift from welfare-oriented strategy to development-oriented approach is the result of certain compulsions emanating from the data while they reveal the issues affecting the life of rural women. Hence, for the effective implementation of programmes for rural women on the lines of development-oriented strategy, consideration of the issues affecting rural women is inevitable. The establishment of National Commission on Women, and the formulation of National Perspective Plan for Women, we believe, are correct steps in this direction.

---

## 1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

---

Government of India, *Planning Commission* (2002), Tenth Five Year Plan 2002-07, Vols. I, II and III, Planning Commission, New Delhi.

Government of India (1988),. *National Perspective Plan for Women 1988-2000 A.D*, Department of Women and Child Development, Ministry of Human Resource Development, New Delhi.

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

Mazumdar V., K. Sharma, and S. Acharya (1979), *Country Review and Analysis on the Role and Participation of Women in Agriculture and Rural Development in India*, ICSSR New Delhi.

Singh Roy, D.K. (1992), *Women in Peasant Movements*, Manohar Publication, New Delhi.

**Table 1: The 21 Selected Gender Development Indicators : 1981 to 2001**

S. No.	Indicators	Women	Men	Total	Women	Men	Total
(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<b>Demography and Vital Statistics</b>							
1	Population (in million in 1981 & 2001)	<b>330.0</b>	353.4	683.4	<b>495.7</b>	531.3	1027.0
2	Decennial Growth (1981 & 2001)*	<b>24.93</b>	24.41	24.66	<b>21.79</b>	20.93	21.34
3	Sex Ratio (1981 & 2001) **	<b>934</b>	—	—	<b>933</b>	—	—
4	Life Expectancy at Birth (in years in 1981-85 & 1996-01)	<b>55.7</b>	55.4	—	<b>65.3</b>	62.3	—
5	Mean Age at Marriage (in years in 1981 & 1991)	<b>18.3</b>	23.3	—	<b>19.5</b>	23.9	—
<b>Health and Family Welfare</b>							
6	Birth Rate (per thousand in 1981 & 1999)	—	—	33.9	—	—	26.1
7	Death Rate (per thousand in 1981 & 1999)	<b>12.7</b>	12.4	12.5	<b>8.3</b>	9.0	8.7
8	Infant Mortality Rate (per thousand live births in 1988 & 1999)	<b>93.0</b>	96.0	94.5	<b>70.8</b>	69.8	70.0
9	Child Mortality Rate (per thousand live births under 5 years of age in 1985 & 1997)	<b>40.4</b>	36.6	—	<b>24.5</b>	21.8	—
10	Maternal Mortality Rate (per one lakh live births in 1980 & 1998)	<b>468</b>	—	—	<b>407</b>	—	—
<b>Literacy and Education</b>							
11	Literacy Rates (1981 & 2001)*	<b>29.76</b>	56.38	43.57	<b>54.16</b>	75.85	65.38
12	12 Gross Enrolment Ratio (1980-81 & 1999-2000)						
	Classes I-V	<b>64.1</b>	95.8	80.5	<b>85.2</b>	104.1	94.9
	Classes VI-VIII	<b>28.6</b>	54.3	41.9	<b>49.7</b>	67.2	58.8
13	Drop-out Rate (1980-81 & 1999-2000) *						
	Classes I-V	<b>62.5</b>	56.2	58.7	<b>42.3</b>	38.7	40.3
	Classes VI-VIII	<b>79.4</b>	68.0	72.7	<b>58.0</b>	52.0	54.6

(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<b>Work and Employment</b>							
14	Work Participation Rate (1981 & 2001) *	<b>19.7</b>	52.6	36.7	<b>25.7</b>	51.9	39.3
15	Organised Sector (No. in million in 1981 & 1999)	<b>2.80</b> <b>(12.2%)</b>	20.05	22.85	<b>4.83</b> <b>(17.2%)</b>	23.28	28.11
16	Public Sector (No. in million in 1981 & 1999)	<b>1.5</b> <b>(9.7%)</b>	14.0	15.5	<b>2.8</b> <b>(14.5%)</b>	16.6	19.4
17	Government (No. in million in 1981 & 1997)	<b>1.2</b> <b>(11%)</b>	9.7	10.9	<b>1.6</b> <b>(14.6%)</b>	9.1	10.7
<b>Decision-making</b>							
18	Administration (No. in IAS & IPS in 1987 & 2000)	<b>360</b> <b>(5.4%)</b>	6262	6622	<b>645</b> <b>(7.6%)</b>	7815	8460
19	PRIs (No. in thousand in 1995 & 2001)	<b>318***</b> <b>(33.5%)</b>	630***	948***	<b>725</b> <b>(26.6%)</b>	1997	2722
20	Parliament (No. in 1998 & 2001)	<b>59</b> <b>(7.2%)</b>	761	820	<b>70</b> <b>(8.5%)</b>	750	820
21	Central Council of Ministers (No. in 1985 & 2001)	<b>4</b> <b>(10%)</b>	36	40	<b>8</b> <b>(10.8%)</b>	66	74

Figures in per cent, \*\* females per 1,000 males; \*\*\* Refers to 1995 in respect of some states, namely, Gujarat, Haryana, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Punjab, Rajasthan, Tripura and West Bengal.

**Note:** i) Figures in parentheses indicate the percentage to the total and year of the data in respective columns. Although, efforts were made to keep a common 'base' and common 'comparable year', but the same could not be kept up because of the limitations in the availability of data and other practical problems; ii) The years given in the parentheses refer to the years of the data in columns 3,4 & 5 and 6,7 & 8 respectively.

**Source:** 1. Census of India, 1991; Census of India, 2001: Provisional Population Totals; and SRS Bulletins for respective years, Registrar General & Census Commissioner, GOI, New Delhi; 2. Selected Educational Statistics for respective years, Dept. of Education, Ministry of HRD, New Delhi; 3. Annual Report, 1999-2000, Dept. of Elementary & Literacy and Secondary & Higher Education, Ministry of HRD, New Delhi; 4. Employment Exchange Statistics, DGE&T, Ministry of Labour, New Delhi; 5. Dept. of Personnel & Training, New Delhi; 6. Ministry of Rural Development, New Delhi; 7. Election Commission of India, New Delhi; 8. National Informatics Centre, Parliament House, New Delhi.)