



# **St. Mary's College (Autonomous)**

**(Re-accredited with 'A<sup>+</sup>' Grade by NAAC)**

**Thoothukudi – 628001, Tamil Nadu**



## **ABILITY ENHANCEMENT COURSE**

### **Women's Synergy**

**II Year – III Semester**

<b>Semester – III</b>			
<b>Women's Synergy</b>			
<b>Code : 18UAWS31</b>	<b>Hrs/ Week : 2</b>	<b>Hrs/Sem:30</b>	<b>Credits : 2</b>

### **Unit I - Physical Health**

Woman's Structural Organisation – Levels of organisation – Body image - Reproductive health – Hormonal Cycle and its Psycho-somatic implications – Child birth – lactation – Nutritional status of women.

### **Unit II – Psychological Health**

Examining factors determining psychological conditions of women – Depression, anxiety, stress, hysteria – Socio – cultural and familial conditioning of women's minds – Self Image, Discrimination against women.

### **Unit III – Women and Legal Awareness**

Women specific – centered legislations – legal issues – laws to prevent gender based violence National / State Pro-women schemes – educational and Employment schemes. Laws for protection of Women – Women's rights to property – Women's Rights in the Indian Constitution – Maternity benefit act.

### **Unit IV – Women and Finance**

Manager of domestic finance – Budgeting basics – Create a family budget - Set financial goals – Plan for financial emergencies – Budget for travel – Saving strategies – Investment options

### **Unit V – Women's Empowerment in Various Domain**

Introduction - Women created history in sports and music – P. T. Usha, M. S. Subbulakshmi - Women who crossed hurdles in Social Service – Mother Theresa, Muthulakshmi Reddy, Medha Patkar - Role of Women in Indian independence movement and Politics – Indira Gandhi, Aruna Asaf Ali.

## **Course Outcome**

- To know about Women's health issues including menstruation, pregnancy, child birth etc, thereby taking care of themselves.
- Create awareness about their own biases, fears and comfort levels and encourage to dream and fuel their own growth and self development .
- Engage in promoting social justice and women rights
- Create platforms and facilitate the young women to operate symbiotically towards issues affecting their lives and take self initiatives for growth.
- Identify historic and contemporary women of importance as well as crucial moments in Women's history

## Unit I

### Physical Health

#### Structural Organisation

Life processes of the human body are maintained at several levels of structural organization. These include the chemical, cellular, tissue, organ, organ system, and the organism level. Higher levels of organization are built from lower levels. Therefore, molecules combine to form cells, cells combine to form tissues, tissues combine to form organs, organs combine to form organ systems, and organ systems combine to form organisms.

#### The Levels of Organization

To study the chemical level of organisation, scientists consider the simplest building blocks of matter: subatomic particles, atoms and molecules. All matter in the universe is composed of one or more unique pure substances called elements such as hydrogen, oxygen, carbon, nitrogen, calcium, and iron. The smallest unit of any of these pure substances (elements) is an atom. Atoms are made up of subatomic particles such as the proton, electron and neutron. Two or more atoms combine to form a molecule, such as the water molecules, proteins, and sugars found in living things. Molecules are the chemical building blocks of all body structures.

#### Cell

A **cell** is the smallest independently functioning unit of a living organism. All living structures of human anatomy contain cells, and almost all functions of human physiology are performed in cells or are initiated by cells.

#### Organelles

A human cell typically consists of flexible membranes that enclose cytoplasm, a water-based cellular fluid together with a variety of tiny functioning units called **organelles**.

#### Tissue

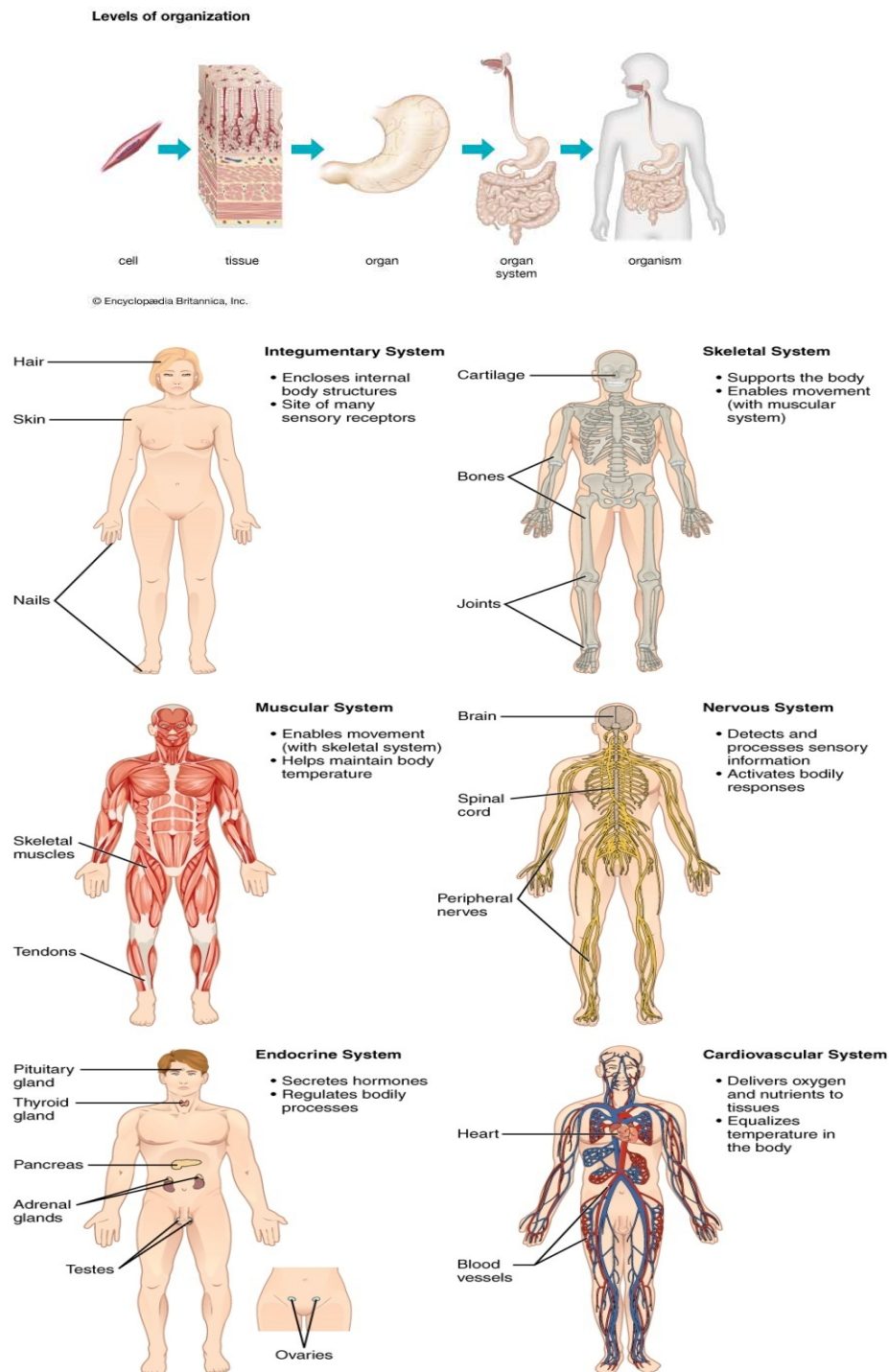
A **tissue** is a group of many similar cells (though sometimes composed of a few related types) that work together to perform a specific function.

#### Organ

An **organ** is an anatomically distinct structure of the body composed of two or more tissue types. Each organ performs one or more specific physiological functions.

## Organ system

An **organ system** is a group of organs that work together to perform major functions or meet physiological needs of the body. Eg. Integumentary System, Skeletal System, Muscular System, Nervous System, Lymphatic System, Respiratory System, Digestive System, Urinary System.



**Figure 2. Organ**

1. **Integumentary system** composed of the skin and associated structures
2. **Skeletal system** composed of bones.
3. **Muscular system** composed of muscles
4. **Nervous system** composed of the sensory organs, brain, spinal cord, and nerves.
5. **Lymphatic System** composed of Lymph nodes, Lymphatic vessels, Spleen and Thymus
6. **Respiratory system** composed of the breathing passages, lungs, and muscles of respiration
7. **Digestive system** comprises mouth, esophagus, stomach, intestine and anus
8. **Urinary System** composed of kidneys, ureters, urinary bladder, and urethra.
9. **Endocrine system** composed of hormone-secreting glands and tissues
10. **Reproductive system** composed of female sex organs

The **organism** level is the highest level of organization. An organism is a living being that has a cellular structure and that can independently perform all physiologic functions necessary for life. In humans, all cells, tissues, organs, and organ systems of the body work together to maintain the life and health of the organism.

## **Body image of women**

**Body image** is the perception that a person has of her physical self and the thoughts and feelings that result from that perception. These feelings can be positive, negative or both, and are influenced by individual and environmental factors.

Women with a positive body image are more likely to have good physical and mental health.

Unhealthy teenage body image is directly related to **low self-esteem**, which can **lead** to negative moods and **mood swings**. Young people who are feeling down are more likely to focus on the negative messages around them and make negative comparisons between their bodies and what they see as 'ideal' bodies. Girls and women with negative thoughts and feelings about their bodies are more likely to develop certain mental health conditions, such as eating disorders and depression. A negative body image may also lead to low self-esteem, which can affect many areas of life.

Girls are more likely than boys to have a negative body image. This may be because many women feel pressured to measure up to strict and unrealistic social and cultural beauty ideals, which can lead to a negative body image.<sup>4</sup> Cultural beauty ideals change over time, and it can be difficult to correctly measure a complicated idea like body image among women from different backgrounds.<sup>6</sup> Children of parents who diet or who have a negative body image are also more likely to develop unhealthy thoughts about their own bodies.

Past events and circumstances can cause one to have a negative body image, including:

- Being teased or bullied as a child.

- Being told they are ugly, too fat, or too thin or having other aspects of appearance criticized
- Seeing images or messages in the media (including social media) that make one feel bad about how they look
- Having underweight, overweight, or obesity

Women who have obesity are more likely to have a negative body image, but not all women who have obesity or overweight are dissatisfied with their bodies. Women with a healthy weight can also have a negative body image, although obesity can make a woman's negative body image more severe.

Weight is not the only part of a person's body that determines body image. Self-esteem, past history, daily habits such as grooming, and the particular shape of body all contribute to body image. Weight is an important part of body image, but it is not the only part.

Women who have underweight due to a health condition like an eating disorder, cancer, or Crohn's disease may have a negative body image due to the effects of their condition. Women who have underweight without another health condition may also have a negative body image if others comment negatively on their weight or express other negative attitudes.

The more they practise thinking positive thoughts about themselves and the fewer negative thoughts they have about their body, the better they will feel about who they are and how they look.

Many teenage girls of average weight think they have overweight and are not satisfied with their bodies. Having extreme weight concerns — and acting on those concerns — can harm girls' social, physical, and emotional growth. Skipping meals or taking diet pills can lead to poor nutrition and difficulty learning. For some teens, extreme efforts to lose weight can lead to eating disorders such as anorexia or bulimia.

### **Causes of Negative Body Image of Women**

There are many factors that may contribute to a poor female body image. We live in a culture where thinness and beauty are highly valued for women and wealth and success are often considered to go hand in hand with a slim figure.

Media images of ridiculously thin women are everywhere – television shows, movies, popular magazines. The media often glamorizes a very thin body for women. These are also the pictures that are being shown to teenagers in a time of their lives that they are particularly susceptible to peer pressure and looking good.

Due to this influence, poor body image can begin to develop at a very young age. Over fifty percent of 9 and 10 year-old girls feel better about themselves if they are on a diet even though the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that only 18 percent of adolescents are really overweight. About 80 percent of girls in this age group say that they have dieted in an attempt to lose weight.

## **The Effects of Poor Body Image**

The effects of a poor body image of women can be profound. The weight loss industry is very profitable and marketing firms know exactly how to sell products to people with the promise that their lives will be better if they lose weight or buy a certain brand of clothing. “Low Fat” and “Fat Free” are two of the most successful marketing terms that a food product can use in order to sell better. Clothing firms use size zero models in their advertisements that are often photo shopped to alien-like dimensions that would be unachievable and unhealthy in any human being

## **Reproductive health**

### **Female Reproductive System**

The female reproductive system consists of a pair of ovaries, a pair of fallopian tubes, oviducts, the uterus, oviducts and the vagina. The breasts are also considered part of the reproductive system. However, other parts of the body also affect the development and functioning of the reproductive system. They include the following:

- Hypothalamus (an area of the brain)

- Pituitary gland (located at the base of the brain, directly below the hypothalamus)

- Adrenal glands (located on top of the kidneys)

The hypothalamus orchestrates the interactions among the genital organs, pituitary gland, and adrenal glands to regulate the female reproductive system.

### **Menstrual Cycle**

Menstruation is the shedding of the lining of the uterus (endometrium) accompanied by bleeding. It occurs in approximately monthly cycles throughout a woman's reproductive life, except during pregnancy. Menstruation starts during puberty (at menarche) and stops permanently at menopause.

### **Stages of the Menstrual Cycle**

Each month during the years between puberty and menopause, a woman's body goes through a number of changes to get it ready for a possible pregnancy. During each menstrual cycle, an egg develops and is released from the ovaries. The lining of the uterus builds up. If a pregnancy doesn't happen, the uterine lining sheds during a menstrual period. Then the cycle starts again.

Menstrual bleeding lasts 3 to 7 days, averaging 5 days. Blood loss during a cycle usually ranges from 1/2 to 2 1/2 ounces. A sanitary pad or tampon, depending on the type, can hold up to an ounce of blood. Menstrual blood, unlike blood resulting from an injury, usually does not clot unless the bleeding is very heavy.



The menstrual cycle is regulated by hormones. Luteinizing hormone and follicle-stimulating hormone, which are produced by the pituitary gland, promote ovulation and stimulate the ovaries to produce estrogen and progesterone. Estrogen and progesterone stimulate the uterus and breasts to prepare for possible fertilization.

The menstrual cycle has three phases:

- Follicular (before release of the egg)
- Ovulatory (egg release)
- Luteal (after egg release)

The menstrual cycle begins with menstrual bleeding (menstruation), which marks the first day of the follicular phase.

### **Follicular phase**

The follicular phase begins on the first day of menstrual bleeding (day 1). But the main event in this phase is the development of follicles in the ovaries.

At the beginning of the follicular phase, the lining of the uterus (endometrium) is thick with fluids and nutrients designed to nourish an embryo. If no egg has been fertilized, estrogen and progesterone levels are low. As a result, the top layers of the endometrium are shed, and menstrual bleeding occurs.

About this time, the pituitary gland slightly increases its production of follicle-stimulating hormone. This hormone then stimulates the growth of 3 to 30 follicles. Each follicle contains an egg. Later in the phase, as the level of this hormone decreases, only one of these follicles (called the dominant follicle) continues to grow. It soon begins to produce estrogen, and the other stimulated follicles begin to break down. The increasing estrogen also begins to prepare the uterus and stimulates the luteinizing hormone surge.

On average, the follicular phase lasts about 13 or 14 days. Of the three phases, this phase varies the most in length. It tends to become shorter near menopause. This phase ends when the level of luteinizing hormone increases dramatically (surges). The surge results in release of the egg (ovulation) and marks the beginning of the next phase.

### **Ovulatory phase**

The ovulatory phase begins when the level of luteinizing hormone surges. Luteinizing hormone stimulates the dominant follicle to bulge from the surface of the ovary and finally rupture, releasing the egg. The level of follicle-stimulating hormone increases to a lesser degree.

The ovulatory phase usually lasts 16 to 32 hours. It ends when the egg is released, about 10 to 12 hours after the surge in the level of luteinizing hormone. The egg can be fertilized for only up to about 12 hours after its release.

The surge in luteinizing hormone can be detected by measuring the level of this hormone in urine. This measurement can be used to determine when women are fertile. Fertilization is more likely when sperm are present in the reproductive tract before the egg is released. Most pregnancies occur when intercourse occurs within 3 days before ovulation.

Around the time of ovulation, some women feel a dull pain on one side of the lower abdomen. This pain is known as mittelschmerz (literally, middle pain). The pain may last for a few minutes to a few hours.

### **Luteal phase**

The luteal phase begins after ovulation. It lasts about 14 days (unless fertilization occurs) and ends just before a menstrual period.

In this phase, the ruptured follicle closes after releasing the egg and forms a structure called a corpus luteum, which produces increasing quantities of progesterone. The progesterone produced by the corpus luteum does the following:

- Prepares the uterus in case an embryo is implanted
- Causes the endometrium to thicken, filling with fluids and nutrients to nourish a potential embryo
- Causes the mucus in the cervix to thicken, so that sperm or bacteria are less likely to enter the uterus
- Causes body temperature to increase slightly during the luteal phase and remain elevated until a menstrual period begins (this increase in temperature can be used to estimate whether ovulation has occurred)

During most of the luteal phase, the estrogen level is high. Estrogen also stimulates the endometrium to thicken.

The increase in estrogen and progesterone levels causes milk ducts in the breasts to widen (dilate). As a result, the breasts may swell and become tender.

If the egg is not fertilized or if the fertilized egg does not implant, the corpus luteum degenerates after 14 days, levels of estrogen and progesterone decrease, and a new menstrual cycle begins.

If the embryo is implanted, the cells around the developing embryo begin to produce a hormone called human chorionic gonadotropin. This hormone maintains the corpus luteum, which continues to produce progesterone, until the growing fetus can produce its own hormones. Pregnancy tests are based on detecting an increase in the human chorionic gonadotropin level.

## **Psycho- somatic implications**

### **Premenstrual syndrome (PMS)**

PMS is a combination of physical and emotional symptoms that many women get after ovulation and before the start of their menstrual period. Most women, over 90%, say they get some premenstrual symptoms, such as bloating, cramping, headaches moodiness forgetfulness and

breast tenderness.<sup>3</sup> For some women, these symptoms may be so severe that they miss work or school, but other women are not bothered by milder symptoms. The changing hormone levels throughout the menstrual cycle can also affect other health problems:

- **Depression and anxiety disorders.** These conditions often overlap with premenstrual syndrome (PMS). Depression and anxiety symptoms are similar to PMS and may get worse before or during the period.
- **Asthma.** symptoms may be worse during some parts of the cycle.<sup>11</sup>
- **Irritable bowel syndrome (IBS).** IBS causes cramping, bloating, and gas. The symptoms may get worse right before the period.
- **Bladder pain syndrome.** Women with bladder pain syndrome are more likely to have painful cramps during PMS.

## Pregnancy and Childbirth

Fertilization of egg takes place at the upper part of the fallopian tube. Cleavage begins at once to form the blastocyst. The blastocyst, when reaches the uterus, is implanted in the uterine wall. The attachment is facilitated by the placenta, a structure formed by the maternal and foetal tissues. When there is a developing foetus in the uterus of a woman she is said to be pregnant.

At the end of pregnancy, the foetus is expelled from the uterus through the genital opening. The process is called childbirth or parturition. The process of birth begins with the labour pain which is caused by rhythmic involuntary muscular contractions of the uterine wall. The muscles connecting the pubic symphysis relax under the influence of relaxin hormone.

The amnion ruptures and the amniotic fluid flows out shortly before childbirth. The vagina and cervix become very much dilated. The embryo is gradually passed out. The head is exposed first, when the head is exposed through the vagina the placenta is cut off from uterine wall. Once the placenta is disconnected, the labour is quick and the child is expelled within a matter of minutes. Shortly after birth, the detached placenta and ruptured foetal membranes are expelled as after-birth tissue.

## Lactation

**Lactation** is the process by which milk is synthesized and secreted from the mammary glands of the postpartum female breast in response to an infant sucking at the nipple. Breast milk provides ideal nutrition and passive immunity for the infant, encourages mild uterine contractions to return the uterus to its pre-pregnancy size (i.e., involution), and induces a substantial metabolic increase in the mother, consuming the fat reserves stored during pregnancy.

## Nutritional status of Women

Pregnancy is a demanding physiological state. In India, It is observed that diets of women from the low socioeconomic groups are essentially similar during prepregnant, pregnant and lactating periods. Consequently, there is widespread maternal malnutrition leading to high

prevalence of low birth weight infants and very high maternal mortality. Additional foods are required to improve weight gain in pregnancy (10-12 Kg) and birth weight of infants (about 3 Kg). It is hence important to ensure provision of extra food and healthcare to pregnant and lactating women

### **Nutrition for pregnant and lactating women**

Pregnancy is physiologically and nutritionally a highly demanding period. Extra food is required to meet the requirements of the foetus.

A woman prepares herself to meet the nutritional demands by increasing her own body fat deposits during pregnancy.

A lactating mother requires extra food to secrete adequate quantity/ quality of milk and to safeguard her own health.

### **Nutrition tips for pregnant and lactating women**

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- Eat more food during pregnancy.
  - Eat more whole grains, sprouted grains and fermented foods.
  - Take milk/meat/eggs in adequate amounts.
  - Eat plenty of vegetables and fruits.
  - Avoid superstitions and food taboos.
  - Do not use alcohol and tobacco. Take medicines only when prescribed.
  - Take iron, folate and calcium supplements regularly, after 14-16 weeks of pregnancy and continue the same during lactation.
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### **Nutrients that require special attention during pregnancy and lactation period**

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The daily diet of a woman should contain an additional 350 calories, 0.5 g of protein during first trimester and 6.9 g during second trimester and 22.7 g during third trimester of pregnancy. Some micronutrients are specially required in extra amounts during these physiological periods. Folic acid, taken throughout the pregnancy, reduces the risk of congenital malformations and increases the birth weight. The mother as well as the growing foetus needs iron to meet the high demands of erythropoiesis (RBC formation). Calcium is essential, both during pregnancy and lactation, for proper formation of bones and teeth of the offspring, for secretion of breast-milk rich in calcium and to prevent osteoporosis in the mother. Similarly, iodine intake ensures proper mental health of the growing foetus and infant. Vitamin A is required during lactation to improve child survival. Besides these, nutrients like vitamins B 12 and C need to be taken by the lactating mother.

### Ways to meet the nutritional demands during pregnancy and lactation

- The pregnant/lactating woman should eat a wide variety of foods to make sure that her own nutritional needs as well as those of her growing foetus are met.
- There is no particular need to modify the usual dietary pattern. However, the quantity and frequency of usage of the different foods should be increased.
- She can derive maximum amount of energy (about 60%) from rice, wheat and millets. Cooking oil is a concentrated source of both energy and polyunsaturated fatty acids.
- Good quality protein is derived from milk, fish, meat, poultry and eggs. However, a proper combination of cereals, pulses and nuts also provides adequate proteins.
- Mineral and vitamin requirements are met by consuming a variety of seasonal vegetables particularly green leafy vegetables, milk and fresh fruits.
- Bioavailability of iron can be improved by using fermented and sprouted grams and foods rich in vitamin C such as citrus fruits.
- Milk is the best source of biologically available calcium.
- Though it is possible to meet the requirements for most of the nutrients through a balanced diet, pregnant/lactating women are advised to take daily supplements of iron, folic acid, vitamin B and calcium.

## **Unit II**

### **Psychological Health**

#### **Psychological health or Mental Health**

Mental health is a term used to describe either a level of cognitive or emotional well-being or an absence of a mental disorder. From perspectives of the discipline of positive psychology or holism, mental health may include an individual's ability to enjoy life and procure a balance between life activities and efforts to achieve psychological resilience. On the other hand, a mental disorder or mental illness is an involuntary psychological or behavioral pattern that occurs in an individual and is thought to cause distress or disability that is not expected as part of normal development or culture.

Gender is a critical determinant of mental health and mental illness. The morbidity associated with mental illness has received substantially more attention than the gender specific determinants and mechanisms that promote and protect mental health and foster resilience to stress and adversity.

Analysis of mental health indices and data reveals that the patterns of psychiatric disorder and psychological distress among women are different from those seen among men. Symptoms of depression, anxiety, and unspecified psychological distress are 2–3 times more common among women than among men; whereas addictions, substance use disorders and psychopathic personality disorders are more common among men. The World Health Organization report lays out these facts effectively. It has further been suggested that observed gender differences in the prevalence rates originate from women and men's different average standings on latent internalizing and externalizing liability dimensions with women having a higher mean level of internalizing while men showing a higher mean level of externalizing.

#### **Factors determining the psychological conditions of women:**

Major life transitions such as pregnancy, motherhood and menopause can create physical and emotional stresses for women. Negative life experiences – infertility and perinatal loss, poverty, discrimination, violence, unemployment and isolation – also impact on women's mental health and wellbeing. Unequal economic and social conditions also contribute to women's higher risk of depression.

#### **I. Depression**

Some of the situations that can contribute to anxiety and depression in women include:

1. Caring for or supporting others
2. Relationship breakdown
3. Violence or abuse
4. Discrimination based on sexuality or gender identity

5. Infertility and perinatal loss
6. Pregnancy, having a baby and becoming a mother (perinatal)
7. Menopause

Everyone feels sad once in a while but if you feel sad for more than two weeks, you may have a condition called clinical depression. This is a very common mental health disorder that can affect anyone of any age at any time but is most common in women in their late 20s and early 30s. In fact, it is so common that over 15 million people in the United States suffer from some kind of depression every year. That is about 7% of the population and approximately 70% of those with depression are women.

### Symptoms of Depression

Although there are various types of depression and some have different symptoms, the most common signs include:

- Feelings of sadness that last longer than two weeks
- Losing interest in activities you usually like
- Weight loss or gain
- Appetite loss or increased appetite
- Insomnia or sleeping more than usual
- Confusion or memory loss
- Lack of concentration
- Feeling guilty or hopeless
- Extreme tiredness and loss of energy
- Having a hard time making decisions
- Aggravation or anxiety
- Thinking about harming yourself or others



## **Types of Depression**

Some of the different types of depression include:

- Seasonal affective disorder (SAD), which only affects people during certain months of the year (usually winter) thought to be caused by lack of sunlight.
- Bipolar disorder causes highs and lows in personality such as being overly excitable for days or weeks at a time and periods of debilitating depression.
- Post-partum (perinatal) depression is a condition that affects mothers after childbirth thought to be caused by hormones.
- Persistent depressive disorder is a severe case of depression that lasts for more than two years.

## **Why Are Women Affected More Often Than Men?**

Nobody knows for sure why women are more susceptible to depression than men but it has been speculated that it could be hormones or genetics. Some of the most commonly cited sources for depression include:

- Genetics
- Chemical imbalance in the brain
- Environmental issues such as abuse, poverty, and neglect
- Hormonal imbalance
- Alcohol or drug abuse

## **Treatments for Depression**

One of the most common treatments for depression is antidepressant medication such as Prozac or Zoloft. However, some experts believe that this should be used as a last resort. Other treatments that have been known to be successful include:

- Therapy such as psychotherapy, interpersonal therapy, cognitive therapy, or light therapy for SAD
- Physical exercise such as jogging or walking
- Yoga is a more concentrated form of exercise
- Meditation can calm your body and clear your head
- Support groups are a great way to feel better by talking to others in similar situations
- Keeping a journal can help by expressing your thoughts when you do not want to talk about it.

## **II. Anxiety:**

Anxiety disorders are real, serious medical conditions - just as real and serious as physical disorders such as heart disease or diabetes. Anxiety disorders are the most common and pervasive mental disorders in the United States. An estimated 264 million people worldwide have an anxiety disorder. Women are nearly twice as likely as men to be diagnosed with an anxiety disorder in their lifetime. In the past year, prevalence of any anxiety disorder was higher



for females (23.4%) than for males (14.3%). The term "anxiety disorder" refers to specific psychiatric disorders that involve extreme fear or worry, and includes generalized anxiety disorder (GAD), panic disorder and panic attacks, agoraphobia, social anxiety disorder, selective mutism, separation anxiety, and specific phobias.

### **Signs and Symptoms of Anxiety**

- Feeling nervous, irritable or on edge
- Having a sense of impending danger, panic or doom
- Having an increased heart rate
- Breathing rapidly (hyperventilation), sweating, and/or trembling
- Feeling weak or tired
- Lack of Concentration
- Having trouble sleeping
- Experiencing gastrointestinal (GI) problems

If you or someone you know express one or more symptoms, please seek professional help.



### **Types of Anxiety Disorders**

**Generalized Anxiety Disorders**, or GAD, includes excessive anxiety and worry about ordinary activities or events such as health, family, money or work. GAD can disrupt every day life by interfering with work, school or family.

**Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder**, or OCD, is a mental health disorder that affects people of all ages and occurs when a person gets caught in a cycle of obsessions and compulsions.

**Panic Disorder** is diagnosed in people who experience spontaneous and unexpected panic attacks and are very preoccupied with the fear of a recurring attack. Because these attacks are so unpredictable, many women may have intense anxiety between panic attacks.

**Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)** is a disorder that develops in some people who have experienced a shocking, scary, or dangerous event. Five out of ten women experience a traumatic event and women tend to experience different traumas than men.

**Social Anxiety** is diagnosed when people become overwhelmingly anxious and self-conscious in every situations.

## **Treatment**

Treatment options and resources are usually the same for women as men, with the exception of women who are pregnant or may become pregnant. Anxiety can worsen, improve, or stay the same during pregnancy, and that may affect treatment. Most people who seek treatment experience significant improvement and enjoy an improved quality of life.

## **III. Stress**

Stress is your body's response to the daily events that occur in your life. Everyone experiences stress. Stress can be positive and motivate women to achieve notable goals. But stress can also be negative and destructive, taking its toll in many life areas. When stress becomes chronic or excessive, it becomes harder to adapt and cope. Chronic stress builds up so that stress seems like a normal way of life for some women. Oftentimes women are so busy that they do not take time to think about how stress is negatively affecting them.

### **What are the symptoms of stress?**

There are many symptoms of stress. Each woman reacts to stress in unique ways. Common symptoms of stress in women include:

- **Physical.** Headaches, difficulty sleeping, tiredness, pain (most commonly in the back and neck), overeating/under eating, skin problems, drug and alcohol misuse, lack of energy, upset stomach, less interest in sex/other things you used to enjoy.
- **Emotional.** Anxiety, depression, anger, unhappiness, irritability, feelings of being out of control, mood swings, frustration.
- **Mental.** Forgetfulness, worry, can't make decisions, negative thinking, lack of focus, boredom.
- **Occupational.** Work overload, long hours, tense relations, poor concentration, unfulfilling job.
- **Social.** Less intimacy, isolation, family problems, loneliness.
- **Spiritual.** Apathy, loss of meaning, emptiness, unforgiving, doubt, guilt, despair.

### **What causes some of the stress seen in women?**

There are many causes of stress. Men and women share many of the same sources of stress, such as money matters, job security, health, and relationship issues. Perhaps a little more unique to women are the many roles they take on. In today's society, women's roles often include family obligations, caregiving for children and/or elderly parent (statistically more likely to be a woman) and work responsibilities as well as other roles. As demands increase to fulfill these roles, women can feel overwhelmed with time pressures and unmet obligations. They may feel a sense of failure in not being able to meet expectations for themselves and others. Oftentimes women spend more time meeting the needs of others rather than nurturing their own needs. If functioning at high stress levels, women may not even recognize what their needs are.

## How does stress affect a woman's health?

In addition to the health symptoms that are brought on by stress, these additional health problems can develop in women exposed to stress over long periods of time.

- **Depression and anxiety.** Women have higher rates of these conditions and other psychological disorders including panic disorder and obsessive compulsive disorder than men.
- **Heart problems.** Stress increases blood pressure and heart rate.
- **Headaches and migraines.** Tension headaches are more common in women than men.
- **Obesity.** Women are more prone to stress-related weight gain than men.
- **Bowel problems.** Stress can lead to such bowel problems as irritable bowel syndrome.
- **Pregnancy issues.** Women with higher stress levels have a more difficult time becoming pregnant than women with lower stress levels.
- **Menstrual problems.** Premenstrual syndrome is more severe with increasing stress levels.



## How can women better manage stress?

Women can manage stress by practicing healthy self-care strategies for coping with stress. Examine your negative stress signs in each of these six life areas: physical, emotional, mental, occupational, social, and spiritual. What would you like to be different in your life? What do you need to do to achieve more balance or potential? Here are some suggestions.

- **Physical.** Exercise, practice relaxation techniques (yoga, meditation, listen to relaxing music), eat healthy (for example, follow the **Mediterranean diet**), schedule leisure time, get enough sleep (7 to 9 hours/night).
- **Emotional.** Express your emotions, repeat positive emotions, work toward a healthy self-esteem.
- **Mental.** Have a positive outlook, realistic thinking, resilient attitude, be creative.
- **Occupational.** Establish doable goals, identify home-work balance, set limits.
- **Social.** Strive to maintain loving relationships, establish healthy boundaries, stay connected with friends.

- **Spiritual.** Find your meaning/purpose, focus on gratitude, stay in the present moment.

## Hysteria

While the word *hysteria* originates from the Greek word for uterus, *hystera* (ὑστέρα), the word itself is not an ancient one, and the term "hysterical suffocation" – meaning a feeling of heat and inability to breathe, was instead used in ancient Greek medicine. The Greeks believed that the uterus moves through a woman's body, eventually strangling her and inducing disease. This suggests an entirely physical cause for the symptoms but, by linking them to the uterus, suggests that the disorder can only be found in women.

Historically, hysteria was thought to manifest itself in women (female hysteria) with a variety of symptoms, including: anxiety, shortness of breath, fainting, insomnia, irritability, nervousness, as well as sexually forward behaviour. These symptoms mimic symptoms of other more definable diseases and create a case for arguing against the validity of hysteria as an actual disease, and it is often implied that it is an umbrella term for an indefinable illness.

In contemporary usage, the name hysteria is given to a form of mental illness characterised by the exhibition of bodily signs such as paralysis or spasmodic movements and by complaints about the body, such as anesthesia or pain. The terms conversion hysteria and dissociative reaction are other names given to these phenomena. Bodily communications indistinguishable from those typical of hysteria may also be present in individuals diagnosed as hypochondriacal, neurasthenic, or schizophrenic, and sometimes in so-called normal persons as well.

### Causes of Hysteria

- Past trauma
- Conflict
- Undue stress
- History of abuse
- Another theory proposed to be a cause of hysteria is repression of sexual or aggressive behavior, which could have brought on a conversion disorder
- Sexual repression
- Excessive idleness
- Heredity factors
- Family history of nervousness
- Faulty emotional training
- Mental strain
- Fear
- Worry
- Depression
- Traumatism
- Masturbation
- Prolonged sickness

- Brain tumor
- Dementia

## **Symptoms**

Symptoms of hysteria included partial paralysis, hallucinations, and nervousness. Other symptoms that were often ascribed to hysteria included:

- Shortness of breath
- Anxiety
- Fainting
- Nervousness
- Insomnia
- Sexual forwardness
- Irritability
- Agitation

## **Diagnosis of Hysteria:**

The physician will take a thorough history of the symptoms causing concern to the person after which there will be a thorough examination. Investigations may be advised if a certain problem is suspected. If the examination and investigations are inconclusive, the physician may recommend a consultation with a psychiatrist or psychologist for further evaluation.

Some might feel that because there is no abnormal finding, the patient is faking it to just draw attention. But it is important to understand that the patient is disturbed, and wants the problem to go away.

## **Treatment for Hysteria:**

### **Conventional Therapy:**

Conventional therapy offers little to treat those with hysteria. Drugs like antidepressants or anxiolytics can be tried if depression or anxiety co-exists. Painkillers for symptoms of backache, body-ache, headache etc. can be given for a short time.

### **Psychotherapy for Hysteria:**

Psychotherapy is useful in encouraging the person to go through life daily with a positive attitude. Once the person develops coping strategies, his mind will stop converting the mental disturbance into a physical symptom, which is seen in somatisation disorder.

Psychotherapy consists of a series of techniques for treating mental health, emotional and some psychiatric disorders. Psychotherapy helps the patient understand what helps them feel positive or anxious, as well as accepting their strong and weak points. If people can identify their feelings and ways of thinking they become better at coping with difficult situations.

### **Hypnotherapy for Hysteria:**

The term "hypnosis" comes from the Greek word Hypnos, meaning "sleep." Hypnotherapists use exercises that bring about deep relaxation and an altered state of consciousness, also known as a trance. A person in a deeply focused state is unusually responsive to an idea or image, but this does not mean that a hypnotist can control the person's mind and free will. On the contrary, hypnosis can actually teach people how to master their own states of awareness. By doing so they can affect their own bodily functions and psychological responses.

Hypnotherapy is a kind of psychotherapy. Hypnotherapy aims to reprogram patterns of behavior within the mind, enabling irrational fears, phobias, negative thoughts and suppressed emotions to be overcome.

### **Self-care Measures for Hysteria:**

**Walk Around:** The act of walking is surprisingly calming. Staying in one place makes it easier for your thoughts and symptoms to run wild. Ideally, you need to try to get walking to help stimulate blood flow, improve breathing, and create natural distractions that come from the sensations of walking.

**Call Someone:** Talking to someone on the phone can actually be very beneficial for decreasing hysteria. In some cases it can be even better than talking to someone in person, because in person some people feel more embarrassed and pressured about their anxiety while on the phone that embarrassment tends to decrease. Talking to someone on the phone takes a surprising amount of brain power, which means that you're taking your mind off of your anxiety while also listening to a calming voice on the other end of the phone.

**Yell:** Sometimes letting that emotion out is very important, and sometimes the best way to do that is to let out a great, loud yell. It's a way of accepting your emotions and stimulating your blood and energy. Obviously you should make sure that no one is around (otherwise you may scare someone), but letting out a good, loud yell can make you feel better.

### **Socio cultural conditioning of women's minds:**

We think that women would no longer be bound by tired gender tropes or attempts by the patriarchy to make us conform into what they think a woman should look and act like. Yet there are many things women are conditioned to be — but don't actually *have* to be. When you look at the state of society today, sometimes it seems as though we are regressing as opposed to progressing. While it has been almost 100 years since women were granted the right to vote, 53 years since the Equal Pay Act was originally passed, and 43 years since *Roe v. Wade*, women are still being told what we should or should not (or worse, can or can not) do.

Still, old habits die hard and sometimes we all need a friendly reminder that we don't have to be any of these ridiculous things we've been conditioned to think are "appropriate" for women. Sure, we can be these things if we *want* to be them; but, we also have the power to

buck the trend, too. Feminism is, after all, about *choice* — being able to choose who you are and what you do. That choice is *everything*.

Being polite, proper, pretty, delicate, modest and selfless are considered to be characteristics of an ideal woman in every culture that has to be changed. Women should be encouraged to be their true selves, casual and happy.

## **Discrimination against Women**

It should be noted that in a vast country like India - spanning 3.29 million sq. km, where cultural backgrounds, religions and traditions vary widely - the extent of discrimination against women also varies from one societal stratum to another and from state to state - some areas in India being historically more inclined to gender bias than others. There are even communities in India, such as the Nairs of Kerala, certain Maratha clans, and Bengali families, which exhibit matriarchal tendencies, with the head of the family being the oldest woman rather than the oldest man. However, many Indian women face discrimination throughout all stages of their life, beginning at (or even before) birth, continuing as an infant, child, adolescent and adult. The stages can be divided in following sections:

- Before Birth / As an Infant
- As a Child
- After Marriage
- As a Widow

### **Discrimination against Women: Before Birth/ As an Infant**

India is one of the few countries where males outnumber females; the sex ratio at birth (SRB) – which shows the number of boys born to every 100 girls - is usually consistent in human populations, where about 105 males are born to every 100 females. There are significant imbalances in the male/female population in India where the SRB is 113; there are also huge local differences from Northern / Western regions such as Punjab or Delhi, where the sex ratio is as high as 125, to Southern / Eastern India e.g. Kerala and Andhra Pradesh, where sex ratios are around 105. Though “prenatal sex discrimination” was legally banned in 1996, the law is nearly impossible to enforce and is not even familiar to all Indian families. Hence, the preference for a male child persists, quite often out of mere practical, financial concerns, because the parents might not be able to afford the marriage dowry for (another) daughter. This leads to some of the most gruesome and desperate acts when it comes to gender discrimination:

- Selective abortions
- Murdering of female babies
- Abandonment of female babies

Prenatal tests to determine the sex of the fetus were criminalized by Indian law in 1994, but the above mentioned imbalances in the sex ratio at birth, clearly point to gender selective abortions.

While abortion is officially illegal in India there are some exceptions to this rule such as the failure of contraceptive device used by a couple; if the woman was raped; or if the child would suffer from severe disabilities. In total 11 million abortions take place annually and around 20,000 women die every year due to abortion related complications.

## **Discrimination against Women: As a Child**

### **Nutrition & Health**

As a child, girls are often treated differently from male children in terms of nutrition and health care; where limited food or financial resources are available, the insufficient means are prone to be allocated unevenly in favour of the male offspring.

This imbalance results in insufficient care afforded to girls and women, and is the first major reason for the high levels of child malnutrition. This nutritional deprivation has two harmful consequences for women:

1. They never reach their full growth potential
2. Anaemia

Both consequences are risk factors in pregnancy, complicating childbearing and resulting in maternal and infant deaths, as well as low birth weight infants.

### **Education**

India's constitution guarantees free primary school education for both girls and boys up to age 14. This has been repeatedly reconfirmed, but primary education in India is not universal, and often times not seen as really necessary for girls. Their parents might consider it more important, that they learn domestic chores, as they will need to perform them for their future husbands and in-laws. Another disincentive for sending daughters to school is a concern for the protection of their virginity. When schools are located at a distance, when teachers are male, and when girls are expected to study along with boys, parents are often unwilling to expose their daughters to the potential assault on their virginity, that would ultimately result in an insult to the girl's family's honor.

This results in one of the lowest female literacy rates in the world.

- Literacy Rate for Women : 54%
- Literacy Rate for Men : 76%

As a comparison, female literacy per 2009: Pakistan: 60%, Peru: 89%, Indonesia: 93%. Mothers' illiteracy and lack of schooling directly disadvantage their young children. Low schooling translates into poor quality of care for children, consequently in higher infant and child mortality and malnutrition, because mothers with little education are less likely to adopt appropriate health-promoting behaviors, such as having young children immunized.

Social sector programmes e.g. “Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan” (Education for Everyone) are promoting girls' education to equalize educational opportunities and eliminate gender disparities, but these initiatives will take time to unfold their whole effect.



## **Child Marriages**

The Prohibition of Child Marriage Act 2006 bans marriage below age 18 for girls and age 21 for boys, but some 80 % of Indians live in villages where family, caste and community pressures are more effective than any legislature. According to UNICEF's "State of the World's Children 2009" report, 47% of India's women aged 20–24 were married before the legal age of 18, with 56% in rural areas. The report also showed that 40% of the world's child marriages occur in India.

## **Discrimination against Women: After Marriage**

There is mainly a bias towards men and their superiority in marital relationships: while women ought to be respected, protected and kept happy by their husbands – their happiness being vital for the prosperity, peace and happiness of the whole family – they should also be kept under constant vigilance, since they cannot be completely trusted or left to themselves. Whereas as a child a girl is supposed to remain in the custody and care of her parents, after marriage she becomes the property and responsibility of her husband, who is supposed to take care of her and keep her in his custody.

Under the existing cultural and social ethos of India a married girl / woman is no longer considered to be part of the family of her birth, instead she has become part of the family of the groom. Hence, after marriage the woman leaves her parental home and lives with her husband's family, where she is required to assume all household labour and domestic responsibilities.

In certain parts of Indian society, women are conditioned from birth to be subservient not only to their future husbands, but also to the females in their husband's family especially, their mother-in-law. Accordingly, the surrounding society mandates a woman's obedience to her husband and her in-laws. Any disobedience would bring disgrace to both, the wife herself and her originating family, and might lead to the woman being ostracized and neglected by her very own family and in her own home.



## **As a Widow**

Indian government has enacted numerous laws to protect widow's rights, including prohibitions against traditional practices for which India has been discredited, such as the

burning of widows (Sati). Whereas in India's contemporary culture, especially in the modern urban middle-class, these societal norms have given way to a more righteous conduct, the enforcement of the law continues to be challenging, where there are regional, religious or caste variants of family law, which tend to escape government jurisdiction. Hence, a widow is still seen as a liability in some part of the Indian society, which might result in her being abandoned by her in-laws. As her originating family is often unable or unwilling to take her back as well, she might be left on her own, without any education, skills, or financial assistance. Instead, she is subjected to many restrictions, and might be required to shave her head permanently, or to wear white clothes for the rest of her life; thus, stigmatized, she is not allowed to enter in any celebration e.g. weddings, because her presence is considered to be inauspicious. Moreover, a widow might face trouble securing her property rights after her husband's death, nor be allowed to remarry, disregarding at what age she became a widow. As the described discrimination against widows is likely to occur in the same societal surroundings as the above mentioned child marriages, this might lead to child or teenage widows, who are bound to be isolated and ostracized for the rest of their lives.

### **For Inheritance**

While in the educated, urban middle class women's rights continue to improve, there remains a strong bias against gender equality in those societal parts of India, where patriarchal traditions prevail. Consequently, in these strata any inheritance of a deceased husband or father would be passed down to the oldest son, while his wife or daughters would not receive any financial benefit. There are laws in place to ensure legal protection for women's right to inheritance, but the enforcement of the law is challenging, when the woman is refused her right by the family, and when she is not confident or educated enough to claim her right.

### **Self image:**

Self esteem or self image comes from the inside out. It means that a woman is not dependent upon anyone else to make her feel good about herself, because she already knows she's fine just the way she is. She is confident and aware of her strengths and abilities. She wants to share them with others. This does not mean she is conceited. She is also aware of areas needing work and growth. She understands that we all have our strengths and weaknesses. Self-esteem is a core identity issue, essential to personal validation and our ability to experience joy. Once achieved, it comes from the inside out. But it can be assaulted or stunted from the outside in. A woman with low self-esteem does not feel good about herself because she has absorbed negative messages about women from the culture and/or relationships

The reign of youth, beauty and thinness in our society dooms every woman to eventual failure. Starting with the teenage market, women's magazines program them to focus all their efforts on their appearance. Many girls learn, by age 12, to drop formerly enjoyable activities in favor of the beauty treadmill leading to nowhere. They become fanatical about diets. They munch, like rabbits, on leaves without salad dressing, jog in ice storms, and swear they love

it! Ads abound for cosmetic surgery, enticing us to “repair” our aging bodies, as if the natural process of aging were an accident or a disease.



Yet with all this effort, they still never feel like they are good enough. How can they? Magazine models are airbrushed to perfection, and anorectic. “Beautiful” movie stars are whipped into perfect shape by personal trainers, and use surgery to create an unnatural cultural ideal. But youth cannot last. It is not meant to. If women buy into this image of beauty, then the best an older woman can strive for is looking “good for her age” or worse yet, “well preserved.” Mummies are also dead.

Relationships are impacted as well. Their needs are not met by their partner because they feel like they don’t deserve to have them met, or are uncomfortable asking. Their relationships with their children can suffer if they are unable to discipline effectively, set limits, or demand the respect they deserve. Worse yet, low self-esteem passes from mother to daughter. The mother is modeling what a woman is. She is also modeling, for her sons, what a wife is.

In the workplace, women with low self-esteem tend to be self-deprecating, to minimize their accomplishments, or let others take credit for their work. They never move up. Finally, with friends, they are unable to say no. They end up doing favors they don’t want to do, or have any time for. They end up going where they don’t want to go, with people they don’t want to go with!

A woman with low self-esteem has no control over her life. But that can change. These women can get help and emotional healing. It is critical to remember that no one deserves to be abused. If something bad has happened to you, it does not mean there is something wrong with you. The responsibility for the abuse lies with the person who chooses to hurt you.

## **Unit III**

### **Women and Legal Awareness**

#### **Introduction**

One of the main pillars of the Indian Constitution is the principle of equality. Article 14 guarantees equality before law and equal protection of law to all its citizens. Articles 15 (1) and 16 (2) expand this principle further and prohibit discrimination on the basis of religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth. This ensures that there is no discrimination between men and women, upper castes and lower castes, rich and poor and all will be treated as equals before the law and will be provided equal protection of law.

Hence, if any law is passed or any action is taken to prevent women from taking up employment in government or public sector undertaking, such law or action by the concerned authority can be struck down by the Supreme Court or a High Court, as being against the Constitutional provisions. Similarly paying women lower salaries for doing the same work even when they are qualified for it, is discriminatory and against the Constitutional guarantee of equality. Similarly not employing dalits or Muslims in certain categories of government jobs would also amount to discrimination.

But most important of all within the scheme of equality are Articles 15(3) (4) and 16 (3) (4) which help to further strengthen the concept of equality by permitting the state to make special provisions for securing the rights of the marginalized sections (women, children, schedule castes and schedule tribes) in order to help them overcome the discrimination they have suffered for many centuries and to help them become equal to others. This is called —positive discrimination.

This has helped the state to enact special laws for women and children such as the provisions for maintenance of women and children, protection against domestic and sexual violence, the Maternity Benefits Act, special protection for women under all labour laws, a special law to prevent sexual harassment at workplace, or reservations for women, scheduled castes or scheduled tribes for jobs and in elected bodies. A law to prevent atrocities against scheduled castes and scheduled tribes does not violate the provision of equality as it is meant to give additional protection to certain backward sections. These are all beneficial legislations meant to improve the status of marginalized people.

#### **Women-Specific Legislation**

- The Immoral Traffic (Prevention) Act, 1956  
An Act to provide in pursuance of the International Convention signed at New York on the 9th day of May, 1950, for the prevention of immoral traffic.
- The Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 (28 of 1961) (Amended in 1986)  
An Act to prohibit the giving or taking of dowry.
- The Indecent Representation of Women (Prohibition) Act, 1986

An Act to prohibit indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other manner and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- The Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987 (3 of 1988)

An Act to provide for the more effective prevention of the commission of sati and its glorification and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto, whereas sati or the burning or burying alive of widows or women is revolting to the feelings of human nature and is nowhere enjoined by any of the religions of India as an imperative duty; And whereas it is necessary to take more effective measures to prevent the commission of sati and its glorification;

- Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005

An Act to provide for more effective protection of the rights of women guaranteed under the Constitution who are victims of violence of any kind occurring within the family and for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

- The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

An Act to provide protection against sexual harassment of women at workplace and for the prevention and redressal of complaints of sexual harassment and for matters connected there with or incidental thereto. Whereas sexual harassment results in violation of the fundamental rights of a woman to equality under articles 14 and 15 of the Constitution of India and her right to life and to live with dignity under article 21 of the Constitution and right to practice any profession or to carry on any occupation, trade or business which includes a right to a safe environment free from sexual harassment; And whereas the protection against sexual harassment and the right to work with dignity are universally recognised human rights by international conventions and instruments such as Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Sexual Harassment Act Discrimination against Women, which has been ratified on the 25th June, 1993 by the Government of India; And whereas it is expedient to make provisions for giving effect to the said Convention for protection of women against sexual harassment at workplace.

- The Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013

The Indian Penal Code, 1860 governs the substantive part and the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 along with the Indian Evidence Act, 1872 governs the procedural part of the criminal law of the country. These Acts have been amended several times to keep pace with the changing needs of society. One major amendment in these laws was the Criminal Law (Amendment) Act, 2013. This is also commonly known as the 'Nirbhaya Act' and it amended the provisions relating to sexual offences. These amendments were the consequences of the brutal rape and consequent death of a 23-year old woman in a bus in Delhi and were based on the recommendations of Justice J.S. Verma Committee Report.

## **Women-Related Legislation**

- The Indian Penal Code, 1860

This Act shall be called the Indian Penal Code, and shall extend to the whole of India except the State of Jammu and Kashmir. Every person shall be liable to punishment under this Code and not otherwise for every act or omission contrary to the provisions thereof, of which he shall be guilty within India.

- The Indian Evidence Act, 1872

In India, the Law of Evidence is a very important part of both the system that is civil and criminal. The word Evidence is derived from the Latin word EVIDEARI which means to show clearly or to prove. The Indian Evidence Act is LEX FORI Law which means the law of the place where the proceeding is being taken.

## **Laws on Violence against Women**

Any type of violence is illegal. Laws about violence against women give additional support to women and families affected by violence. The most significant laws related to violence against women are the Violence against Women Act and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).

### **Violence Against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013**

The main federal law against violence against women is 'Violence against Women Reauthorization Act of 2013'. Domestic violence and abuse are already against the law. This law provides services and support for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault.

### **The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act**

The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA) help victims of domestic violence and their children by providing shelters and resources.

## **Women Empowerment Schemes**

1. Beti Bachao Beti Padhao Scheme
2. One Stop Centre Scheme
3. Women Helpline Scheme
4. UJJAWALA : A Comprehensive Scheme for Prevention of trafficking and Rescue, Rehabilitation and Re-integration of Victims of Trafficking and Commercial Sexual Exploitation
5. Working Women Hostel
6. Ministry approves new projects under Ujjawala Scheme and continues existing projects
7. SWADHAR Greh (A Scheme for Women in Difficult Circumstances)
8. Support to Training and Employment Programme for Women (STEP)

9. NARI SHAKTI PURASKAR
10. Awardees of Stree Shakti Puruskar, 2014 & Awardees of Nari Shakti Puruskar
11. Awardees of Rajya Mahila Samman & Zila Mahila Samman
12. Mahila police Volunteers
13. Mahila E-Haat
14. Mahila Shakti Kendras (MSK)
15. NIRBHAYA
16. Amma Two Wheeler Scheme

## **Women's Rights to Property**

This makes women absolute owners of their properties. However, not any women are aware of their rights; there is a misconception that women enjoy only limited rights over property, besides numerous other restrictions. The Act was amended in 2005 to give equal rights to women. Among the few factors that bind many women across the world together regardless of religion or language is the right to property.

In many cases, they are even bread winners for the family but they still have little or no rights to own land. A confluence of factors like lack of legal awareness, scant knowledge of inheritance rights, and years of societal conditioning have worked against Indian women. However, there have been signs of progress as mind sets slowly change for the better.

### **Inherited property**

In 2005, the central government passed a landmark amendment to the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 stipulating that all Indian women have the same rights as their brothers to inherit property.

Now, ancestral property cannot be denied to women any longer as the law classified the daughter as a “coparcener”, a person who gets an equal share of inherited land. But the laws regarding inheritance of agricultural land are more problematic as it falls under state laws, which differ from state to state. While Andhra Pradesh, for example, has a law that gives women equal inheritance rights over agricultural land, it is not the case in Bihar or Madhya Pradesh.

### **A daughter's rights**

According to the Hindu Succession Act, an unmarried or married woman is considered to be part of her father's Hindu Undivided Family (HUF). With the new changes in 2005, the daughter has the right to be the ‘karta’ or manager of the property, which was earlier limited to sons.

In another progressive ruling in 2018, the Supreme Court decreed that a daughter, living or dead, has full rights to her father's property along with her children.

A woman, who now has rights over her father's property by birth, is also free to sell her share to a third party or to a coparcenary, which is someone who has joint heirship. However,

the coparcenary has the 'right of first refusal', to stop the property from going to a non-family member or third party.

### **Widows have rights too**

The Hindu Widow Remarriage Act that was passed by the British in 1856 stated that, "All rights and interests whom any widow may have in her deceased husband's property...shall upon her remarriage cease." However, this act has long since been repealed and replaced by the Hindu Succession Act.

One of the first rules with regard to widows that the Act introduced was that if a husband dies intestate or without leaving a will behind, then his widow has the right to claim a share of the property along with his immediate kin like mother, daughter, and son. If a person dies intestate and he has a widowed mother, she too is entitled to get a share of his property along with the rest of kin.

### **Rights in a second marriage**

A woman who chooses to marry for the second time is granted the right to receive a share of her husband's property by law. Upon her husband's death, the second wife and her children along with her husband's wife and children from his previous marriage, if any, are equally entitled to receive a share of the property.

### **The National Commission for Women Act, 1990**

An Act to constitute a National Commission for Women and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto

1. The Central Government shall constitute a body to be known as the National Commission for Women to exercise the powers conferred on and to perform the functions assigned to, it under this Act.
2. The Commission shall consist of :-
  - i. A Chairperson, committed to the cause of women, to be nominated by the Central Government.
  - ii. Five members to be nominated by the Central Government from amongst persons of ability, integrity and standing who have had experience in law or legislation, trade unionism, management of an industry potential of women, women's voluntary organisations ( including women activist ), administration, economic development, health, education or social welfare
  - iii. Provided that at least one member each shall be from amongst persons belonging to the Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes respectively;
  - iv. A Member-Secretary to be nominated by the Central Government who shall be :-
    - a) an expert in the field of management, organisational structure or sociological movement, or



- b) an officer who is a member of a civil service of the Union or of an all-India service or holds a civil post under the Union with appropriate experience

## **WOMEN'S RIGHTS IN THE INDIAN CONSTITUTION**

The Indian Constitution talks about equality for all irrespective of their sex, in fact, it goes a step further and allows the state to make special laws for the benefit of women. Thus, we have a host of laws to protect women against discrimination, violence, exploitation and sexual harassment.

### **1. Right to marry a partner of your choice**

Every girl who is eighteen years and above has the freedom to choose a partner of her choice. Free consent is absolutely necessary for a valid marriage. No one can compel her to marry against her wishes.

### **2. Right to monogamous marriage**

Under the law, marriage has to be monogamous (except for Muslims), thus one cannot remarry during the lifetime of an existing spouse. Such act is punishable under Section 494 of the Indian Penal Code (IPC).

### **3. Right to say 'No'**

Every woman has absolute autonomy over her body and no one can compel her to establish sexual relations without her consent. That would amount to rape. A husband has presumed matrimonial consent to cohabit with his wife who is above 18 years of age, but if he sexually abuses his wife, the woman has a right to get protection orders under Section 18 of the Domestic Violence Act, 2005.

### **4. Right to protection against violence**

If any woman in a domestic relationship faces violence i.e. she is subjected to physical, verbal, emotional, sexual or economic abuse, she has the right to seek relief under the Domestic Violence Act. Domestic relationship means a relationship between two persons who live together or have, at any point of time, lived together in a shared household, when they are related by consanguinity, marriage, joint family, adoption or through a relationship in the nature of marriage.

### **5. Right to matrimonial remedies**

If any married woman wants to seek judicial separation, maintenance or divorce from her husband she can do so under the respective law. In addition to common grounds of divorce such as cruelty, adultery, mental disorder, renunciation of the world, communicable venereal disease and unheard of for seven years, there are certain special grounds that are available to a wife

alone such as bigamy or husband being guilty of rape, sodomy or bestiality. Any girl who is married before attaining 15 years of age has a special right. This is called 'option of repudiation', which she can exercise between 15-18 years of marriage in order to repudiate the marriage. Irrespective of her personal law she can also seek maintenance under Section 125 of the CrPC.

## **6. Right against sexual harassment**

Every woman has a right to safety inside as well as outside her home. Thus, she has a right to protect herself against sexual harassment at workplace or otherwise. There is a specific law that safeguards women against any kind of sexual harassment at workplace. In addition to this there are provisions under IPC that make eve teasing (509), molestation (354) and sexual harassment (354A) punishable crimes.

## **7. Right to private defence**

Everyone has the right to use force against an aggressor in order to defend oneself. This right extends to even causing the death of the aggressor where the assault causes a reasonable apprehension that the woman would be otherwise subjected to rape, unnatural sex, kidnapping/abduction or acid attack.

## **8. Right to privacy**

She has a right to complain if anyone follows her physically, monitors her activities online or repeatedly tries to foster interaction with her despite a clear indication of disinterest from her side. This amounts to stalking which is punishable under 354D of the IPC. In addition to this if anyone watches, captures or disseminates the image of a woman engaging in a private act without her consent is guilty of voyeurism under Section 354C of the IPC.

## **9. Right to equal pay for equal work**

Equal Remuneration Act makes it illegal to discriminate against women and they are entitled to equal wages for equal work.

## **10. Right to maternity benefit**

Every working woman is entitled to full paid absence from her work for a period of 26 weeks to take care of her new born child. This is available for two surviving children. For more than two children the duration of leave would be twelve weeks. This leave is available to all women working in the private sector or the public sector.

## **11. Right to adopt**

Every woman whether married or single has the right to adopt. Consent of both the spouses is required for the adoption in case of a married couple. A single woman can adopt a child of any gender; however, a minimum age difference of 21 years between the single mother and the adopted child is required if they're of opposite sexes. Also, any woman who adopts a

child under the age of 3 months is entitled to adoption leave of 12 weeks under the Maternity Benefits Act.

#### **12. Right to renounce all practices that are derogatory to womanhood**

We have laws that have declared derogatory practices such as dowry system, sati pratha, Devadasi pratha etc. as illegal and punishable. We also have a law that prohibits indecent representation of women through advertisements or in publications, writings, paintings, figures or in any other form. We have laws that protect women against trafficking and prostitution.

#### **13. Right to free legal aid**

Every woman regardless of her income is entitled to free legal aid.

#### **14. Right to register FIR**

It is mandatory to register an FIR in cases of crimes against women. Any police officer refusing to register an FIR when the information discloses the commission of a cognizable offence against a woman shall be punishable under Section 166 A of the IPC.

#### **15. Right to have investigation conducted in a dignified manner**

No female witness shall be asked to attend any place other than her residence for any purpose of investigation. In case the statement of a woman victim is to be recorded, it has to be done by a woman officer. Wherever the woman is to be subjected to medical examination, this has to be done by a female doctor or in the presence of another woman with strict regard to decency. Two finger test to determine rape is illegal.

#### **16. Right against arrest at night**

Unless there are exceptional circumstances justifying immediate action, no woman is to be arrested at night and where such exceptional circumstances exist then the arrest is to be made by a woman police officer, who shall make a written report to the concerned judicial magistrate of first class and obtain prior permission to arrest.

### **Maternity Benefits Act 1961**

#### **Maternity Benefits Act 1961 Background of the Act**

A maternity benefit Act stipulates that every woman shall be entitled to, and her employer shall be liable for, the payment of maternity benefit, which is the amount payable to her at the daily wage rate for the period of her actual absence. There is need for maternity benefits so that a woman is able to give quality time to her child without having to worry about whether she will lose her job and her source of income. This Act was enacted on 12th December 1961, to regulate the employment of women in certain establishment for certain period before and after child-birth and to provide for maternity benefit and certain other benefits.

**Why maternity leave is important for any women employee?**

Women's ties with pregnancy and child rearing and the failure of employers and policymakers to deal consistently with this issue exacerbate the difficulties women face in the economy. Women continue to have the primary responsibility for housework and childcare, even when they have extremely demanding jobs. Few employers provide help with childcare, flexible work hours to accommodate children's needs, or paid maternity leaves. Women in blue-collar work as well as clerical jobs face rigid time schedules, low pay, and virtually no recognition or help from employers for their family responsibilities

**Maternity benefit Act 1961**

Leave	26 weeks
Remuneration	Average daily wage shall be paid for the period of her actual absence immediately preceding and including the day of her delivery and for the six weeks immediately following that day
Additional Benefits	(i) Medical Bonus – 3,500 Rupees if no pre-natal confinement and postnatal care is provided for by the employer free of charge (ii) Nursing Breaks; Crèche Facilities; and (iii) Four visits a day to the crèche, including the interval for rest.

## Unit IV

### Women and Finance

#### DOMESTIC/ FAMILY FINANCE:

All income, expenses, and financial accounts related to the maintenance and upkeep of an entire family household. This includes all sources of income including wages, investments, savings accounts, and trusts. The ways to manage family finance are:

1. Spend less than you earn.
2. Don't buy things you can't afford.
3. Beware of financial indebtedness.

#### MANAGER OF DOMESTIC FINANCE:

Due to the multiple roles that women play on a daily basis, as household managers, consumers or as business owners, sound financial management is extremely important. Below are some tips on how to achieve this:

1. **Prepare a monthly budget:** Plan your expenses for a given period and monitor if you have spent more than you originally planned. At the end of the month, make the necessary adjustments to optimize it. Daily follow-up can help you save up to 15%.
2. **Use different accounts for different purposes:** The secret of generating wealth is money management. One of the ways is to divide the money into specific accounts for specific purposes and relate each account to an area of your life – and to use it only for that purpose. Each time you receive money, assign a percentage to each account.
3. **Invest instead of savings:** Money is too volatile to focus only on saving. Aim to accumulate to invest, generate returns and more income. It is good to be an active investor and above all, to understand the chosen method.
4. **Prepare for contingencies:** Seek to protect yourself through insurance on your business, life and other assets that can be adversely affected and impact your wealth. Create an emergency fund (equivalent to three to six months of your income) in order to face any possible problems relating to work, production or personal situations that may arise.
5. **Increase added value:** The more value you generate, the higher the price that your client will be willing to pay for the product or service that you are offering. Investing in yourself to grow and create more capabilities is the best long-term investment where you can accumulate experience, training and continue to be updated.
6. **Think about tomorrow:** It is never too early or too late to design a retirement and savings plan. On average, women have a higher life expectancy than men and should think about how they will manage the costs.

## **BUDGETING BASICS:**

### **Budget**

A budget is a detailed plan of operations for some specific future period. Many of us are familiar with the term 'Budget'. For instance, if we want to have a holiday trip to Kashmir, we are to estimate the cost of travelling, boarding, lodging etc., so as to have sufficient amount for the trip. On return from the trip, we may like to compare the actual amount spent with the estimated or budgeted figures. The word 'budget' is derived from the French term 'Bougette' which denotes a leather pouch in which funds are appropriated for meeting anticipated expenses.

The expenses include fixed and flexible expenses.

- Fixed expenses are expenses that stay the same from month to month, such as rent payments, Payment for LIC etc.
- Flexible expenses are expenses that change from month to month and vary from time to time.
- Total expenses are the combined amount of the fixed and flexible expenses.
- Total monthly income is the income from the job or other resources including investment dividends, pensions, Social Security benefits, rental income and more.
- Disposable income is the money which is left over after the income tax is subtracted from the income.

## **CREATING A FAMILY BUDGET**

The easiest way to develop a budget for the family is to keep track of all the things you spend money on, no matter how big or small. It can be helpful to first create some generalized categories, and then think about where the money goes under each of them. The idea is that you'll get a feel for trends in your spending so you can make necessary changes to make sure you're financially successful and debt-free.

### **Personal and Household Budget Categories**

- Income. Get a good understanding of your income.
- Emergency Fund. A priority household budget item is an emergency fund.
- Housing.
- Savings.
- Utilities.
- Health Care.
- Consumer Debt.
- Food and Groceries

### **Advantages of Family Budget:**

1. Budgeting helps in the proper distribution of family income for satisfactory living.

2. It is a valuable means of comparing various items.
3. Budgeting facilitates adjusting irregular income to regular expenditure.
4. It helps to live within one's own income.
5. By budget we can identify the unnecessary and extravagant expenditure.
6. A budget determines how a family can use all its resources.
7. Budget can help to save for future.
8. Budget keeps one free from financial worries and anxieties.
9. It encourages conscious decision making.
10. It serves as a time record for meeting future needs.
11. Budget helps in the distribution and proper allocation of income for expenditure on different items according to the requirement of family members.
12. It serves as a financial guide of the family.
13. Since all the members of the family work together for the planning of a budget, it induces a sense of co-operation among them.
14. Budget is very helpful where there is scarcity of money.
15. Members of the family understand their responsibilities in storing income.
16. The family budget provides the family a record of expenditure for future use.
17. The greatest advantage is that it makes the family healthier and happier with its means.

#### **Disadvantages of Family Budget:**

1. Budget becomes a failure in case of irregular income.
2. The illiterate people are unable to know the techniques of budget as it is a written plan.
3. Extra expenditure cannot be met easily when a family makes a budget. Sometimes saving becomes lower.
4. If the members of the family do not co-operate with the home maker, the budget becomes a failure.
5. The housewife becomes tensed when her plan of budget cannot work properly.

#### **Types of Budget: Budget is of three types:**

##### **A. Deficit budget:**

When the expenditure exceeds income, it is known as deficit budget. It is not at all desirable.

##### **B. Surplus budget:**

In this budget, the income is more than the expenditure. The family is able to save more in this budget.

##### **C. Balanced budget:**

This is a good budget. In this budget, income and expenditure are equal and the estimated income meets the estimated expenditure.

## **Importance of a household budget**

A well-made, proper household budget has a great impact on our financial lives. If we do not have one, we may have to face financial problems of various kinds. A household budget is all the more important in this consumer era because it teaches members of the family the worth of money. It is, indeed, an important cog in the wheel that runs a house.

Contrary to what many people tend to believe, creating a household budget is an uncomplicated process, even as simple as noting down each expense and keeping track of it for a month.

## **Benefits of household budget:**

A household budget helps you to identify the areas in which you spend and take necessary steps to curtail expenditure on those items that are non-essential and unnecessary. Household expenses often spiral out of control because we have no idea about how the family's total outgoings are created. Once a household budget is in place, it becomes much easier to bring things under control. It can also teach younger members of the family the importance of money, so that they stop wasting money on unnecessary things. They can utilize this knowledge when they grow up and start their own families.

## **Affordable credit limit:**

The most important benefit of a household budget is that it gives you an idea of how much credit you are in a position to take on without landing in serious debt problems. Those who do not follow a household budget often find themselves in a debt trap, making extravagant purchases on credit without knowing where the money will finally come from. Last but not the least, making a household budget is a good habit that helps a family to run in a smooth manner.

## **Manage your Finance:**

One can manage the family finance by creating a monthly budget using the basic Budget Worksheet. There are 10 fundamental steps to help you manage your money the right way:

1. Create a budget:  
Budgeting helps us see with clarity and full transparency our financial situation and this is of utmost importance for better managing your money.
2. Understand your expenses:  
Take all your receipts (groceries, restaurant bills, utilities, etc.) and look at your bank statements and add up all of your expenses. Remember to keep track of expenses paid by cash as well as credit cards.
3. Understand your income:  
Most people know their full monthly income but have less knowledge of their full monthly expenses.



4. Consolidate your debt:  
There are options out there that allow you to combine several unsecured debts such as credit cards, personal loans and payday loans, into one bill rather than pay them individually.
5. Slash or remove unnecessary expenses:  
Cut down all kinds of unnecessary expenses which may burden the family and put them into unwanted debt.
6. Create an emergency fund.  
Emergency funds are an important part of a healthy personal finance plan. They are very helpful in meeting unforeseen expenses which are likely to arise in a family.
7. Save 10 to 15 percent for retirement.  
The sooner you start saving for retirement, the better off you will be in your golden years. It is therefore wise to establish a savings target while you are able to do so.
8. Review and understand your credit report.  
It serves to determine how creditworthy you are and this has a direct impact on your future borrowing ability.
9. Use a tool or personal finance app  
With a secure financial app you can get access to all your account balances, financial transactions, spending habits and budgets and take all that information to start making smarter decisions and achieve your financial goals.
10. Follow money management resources  
Knowledge is power.

### **Set Financial Goals:**

- Saving money seems to be a long term goal.
- Setting financial goals is an important step in projecting family's future such as saving money for child's college fund, retirement etc. Financial goals can include quick reductions on utility bills, cable bills and other expenses in saving more money each month.

### **Plan for Financial Emergencies:**

- The stress of a financial crisis can put a strain on the wealthiest families. Establishing an emergency fund helps to build up savings for unexpected expenses.
- Life insurance and a last will and testament can also shield the family from a financial hardship if something wrong has happened to the head of the family.
- Cut the costs of feeding the family with a well-planned food budget. Save money on groceries with a ready-made shopping list of the family's favorite recipes.

## **Budget for Travel:**

Many families think a vacation is an automatic budget buster. Money can be saved for the vacation to make a getaway, as part of the budget.

### **How to Plan Your Travel Budget**

- Identify your big-ticket items.
- Estimate your expenses for accommodation, meals, and transportation.
- Don't forget to include expenditures on visas, **travel** insurance and vaccinations.
- Identify your priorities.
- Start saving for the **trip** as early as possible.

## **Saving Strategies**

Money can be saved aside on a regular basis for a down payment for a house, a car, or for retirement.

### **Five Saving Strategies:**

#### **1. Save Automatically:**

Save automatically through a monthly transfer from checking to savings. These savings will provide funds for emergencies, home purchase, school tuition, or even retirement. Almost all banking institutions will, on request, automatically transfer funds monthly from checking account to a savings account.

#### **2. Save for Emergencies:**

Low-income families with at least Rs. 10,000 in an emergency fund were better off financially than moderate-income families who saved less for emergencies.

#### **3. Pay Off High-Cost Debt:**

The best investment most borrowers can make is to pay off consumer debt with high interest rates.

#### **4. Save for Retirement:**

People are encouraged to plan for their retired life by investing in LIC (Life Insurance Corporation), PPF(Public Provident Fund), ULIP( Unit Linked Insurance Plan) and the like.

#### **5. Make a Plan:**

Choose a goal and amount to save monthly.

## **Investment Options**

An investment is an asset or item acquired with the goal of generating income or appreciation. In an economic sense, an investment is the purchase of goods that are not consumed today but are used in the future to create wealth. It is wise to invest the savings in investments which would yield a return/income to the family.

There are four main investment types, or asset classes, that one can choose from, each with distinct characteristics, risks and benefits. They are:

- Growth investments
- Shares
- Property
- Defensive investments
- Cash investments which include everyday bank accounts, high interest savings accounts and term deposits
- Fixed interest investments

### **Growth Investments**

These are more suitable for long term investors that are willing and able to withstand market ups and downs.

### **Shares**

- Shares are considered as growth investments, as they can help grow the value of your original investment over the medium to long term.
- If you own shares, you may also receive income from dividends, which are effectively a portion of a company's profit paid out to its shareholders.
- Of course, the value of shares may also fall below the price you pay for them. Prices can be volatile from day to day and shares are generally best suited to long term investors, who are comfortable withstanding these ups and downs.
- Also known as equities, shares have historically delivered higher returns than other assets and are considered one of the riskiest types of investment.

### **Property**

- Property is also considered as a growth investment because the price of houses and other properties can rise substantially over a medium to long term period.
- However, just like shares, property can also fall in value and carries the risk of losses.
- It is possible to invest directly by buying a property but also indirectly, through a property investment fund.

## **Defensive investments**

These are more focused on consistently generating income, rather than growth, and are considered lower risk than growth investments.:

### **Cash**

- Cash investments include everyday bank accounts, high interest savings accounts and term deposits.
- They typically carry the lowest potential returns of all the investment types.
- While they offer no chance of capital growth, they can deliver regular income and can play an important role in protecting wealth and reducing risk in an investment portfolio.

### **Fixed Interest Investments**

- The best known type of fixed interest investments are bonds, which are essentially when governments or companies borrow money from investors and pay them a rate of interest in return.
- Bonds are also considered as a defensive investment, because they generally offer lower potential returns and lower levels of risk than shares or property.
- They can also be sold relatively quickly, like cash, although it's important to note that they are not without the risk of capital losses.
- Women can thus manage the finance of the family by making wise investment decisions.

## Unit V

### Women's Empowerment in Various Domain

A woman is a being with senses, imagination and thoughts and she should be able to express them freely. “In our society, the women who break down barriers are those who ignore limits.”- Arnold Schwarzenegger

The renowned Swami Vivekananda quoted, “There is no chance for the welfare of the world unless the condition of women is improved. It is not possible for a bird to fly on only one wing.”

Empowerment can be defined as a “multi-dimensional social process that helps people gain control over their own lives. Women's empowerment refers to “women's ability to make strategic life choices where that ability had been previously denied to them” (Malhotra et al., 2009) (Kabeer 1999).

Accordingly, empowerment is central to the processes of maintaining the benefits of women at an individual, household, community and broader levels (Malhotra et al., 2009). It involves the action of boosting the status of women through literacy, education, training and raising awareness (Alvarez and Lopez, 2013). Hence, women's empowerment is all about allowing and equipping women to make life-determining choices across different issues in the country.

We all know the ratio of girls is less as compared to boys in our country, India. And it is due to the orthodox mentality of society who wants to have boys and not girls. In true sense, patriarchy has decided the course of women's lives throughout ages.

The need for women empowerment arose because of the gender discrimination and male domination in the Indian society since ancient time. Women are being suppressed by their family members and society for many reasons. They have been targeted for many types of violence and discriminatory practices by the male members of the family and society in India and other countries as well. Wrong and old practices in the society from ancient times have taken the form of well-developed customs and traditions.

Women enjoyed a better position in the Rig-Vedic period which deteriorated in the Vedic civilization. Vedic civilization onwards, women were denied the right to education, right to widow remarriage, right to inheritance and ownership of property. Social evils like child marriage and dowry system worsen the situations more for women. During the Gupta period, the status of women deteriorated extremely and institutions like dowry and Sati Pratha became more prominent. During the British Raj, many social reformers such as Raja Ram Mohan Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, and Jyotirao Phule started agitations for the empowerment of women and as a result of their efforts Sati was finally abolished and the Widow Remarriage Act was formulated. Later, stalwarts like Mahatma Gandhi and Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru advocated women rights and as a result of their concentrated efforts that the status of women in social, economic and political life began to elevate in the Indian society.

Although women in India have made a considerable progress in the seven-decade of Independence still the battle is only half won. They still have to fight against many social evils that are oppressing them and deteriorating their status. Still, there are people or groups that create hurdles and resist women progress in India. Empowerment of women is essential to have the bright future in family, society and country. Pt. Jawaharlal Nehru had said that to awaken the people, first the women need to be awakened, because once a woman has been awakened then the whole nation and family gets awakened with her.

Women no longer need men to rely on. Nothing is beatable for a woman. All she needs is support and lots of love. A woman is the most powerful creature in this living earth. Not only she compromises her family, but in the time of need, she tends to have such energy to make things go in a right way whether the cost to it is they themselves.

### **Benefits and Necessity of Women Empowerment:**

They are able to lead their lives with dignity and freedom. It adds to their self-esteem and self-confidence. It gives them a distinct identity of their own. They are able to gain respectable positions in society. As they are financially independent they are able to spend on all their needs and desires and they don't need to sacrifice or compromise with their needs for others. They are able to make meaningful contributions to the well-being of society. They act as capable citizens to contribute to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth of the country. Country's resources are fairly and equally accessible to them. Women cannot enjoy security and protection in life if they are not empowered. It also provides them with a safe working environment.

Empowerment acts as a powerful tool against exploitation and harassment faced by women. It provides legal protection for women. Women cannot develop their own identity if they are not empowered. Women constitute a vast chunk of the world's population. So if they aren't employed the global economy will be adversely affected. Women need to be provided equal opportunities for work to produce a just and progressive society.

## **Woman in Sports**

### **P.T.USHA- The Golden Girl**

One of the most iconic women athletes of track and field, PT Usha was born on June 27, 1964, to a poor family living in a village named Payyoli near Calicut, Kerala. Her full name is Pilavullakandi Thekkeparambil Usha, P.T. Usha (Pilavullakandi Thekkeparampil Usha) or "Payolli Express" as she was popularly known was the reigning queen of Indian track and field for two decades. She was interested in sports right from her childhood days.

P.T. Usha did not have a privileged childhood and faced many health issues and much poverty. Her incredible drive for athletics and sports soon earned the "queen of Indian track and field" the nickname of 'Payyoli Express'. Usha was associated with sports since the year 1976 when her aptitude and passion for sports led her to secure a Rs 250 scholarship from the Kerala state government and represent her district when it started a sports school for women in Cannore.

**Sports career:**

In 1976 the Kerala Government started a Sports division for women in Kannur, where Usha started practicing under coach O.M Nambiar. Her march to fame started in 1979, when she won the individual championship at the National School Games. In 1980, in her first international meet, she won 4 gold medals for India.

**Winning Streak**

Usha immediately made a comeback in 1982, during the World Junior Athletics Championship in Seoul, South Korea, where she won the 200m and secured a bronze in the 100m. Her most glorious performance occurred at the 1984 Los Angeles Olympics, where she won the 400m hurdles heats. She missed a chance to win India's first track-and-field bronze in 400m hurdles by a mere 1/100th of a second. Her coach attributed to the second start that spoiled her rhythm.

Bouncing back at the 1985 Asian Championship in Jakarta, Usha won six medals to set a record for the most gold medals won at a single event in the championship. In the 1986 Asian Games, Seoul, she struck gold in the 200m, 400m and 4X400m relay, with new game records. She also settled for the 100m silver, having lost to arch rival Lydia de Vega.

**Overcoming obstacles**

Usha suffered from a heel injury during the 1988 Seoul Olympics. Despite the pain, she pushed herself to run but failed to make it to the final. She recovered and participated in the 1989 Asian Track and Field Meet where she won four golds. Usha wanted to retire the same year but decided to compete in the Beijing Asian Games where she won three medals. In 1991, she married V Srinivasan and the couple was blessed with a son in 1992. Usha returned to the track for the 1998 Asian Track and Field meet in Japan where she set a new national record in the 200m race.

**Legacy**

After retirement from competitive sport, India's first sportswoman to enter an Olympic final, opened the Usha School of Athletics – a nonprofit organisation that trains future athletes. She has won the Arjuna Award (1983), the Padma Shri (1985) and was named Sportsperson of the Century as well as Sportswoman of the Millennium by the Indian Olympic Association. With 101 medals to her name, Usha's legacy remains unmatched.

**Interesting Facts:**

1. Young P.T. Usha was a bright student during her school years, and her parents thought that she would become a teacher like her mother. Initially, her father was apprehensive of her taking up sports as he didn't want her to get injured and knew very little about the world of sports.

2. In 1983, when PT Usha requested that OM Nambiar be her coach, the government approved her request. As a result, she became India's first athlete to have a personal coach. Nambiar was always proud of Usha's potential and performance, and credits his own popularity to the athlete.
3. AK Kutty, who coached athlete MD Valsamma, made a statement that if Valsamma had trained on a synthetic track, she would have beaten Usha. The latter took this as a challenge, she kept the media clipping under her pillow and used it to motivate herself before the 1984 Olympics.
4. At the 1985 Asian Meet in Jakarta, Usha's arch rival at the time, Lydia de Vega as well as her father continuously complained about the Indian sprinter after every race, suspicious of her wins. Even though Usha was subjected to dope tests after each race, she won five golds and a bronze.
5. PT Usha's record as an athlete remains unmatched till date. Due to her performance and contribution to track and field, she has been given several nicknames over the years including Payyoli Express and Golden Girl, as well as the title 'Queen of Indian track and field'

## **Conclusion**

She has won as many as 101 international medals till now and is employed in the Southern Railways as an officer. Usha currently also runs a school for athletics at Koyilandi near Kozhikode, Kerala, where girls in the age group of 10-12 are recruited and trained. Among them was Tintu Lukka, who had qualified at the London 2012 Olympics for the women's semi-final 800m event.

Having entered track and field athletics at the age of 16, she is credited with popularising the sport across India. Though Usha retired in the year 2000, her records remain unmatched till date. She stays connected with the field through her athletics training school.

## **Woman in Music**

### **M. S. Subbulakshmi**

#### **Early Career**

Madurai Shanmukhavadivu Subbulakshmi is a name that is synonymous with the world of Carnatic music. This flawless singer, whose voice almost had a divine power, is the first singer to be presented with India's highest civil honour, the Bharat Ratna. When she was honoured with the Ramon Magsaysay award, which is considered as Asia's Nobel Prize, she became the first Indian musician to do so. Subbulakshmi, fondly addressed as M.S by her fans, was a true pioneer of anything that has to do with women empowerment. She led by example and showed the way to contemporary women of her era. Though she is famous as an exponent of Carnatic music, her expertise in Hindustani classical music was not short of brilliance. Subbulakshmi didn't contain herself with just music, for she forayed into the field of acting as



well. M. S. Subbulakshmi was a leading exponent of Carnatic music. She was known by various sobriquets, namely, the Queen of Music, Nightingale of India, the Eighth Tone of Music and the Goddess of Perfect Note.

### **Childhood**

M.S was introduced to Carnatic music at a very young age. That was because she was born into a family of musicians. While Akkammal, her grandmother, was a violinist, her mother was a well-known Veena player. Since her mother came from the devadasi community, stage shows were something M.S was used to, very early in her life. As a child, she would have numerous conversations with famous musicians like Karaikudi SambasivaIyer, Ariyakudi RamanujaIyengar and Mazhavarayanendal Subbarama Bhagavathar. This level of exposure to music and musicians made her to choose her career path at a young age.

### **Education**

Subbulakshmi began her training under her mother Shanmu kavadiver Ammal. She then went on to learn the nuances of Carnatic music under Semmangudi Srinivasa Iyer. While learning Carnatic music, she also learnt and mastered Hindustani music under the famous vocalist Pandit Narayanrao Vyas.

### **First performance**

She was a quick learner. She delivered her first public performance at the famous Rockfort Temple in Tiruchirappalli when she was just eleven years old. The performance was backed by popular musicians like violinist Mysore Chowdiah and Dakshinamurthy Pillai, a well-known Mridangam player. Her major breakthrough came in the year 1929 when she performed at the Madras Music Academy. The few lucky music lovers present at the event were mesmerized by the skills of a 13 year old girl, who could sing bhajans with such grace and fluency. Impressed by her vast knowledge on music, the academy invited her for several other performances and by the time she was 17, Subbulakshmi was a major attraction in all of her concerts.

### **Foreign Trips**

Subbulakshmi soon became an Indian ambassador for all things cultural, and represented the country in many foreign festivals. In 1963, she was invited to Scotland to take part in the famous Edinburgh International Festival. Her mesmerizing performance in the UK paved the way for her next foreign tour as she was invited to perform at the Carnegie Hall in New York. In 1982, she got an opportunity to showcase her talent at the famous Royal Albert Hall in London. Five years later, she was invited by the government of Russia to perform at the Festival of India which was held in Moscow. Subbulakshmi also traveled to places like Canada and the Far East and songs of praise just kept following her wherever she went.

## Role in cinema

M.S also tried her hand at acting and showcased her acting skills in five movies. Her debut came in the year 1938 when she essayed the role of a young girl in the movie 'Sevasadanam'. The film was commercially and critically acclaimed and was considered a trendsetter at that time. In her second movie 'Sakuntalai', she played the title role. Her third film 'Savithiri' saw her portraying the character of Saint Narada and was appreciated for her performance.

One of her most memorable films came in the year 1945 when she once again played the title role in the movie 'Meera'. The movie was directed by American filmmaker Ellis R. Dungan and it went on to become a huge success. The versatile singer sang all the famous Meerabhajans in her melodious voice and these bhajans were thoroughly enjoyed by the audience. In 1947, 'Meera' was remade in Hindi as 'Meerabai' and this gave her true national recognition. She attained major success by acting in films, but it did not fascinate her for a long time. She quit films and continued to focus on her music and once again started performing in concerts.

## Famous Works

Some of her most famous works include 'Suprabhatam' (Early Morning Hymns), 'Bhajagovindam' (composed by Adi Shankaracharya praising Lord Krishna), 'Kurai Onrumillai' (composed by Rajagopalachari), 'Vishnu Sahasranamam', 'Hanuman Chalisa' (Prayers to Lord Hanuman), etc. Any ardent fan of Carnatic classical music is sure to have all these and much more works of M. S. Subbulakshmi. Another moving composition is the song 'Vaishnava Jana to'. Her perfect pronunciation and flawless singing would bring tears to the eyes of anyone who listens to it.

Quite naturally she had a massive fan following in India. Recognition and compliments came in multitudes. Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru once said about her, *"Who am I, a mere Prime Minister before a Queen – a Queen of Music."* Mahatma Gandhi famously remarked, *"I would gladly hear Subbulakshmi speak it than hear it sung by others."* The legendary Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan hailed her as *Suswaralakshmi* (the Goddess of the perfect note). The reigning melody queen Lata Mangeshkar once hailed her *Tapaswini* (the ascetic).

## Awards

Subbulakshmi was a recipient of innumerable awards and honors. Some of them are mentioned below:

- Bharat Ratna – In the year 1998, M. S. Subbulakshmi became the first musician to be honored with India's highest civilian award.
- Ramon Magsaysay award – This award is also known as Asia's Nobel Prize. In the year 1974, M.S became the first Indian to be honored with this prestigious award.
- Sangeet Natak Akademi Award – In 1956, she became the proud recipient of this award for her contribution in the field of Carnatic music.

- Sangeetha Kalanidhi – Awarded by the Madras Music Academy, this award is considered to be the most prestigious in Carnatic music. It was bagged by her in the year 1968.
- Sangeetha Kalasikhamani – In 1975, she won this award, presented to her by the Indian Fine Arts Society.
- Kalidas Samman – In 1988, the government of Madhya Pradesh honored her with the Kalidas Samman.
- Indira Gandhi Award – She bagged this prestigious award in 1990. Presented by the government of India, this award was given to her for her efforts in national integration.

## **Death**

M. S. Subbulakshmi passed away on 11th December 2004 in Chennai. Her funeral was attended by hundreds of fans and music lovers from all over the country. Many national leaders like the then President A.P.J Abdul Kalam also paid their homage. Her mortal remain was consigned to flames with full state honour. Her fans have included the likes of Jawaharlal Nehru, Mahatma Gandhi, Sarojini Naidu, Lata Mangeshkar, and Ustad Bade Ghulam Ali Khan of the Hindustani school.

## **Legacy**

In 2005, the Government of India issued a postage stamp in her memory. In 2006, the Urban Development Authority of Tirupati installed a bronze statue of her and the same was unveiled by the then C.M of Andhra Pradesh, Y. S. Rajasekhara Reddy. While a postage stamp of M.S. was issued in 2005, United Nations issued her stamps to celebrate her birth centenary. In Kancheepuram, a type of silk saree has been named after her. Still later, in October 2016, the United Nations released a commemorative stamp to observe her birth centenary.

## **Women who crossed hurdles in Social Service**

### **Mother Teresa**

Born on August 26<sup>th</sup> 1910 in Skopje into an Albanian family, Mother Teresa was the youngest child of Nicholas Bojaxhiu and Dranafle Bernai. She was christened Agnes Gonxha Bojaxhiu when she was just a day old. In Albanian, Gonxha means 'flower bud.'

Mother Teresa was very close to her mother. Her spiritual life was greatly influenced by her mother's strong sense of values and her commitment to faith. The children called their mother 'Nana Loke' meaning, the mother of my soul. Her father too was of a charitable disposition.

Her mother was against the wasting of resources. There is a story about their childhood, when the three siblings sat around their mother chatting playfully, their mother quietly listened for a long time then abruptly got up and switched off the lights saying electricity should not be wasted on foolish talk.

Her mother was strict but was also very kind. She would visit the poor and the needy with food and money. Agnes, as a little girl would love to go with her mother.

Sadly and quite suddenly their father died. Her mother, after being struck with grief was at first unable to come to grips with the tragedy. After she recovered, she started a small business of her own to earn enough to bring up her three children.

Both Agnes and her elder sister Age, were in the choir and participated in many activities of the church. Agnes did very well in school and she was fond of reading and writing too. In fact her brother thought she would make a career out of writing.

But destiny had other plans. She was only twelve years old when she first felt the desire to become a nun. From Father Jambrenkovic she learned about the lives of saints and missionaries and about the experiences they had with the people and children of India. She learnt about the Loreto order of nuns who were working in Bengal, educating children. All this had a great impact on Agnes.

By the time Agnes turned eighteen, she had made up her mind that she wanted to become a missionary in India. For this, she had to become a nun and join the Irish order of the sisters of Loreto. This time, her mother understood her daughter's deep inner desire to serve the poor and advised her to have faith in God and He would lead her on. As nuns in those days could not visit home she knew she would never see her daughter again.

On the twenty third of May 1929 Agnes changed her name to Teresa after the name of a French Carmelite nun and on May 24<sup>th</sup> 1931, she took her first temporary vows of poverty, charity and obedience.

When she arrived in India in January 1929 she was sent to novitiate at the hill resort of Darjeeling where the surrounding natural scenery was proof of God's power and beauty.

Here during her two year stay she began to learn Bengali picked up some Hindi too. She soon began to be called the "Bengali Teresa" because she had mastered this language so well. For two hours each day they also taught poor children and she also liked helping at the hospital. After Sister Teresa took her final lifetime vows in 1937, she was a professed nun at last and was made principal of St. Mary's School. People recall, that even then she was a very dedicated and charitable worker. She was witty with a fine sense of humour. Sometimes while enjoying jokes she would bend double with laughter.

Then in 1942-43 the Great Famine broke out. Burmese rice was cut off because of the Japanese invasion. In 1946, communal tension between Hindus and Muslims became the reason for a nightmare of violence that killed more than four thousand people within five days.

During the riots once, Sister Teresa went out to find food for her students. The misery of the refugees in Calcutta and the ghastly state of the Motijhil slum affected her deeply. Then came God's call. The message she said was very clear to her : to leave the convent and help the poor while living among them. It was an order. 'A call within a call.'

On the 8th of August 1948, Father Van Exem was permitted by the Archbishop to break the news to Mother Teresa that she could leave the Order and go and live in the slums. She wrote to her mother in Skopje to inform her that she had taken permission from the Vatican and she was leaving with her religious vows intact.

On 17th August 1948 Mother Teresa wore her new dress, the white sari with the blue border which Father Van Exem had blessed together with a small cross and rosary. She then lived with the Medical Mission Sisters in Patna for a few months to learn about nursing and outdoor dispensary work. She was taught to give injections, medicines and even to help in child birth.

She had stepped out of Calcutta's Loreto with a five rupee note, three saris and a huge amount of faith. When she stepped in Motijhil, she felt the children needed a school. She did not have a building and tables and chairs. Someone donated a couple of chairs and a blackboard. The school had started! She would teach personal hygiene and cleanliness. Regular students were awarded soap cakes as prizes. They got milk at mid day.

Her state was pathetic those days as she tried to uplift the state of the poor and show to them the glory of God's love. Her prayers were answered and got her a house, Michael Gomes, who lived with his family in 14, Creek Lane, offered her the use of the second floor of his house. This house became a haven of peace and love for her.

Mother Teresa then took Indian citizenship. She wrote out very carefully the aims of her little group and the Rule that they followed. The Archbishop was impressed and the constitution was accepted on October 7, 1950 and the Missionaries of Charity were recognised by the Catholic Church and also approved by the Pope.

A generous Muslim, a friend of Father Van Exem provided Mother Teresa with her first proper Motherhouse of her Order. Mother Teresa never complained of any hardship and God's praise was always on her lips.

Mother Teresa offered to take care of the homeless destitute, sick, starving, those dying on the streets. Her first major work was the Kalighat Home for the Dying. The home, or hospital was called 'Nirmal Hriday.' Thousands died in the home, decently, peacefully, and prayerfully. The Sisters with their helpers, washed and fed them, consoled them, cheered their spirits and prepared their souls so that each one of them could die in peace.

Mother Teresa started working for the welfare of leprosy patients. Collection tins were taken around Calcutta for Mother Teresa's Leprosy fund with the slogan 'Touch the Leper with your kindness.' Money poured in from all sources.

In December 1979, Mother Teresa went to Norway to receive the highest award, the Nobel Peace Prize. The entire money of the award was to be used to feed the starving and build homes for the homeless and for the lepers.

In 1964 when the Pope visited India, he gifted his beautiful white Rolls Royce to her before he left. Mother Teresa auctioned it to get more money for the poor. Mother Teresa's work by this time was noticed all over the country. Branches of her schools, hospitals and clinics were springing up rapidly.

In 1965, the Pope Paul VI allowed the Missionaries of Charity to work outside India for the first time. Mother opened a mission in Ceylon, in Venezuela and she also visited Rome. Mother Teresa's last day was 5<sup>th</sup> of September in 1997. October 19<sup>th</sup> of the year 2003 was the date of beatification of Mother Teresa.

## **Dr. S. Muthulakshmi Reddy (1886-1969)**

### **Introduction**

Muthulakshmi Reddy, a good writer and an excellent orator was one of the greatest women of 20<sup>th</sup> century India. She was the first woman in many respects and credits. She was the first woman to study in the Government College Pudukottai and the first woman to study medicine. She was the first woman to be a member of the Legislature; the first Alderwoman in the Madras Corporation and the first woman Deputy President of a Legislature in the world.

Muthulakshmi dedicated her life to social work and cause of women and children's welfare. A crusader for women's rights she spent her career for the emancipation of women. The veteran social worker Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddy was born on 30<sup>th</sup> July 1886, in a middle class family of Pudukottai. She was the eldest daughter of S. Narayanaswami Iyer, a Brahmin and the principal of Maharaja's College; her mother was Chandrammal, born to the Isai Vellala caste, a caste whose women danced and sang in temples. S.Narayanaswami broke with tradition and sent Muthulakshmi to school. The child's enthusiasm for learning was so great that Muthulakshmi's teachers decided to instruct her in subjects beyond those approved by her father. At the onset of puberty she was obliged to leave school but tutoring continued at home.

Muthulakshmi was a sincere student and hard working. She completed her studies on state scholarship. When Muthulakshmi passed the matriculation exam she applied for admission to Maharaja's College but her application was not welcomed by the Principal at the time or the parents of other students. Her gender was a factor but so was her background. The Principal thought she might demoralize the male students. Maharaja of Pudukottai ignored these objections admitted her to the College and gave her a scholarship. She became the first girl student (1903) of the Pudukottia Maharajah's College.

Later she came to Madras and entered Madras Medical College, completed her studies in 1912. She was the first woman to have obtained the degree of M.B.C.M. She became a house surgeon in the Government Hospital for women and children in Madras. There she got close association with various political leaders, social reformers and doctors. During her college years, she met Sarojini Naidu and began to attend women's meetings. She stood first and won many gold medals and honours certificates in medicine, surgery and midwifery. In 1914 she married Dr. T. Sundara Reddi F.R.C.S, who was also a good doctor.

### **Political Awareness**

Muthulakshmi was inspired by Vivekananda and Mahatma Gandhi, Annie Besant, Margaret Cousins. She was a blind follower of Gandhi and his principles. In 1925, she went to England on a Government of India scholarship to specialize in the diseases of women and children. From her very childhood she was entertaining the idea of becoming a social worker. She was the Honorary Medical Officer for Widow's Home and Social Service League. She was often visiting those institutions.

Since 1917, she was connected and an active member with the Women's Indian Association (WIA) of Madras. As a representative of WIA many legislations were brought in the

Madras Legislative Council to promote women's education. The WIA had been pressing for universal free and compulsory primary education. Later, she acted as the Secretary and President of Madras branch of WIA. As she became the President she urged the government to sanction grants for the private philanthropic institutions such as Women's Home of Service to help the destitute women and widows of over school age and to train them so as to enable them to earn their livelihood as vocational teachers and nurses.

She was also one of the founders of the Muslim Ladies Association. She was associated with Madras Seva Sadan. In order to meet the expenditure of the Madras Seva Sadan which engaged in training women in various crafts, S. Muthulakshmi Reddy moved a resolution recommending the government to sanction special and liberal grant to it. Because of her efforts, the government sanctioned scholarships for Adi-Dravida girls intended to be trained in the Industrial Home for women, Mylapore. It not only gave protection, free boarding and lodging to a number of widows and destitute women, but also trained them to useful professions. They were engaged in hand spinning, hand weaving, embroidery, sewing, music etc. Thus, they were made self supporting and self-reliant. Besides, she forced the Government to extend compulsory primary education to everyone including Muslim girls. Because of her efforts, WIA launched an adult literacy campaign in 1939 and Mangalambigai Sadasiva Iyer, Ambujammal and Swarnamal took keen interest in the work.

She was intimately connected with "Sarada Home", "Women's Home of Service", "Society of Indian Ladies" striking for protection of minor girls and "Madras Maternity and Child Welfare Board". She contributed to spread women's education as a member of "Hartog Committee of Indian Education". For about 7 years she worked as honorary Secretary of 'Madras Children's Aid Society'. She evinced a lot of interest in the institutions run by the society viz, 'Juvenile Offenders School', 'Women's Home', 'Girls Club'. She edited a journal called 'Stree Dharma', wrote articles, attended many meetings for the uplift of women. She wrote profusely on women's problems.

### **As a Legislator**

In 1926, she was nominated as a member of the Madras Legislative Council and she was the first woman to sit in the Madras Legislative Council. Thus, she became the first woman Legislator. In 1928, she was unanimously elected as the Deputy President of the Council, but she resigned this post in 1930 to protest against the imprisonment of Gandhi. She saw it her duty as an educated woman to speak on behalf of women. In her first speech in the Council she expressed her desire to ameliorate the condition of women and sought the help of her colleagues in the Council in this regard. She thought that no country or nation would prosper without the active support and co-operation of its women. She not only campaigned to obtain legal rights for women, promote girls education and eradication of social evils, but also worked to improve the health condition of women and children. Regarding the system of education her opinion was "we have to formulate a system in which our religion, our past culture and tradition should have a large share and at the same time suitable to modern conditions of life". She was associated with

many social organisations and associations for women and worked for the well being of women through these organisations.

During the tenure of her period as Legislator, she had done a lot of social service and national activity from 1927 to 1930. She brought out certain social and moral reforms. She took strain to establish a Children's Hospital. As a member of the Legislative Council of Madras Presidency she could get Children's Wards opened in Kasturba Hospital and Government Maternity Hospital. She got introduced a regular scheme for compulsory medical checkup of students, women and men. Child Welfare Centres were opened in many places and separate women doctors of health were appointed.

Muthulakshmi as a Legislator, piloted for girls' education. She worked hard for the establishment of a number of girl's schools. She also influenced to start health centres for children and extension of maternity and child welfare work in the Presidency.

Muthulakshmi was one of the organizers of the Madras Vigilance Association and its Vice-President for many years. Further, she was completely responsible for establishing the first rescue home.

### **Through Education**

She realized and expressed that women's upliftment is possible only through Education. She obtained liberal donations and grants from Philanthropic institutions and from women's institutions in Madras. She secured exemption from payment of fees for poor girls. She also worked for the establishment of hostel for Muslim girls.

The credit must go to Muthulakshmi Reddi for the introduction of Government scholarships for Harijan girls and for providing facilities for alternative courses of Home Science with the appointment of an expert in science.

### **Devadasi System**

The great contribution of Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi was she took initiative for the abolition of 'Devadasi System' from Tamil Nadu. She got the Hindu Religious Endowment Act of 1927 amended. Devadasi (women who were obliged to dance and sing in praise of God during festivals and processions of Deity) owed a lot to her for their emancipation. This Act penalized the dedication of girls to temples. She was personally praised for her active propaganda against Devadasi system. Appreciating her role in the agitation against Devadasi system she was nominated to the Tamil Nadu Legislative Council 1929. As a result the Justice Government enacted a law abolishing Devadasi system.

### **Social Acts**

She prevented child marriage by passing resolutions in the Assembly. She championed the Sarada Act which increased the marriageable age for boys and girls and as a result of her sincere efforts it was passed by the Legislature in 1928.



Another important work of Muthulakshmi was the Act passed for the suppression of Immoral Traffic in 1930. Through resolutions and interpellations she got seats reserved for women in local bodies.

At her initiative the then Government of Madras province passed orders for appointment of house surgeons and medical officers in 'Guindy Institute' to check up the health of the poor suffering from syphilis.

### **Avvai Home**

In 1930, Muthulakshmi founded and started the Avvai Illam an orphanage at Santhome in Madras (now at Adyar). She was very intimately connected with 'Avvai Home' striving then for providing protection, education for the neglected vagrant destitute women and orphan children irrespective of caste and creed.

### **National Movement**

During the period of Non Co-operation Movement, she guided the policy of All India Women's Conference. She involved women in the National Movement. She also tried to secure political rights for women through Women's Indian Association. It secured adult suffrage and civic rights for women. She actively participated in the Association's agitation for the Municipal and Legislative Franchise for women.

Muthulakshmi organised evidences all over India and clearly explained before the Lothian Committee. She also impressed before the Joint Parliamentary Committee in London and pleaded for adult franchise, common electorate, non-reservation of seats etc.

### **Cancer Institute - Adayar**

Another remarkable feature of Dr. Muthulakshmi's work was her deep commitment to the scientific approach to problems. In 1923, her sister died in cancer. On that day she took a vow to destroy cancer. To redress the sufferings she started the Anti-Cancer Movement in 1936. It was again renewed in 1949. By her tireless effort, the Cancer Institute came into existence in 1956 at Adayar, Madras. The first Prime Minister Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru laid the foundation for that institution. She was not only interested in medicine but also in politics and social reforms.

Dr. Muthulakshmi would have been proud to see the growth and expansion of this institute into a nationally renowned one. She had conducted campaigns to educate the people about cancer. She even established camps for the same.

### **Various Status**

She was the honorary Secretary and organizer of the Madras Children's Aid Society and organised a Juvenile Court for Junior and Senior certified schools. She became the President of the 5<sup>th</sup> All India Women's Conference held at Lahore. Muthulakshmi was an active member of

the Women's Indian Association since its inception in 1917. She became its Vice-President and then its President after the death of Dr. Beasant in 1933.

She went to Paris in 1926 to attend the International Conference of women as the Indian delegate. She also attended the same conference in 1933 at Chicago. In 1937, she became the first Alderwoman of the Madras Corporation for two years. During this period she worked to solve the beggar's problem, child welfare and children's education.

Muthulakshmi was again an M.L.C from 1952 to 1957. She was the first Chairman of the State Social Welfare Advisory Board from 1954 to 1957. She worked hard for women's progress as President of Madras Advisory Board of Social Welfare. She carved out a place for herself in the Movement for Women's Welfare.

## **Conclusion**

Dr. Muthulakshmi Reddi possessed great moral courage and self confidence. Her mind was more philosophical and her actions were socially bent up. She was connected with Brahmo Samaj, but she believed in equality of all religions. She regarded service to humanity as service to God. Such a great social worker was honoured the title of 'Padma Bhushan' by the Government of India in recognition of her services for the women and children of India. Through her dedicated and tireless work she proved the world, hard work never fails. Her services for the uplift of women and the society should be remembered for ever. She passed away in 1968, at the age of 82.

## **Medha Patkar**

### **Early Life**

**Medha Patkar**, was born on December 1, 1954 in Bombay, Maharashtra, India. Indian social activist known chiefly for her work with people displaced by the Narmada Valley Development Project (NVDP), a large-scale plan to dam the Narmada River and its tributaries in the Indian states of Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, and Maharashtra. An advocate of human rights, Patkar founded her campaigns on two basic tenets in the Indian constitution: the rights to life and to livelihood. Born to socially active parents, Patkar grew up in an environment imbued with a sense of social justice and freedom. She graduated with a bachelor's degree in science from Ruia College in Mumbai and earned a master's degree in social work from the Tata Institute of Social Sciences in the early 1980s.

### **Narmada Bachao Andolan Movement**

Medha Patkar mobilized massive marches and peaceful protests against the construction of India's Sardar Sarovar Dam, which displaced thousands of tribal people and submerged vast stretches of forests and farmland.

Medha Patkar has been a central organizer and strategist for Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA), a people's movement organized to stop the construction of a series of dams planned for India's largest westward flowing river, the Narmada. **Narmada Bachao Andolan** movement

was a massive social movement organised by Medha Patkar. The main **cause** of this movement was large scale dam construction besides the **Narmada** River. This **caused** huge displacement of people in these areas due to the slow progress of government's rehabilitation policy. The World Bank-financed Sardar Sarovar Dam is the keystone of the Narmada Valley Development Project, one of the world's largest river development projects. Upon completion, Sardar Sarovar would submerge more than 37,000 hectares of forest and agricultural land. The dam and its associated canal system would also displace some 320,000 villagers, mostly from tribal communities, whose livelihoods depend on these natural resources.

In 1985, Patkar began mobilizing massive marches and rallies against the project and, though the protests were peaceful, was repeatedly beaten and arrested by the police. Through the NBA, Patkar sought help for those rendered homeless and without livelihoods because of the construction of the Sardar Sarovar and other large dams along the Narmada. In 1990 Patkar led NBA members and some 3,000 people displaced by dam projects on a march from northern Madhya Pradesh toward the Sardar Sarovar dam site, but they were stopped at the Gujarat border by police and pro-dam activists. She almost died during a 22-day hunger strike in 1991. Undaunted, she undertook two more long protest fasts in 1993 and 1994. With each subsequent summer monsoon season, when flooding threatens the villages near the dam site, Patkar has joined the tribal residents in resisting evacuation. To date, as many as 35,000 people have been relocated by the project; however, they have not been adequately resettled and hundreds of families have returned to their home villages despite the constant threat of submergence. The activists are continually subjected to intimidation. However, after further protest and opposition, including hunger strikes, Patkar and the NBA achieved a breakthrough in 1993 when the World Bank withdrew from the project. In 1994 the NBA office was ransacked, and later Patkar was arrested for refusing to leave the village of Manibeli, which was to be flooded.

## **NAPM**

In 1996 Patkar founded the National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), an agglomeration of progressive social bodies opposed to globalization policies. She was a representative to the World Commission on Dams, the first independent global advisory body on dam-related issues of water, power, and alternatives; the commission was set up in 1998 and in 2000 issued its influential final report, which contained recommendations on improving development outcomes. Patkar also worked with local communities to develop alternatives for energy generation, water harvesting, and education, and she created a system of residential and day schools in villages of Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh, and Gujarat. She was recognized internationally for her work.

## **Political career**

It is in January 2004 during the World Social Forum held in Mumbai., Medha Patkar and other members of National Alliance of People's Movement initiated a Political Party 'People's Political Front' also called as 'Lok Rajniti Manch'. However Medha did not participate as an

active Politician, but adhere herself in creating an atmosphere and environment by organising a Fifteen Days Maharashtra State level Campaign. She was accompanied with two young activists, Maju Warghese and Journalist jaspal Singh Naol (Jal). Meetings were organised under her leadership in each district of Maharashtra. Most of the Members had asked Patkar to stand for Election, but she denied.

It is January 2014, Medha Patkar joined the Aam Aadmi Party, a political party led by Arvind Kejriwal. She and her organisation, National Alliance of People's Movement, provided support to the Aam Aadmi Party during the Lok Sabha campaign.

Patkar also contested 2014 Lok Sabha election from the North East Mumbai constituency as an Aam Aadmi Party candidate. She lost, receiving 8.9% of the vote cast in North East Mumbai constituency, trailing at third position behind Kirit Somaiya (BJP candidate, winner) and Sanjay Patil (NCP candidate). She resigned from Aam Aadmi Party's primary membership on 28 March 2015.

It is in the year 2016 during the National Convention of National Alliance of People's Movement held at Rashtriya Seva Dal, Pune, Dr Suresh Khairnar, General Secretary, National Executive Committee, Rashtriya Seva Dal openly expressed that any Political Organisation led by Medha Patkar will get full support from Rashtriya Seva Dal, but they will limit support to her if the leader becomes a follower.

#### **Awards and Honours**

- 1991: Right Livelihood Award
- 1992: Goldman Environment Award
- 1995: Green Ribbon Award for Best International Political Campaigner by BBC, England
- 1999: Human Rights Defender's Award from Amnesty International, Germany
- 1999: M.A. Thomas National Human Rights Award from Vigil India Movement
- 1999: Person of The Year BBC
- 1999: Deena Nath Mangeshkar Award
- 1999: Kundal Lal Award for peace
- 1999: Mahatma Phule Award
- 2001: Basavashree Award
- 2013: Matoshree Bhimabai Ambedkar Award
- 2014: Mother Teresa Award for Social Justice.

## **Role of Women in Indian Independence Movement and Politics**

### **Indira Gandhi**

The great leader, Indira Priyadarshini was born in the year of the Russian revolution i.e. 1917. The month was November, the date nineteenth and the city was Allahabad. She was named Indira after the name Indirani that belonged to her grandfather Motilal Nehru's mother. A strong, resolute and brave lady was Indirani.

Indira was born in an illustrious family. When Indira was about five years of age she was presented a small charkha by her grandfather Motilal Nehru. She even learnt to spin on it.

When her father and grandfather were jailed she would spend a lonely time with her mother for company. Other times their house Ananda Bhavan became a meeting point for Freedom fighters where her father and grandfather would be busy in discussions.

It was in the lawns around Ananda Bhavan that Jawahar taught his daughter to walk and run. She spent a considerable amount of time in the garden, sometime climbing up trees for fun and sometimes to curl up in some, hollow of the bark to read her favourite story books. So the garden became a sort of a haven for her and tree tops, a cozy place to relax when in need of solitude.

Even when alone in her room Indira loved to play with her dolls often enacting the freedom struggle that was such a familiar site for her those days. Indira was taken to all places of historical interest and to the theatre also where she saw St. Joan being enacted. They were back in India by the end of that year and schooling abroad had made her bold and to question things instead of accepting meekly. Her father gave her more time and attention. He instilled within her a love of books and very often she was presented books that she found difficult to understand, for example, H.G. Wells. She was quite irregular in her attendance at school being away travelling with her grandfather or mother at hill stations. The atrocities of the police had made even the women folk of the Motilal household aggressive and active. They organized and addressed public meetings at street corners and persuaded others of their kin to become bold and face the British. Even lathi charges did not deter them.

Feroze Gandhi, a Parsee youth from a middle class family in one of her meetings had saved Kamala from the police lathi charge. Though he was arrested and beaten up by the police he continued supporting Kamala and often visited Ananda Bhavan. His family of course severely disapproved all of this. When Indira announced her decision to stop schooling at the convent, her father arranged for tutors and arranged scholars to teach his daughter at home.

She wanted to become a member of the Congress but was refused membership. She wanted to learn Urdu and was allowed to do so. But her father insisted she learn Sanskrit also even though Indira felt it was a dead language.

The death of Motilal Nehru in 1930 in Lucknow deeply grieved not only his son Jawahar but also his granddaughter Indira. She wept bitterly behind a pillar alone. Jawahar took Kamala and Indira for a two week trip to Ceylon after his father's death which is in new Sri Lanka. They visited the Buddhist viharas and met the monks there and spent a relaxed fortnight after a very exhaustive time back home.

With Jawahar courting frequent arrests and Kamala's health deteriorating something had to be done about Indira's education. Mahatma Gandhi advised that she be sent to Pune to join the People's Own School. Separation from her mother at this young age distressed her.

It was during her stay at Oxford that she became close to Feroze and they often would discuss her mother Kamala and her mental anguish. That seemed to be a great binding factor as

Feroze had also worked closely with Kamala, and knew her well. Education for Indira was interrupted once more when she went along with her father for a European tour.

She was homesick and wanted to return to India. Feroze had travelled with her on the same ship and it was at this time that they decided to marry. Jawahar did not approve of this match as he felt Indira was still quite young and also because Feroze was a Parsee and Indira was a Hindu. Gandhiji supported Indira when she adamantly stuck to her decision. Her father too then gave his consent and they were married in 1942. Their son Rajiv was born in 1944 and two years later their second son Sanjay was born. They were both actively participating in activities against the British and were imprisoned for doing so. India became independent on the midnight of 14 August 1947. Jawaharlal Nehru became the first Prime Minister of India. The division of India distressed Gandhiji as communal riots broke out. Indira would visit the riot torn areas and also visit Gandhiji everyday. Peace returned but on January 30 1948 Gandhiji was assassinated. He had been a great guiding source for India. When Nehru started rebuilding the country, Indira together with her children moved to Teen Murti House, the official residence of the Prime Minister. She played the official hostess and went with him on his visits to China, Poland, Egypt and the Soviet Union.

She formed a women's wing of the Congress and campaigned for her party during the general elections. Soon she was elected as the chairwoman of the Allahabad Congress Committee because of her hardwork. In 1960 she resigned from the post following the demise of her husband. Theirs was a very turbulent marriage because both Indira and Feroze were strong willed persons.

Nehru died on May 27 1964, leaving the entire nation mourning at the loss of a great leader. After her father's death, Indira continued her work for the country. She served as Minister for Information and Broadcasting in the cabinet of Lal Bahadur Shastri. After his sudden death she was installed as Prime Minister. Immediately she strove to make her party popular but she had to face many challenges. The Indo-Pakistan war in 1975 won her a reputation of a courageous woman but it drained the country's resources.

In the 1971 General Elections she won a landslide victory. The world took note of this woman as a powerful leader and a good director of war. After independence, East Pakistan came to be known as Bangladesh. Her declaration of a state of emergency in 1971 set a controversy rolling. Her younger son Sanjay became the leader of the Youth Congress and participated in political activities. The state of Emergency was put to an end and elections declared in 1977. The Congress Party lost the elections and Moraji Desai of the Janata Party became the next Prime Minister of India.

She was a woman of courage and dynamism. Jawaharlal Nehru, in one of his letters to his daughter, had explained the two kinds of problem children — one was the spoilt child and the other was the neglected child. The blend of the two was what the world saw as the adult Indira Gandhi.

## **ARUNA ASAF ALI**

### **Early Life**

She was born on 16 July 1909 at Kalka, Haryana and was educated at Lahore and Nainital. After completing her education, she began to teach at the Gokhale Memorial School in Kolkata. She married Asaf Ali, a Congress leader in 1928. After her marriage, she began to participate actively in the freedom movement. She participated in the Salt Satyagraha. She was held prisoner at the Tihar Jail in 1932 where she protested the shabby treatment meted out to prisoners by launching a hunger strike. Thereafter she was moved to Ambala and put in solitary confinement.

Aruna Asaf Ali was a member of the Congress Socialist Party, a group within the Congress Party for activists with socialist leanings. She was disillusioned with the progress of Congress party on socialism and joined a new party, Socialist Party in 1948. She did not stay in that party for long and joined the CPI (Communist Party of India). She helped found the National Federation of Indian Women, the women's wing of CPI in 1954. This remarkable lady was elected as the first Mayor of Delhi in 1958. She rejoined the Congress Party in 1964 but did not take part in active politics.

### **Aruna Asaf Ali courted her first arrest within two years of marriage**

Her first endeavor into politics started with an active participation in the Salt Satyagraha in 1930. It was then that she was arrested for the first time, on the charges of being a nomad. Unlike other prisoners, who were released on an account of the Gandhi Irwin Pact in 1931, she was released after the public protested against her arrest. In 1932, she was arrested yet again for participating in the freedom movement. While in jail, she organised protests against the ill-treatment being meted out to them by launching a hunger strike.

### **The 'Heroine of 1942**

Aruna Asaf Ali is famous for hoisting the Congress flag at the Gowalia Tank maidan in Bombay during the Quit India Movement in 1942. In 1942, when all major leaders had been arrested by the British as a pre-emptive measure against the Quit-India movement, she gave the much-needed push to the Quit India Movement by hoisting the Indian Flag at the Gowalia Tank ground.

Since the British police were looking for her, she went into hiding to escape being arrested. While she was underground she continued her struggle through underground radio, pamphlets, and magazines such as 'Inquilab' to continue the struggle. In 1946, the warrant against her was withdrawn and she came out in public.

### **Role in Freedom Struggle**

On August 8, 1942, the All-India Congress Committee met in Mumbai and passed a resolution calling for British withdrawal from India. Thus the Quit India Movement was launched. There were a number of prominent women leaders, such as Matangini Hazra, Aruna

Asaf Ali, Usha Mehta and Sucheta Mazumdar Kripalani led the movement in different parts of the country. The techniques were the same as Gandhi's previous methods-salt-making, boycotts of courts and schools, picketing cloth and liquor shops, and non-payment of taxes.

The participation of women in the Quit India Movement took many different forms. Usha Mehta, a committed patriot set up a radio transmitter, called the 'Voice of Freedom' to disseminate information about the war for freedom. News of protest and arrests, deeds of young nationalists and Gandhi's famous 'Do or Die' message for the Quit India movement were circulated amongst the masses.


In the rural area large number of peasant women joined men in protesting against taxes, land tenure, and landholder's rights. At the end of September 1942, peasants attacked police stations and destroyed telegraph lines in four sub-divisions of Midnapur District. On September 29 the people of Tamluk sub-division marched on the town with the intention of capturing the court and the police station. Matangini Hazra, a seventy-three-year-old widow, stepped forward, lifted the Congress flag, and gave her first public speech. She urged the crowd onward in the name of Gandhiji and refused to stop. The people of Midnapur District continued their resistance and were brutally repressed.

Aruna Asaf Ali was another leader of the Quit India Movement. When she moved to Delhi with her husband, Mata Rameshwari Nehru introduced Aruna to the Delhi Women's League and Satyawati Devi brought her into the Civil Disobedience Movement. Aruna who broke the salt law, was arrested, sentenced, and imprisoned in Lucknow. She became a leader of the underground movement in 1942 and was forced to remain in hiding until 1946. During her three and a half years in hiding, Aruna was constantly in motion, urging people to liberate the land from foreign rule. She is widely remembered for having hoisted the national flag at Mumbai during the Quit India Movement.

### **A woman ahead of her times**

Post-independence, she worked towards the upliftment of the status of women by encouraging women education. She also started a weekly journal 'Weekly' and newspaper 'Patriot' to attain this objective. In 1958, she served as the first elected Mayor of Delhi. She was awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 1992. She received many awards during her lifetime. She was awarded the International Lenin Peace Prize in 1964 and the Bharat Ratna, posthumously in 1997. This great freedom fighter passed away on 29 July 1996. One year after her death, she was honoured with the Bharat Ratna in the year 1997.



An illustration of a woman with long, flowing pink hair, shown in profile with her eyes closed. She is wearing a large pink hoop earring and a dark pink garment. In the upper left corner, a small yellow butterfly is depicted. The background is a solid dark pink color. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

"I am a woman  
phenomenally.  
Phenomenal  
woman, that's me."

~Maya Angelou