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## UNIT 5 “STREE JAGRAN”: THE PROCESS OF GENDER TRAINING

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### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

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This Unit will introduce you to the concept of gender and the philosophy and practice of gender training. You will realize the difference between sex and gender and how the society we live in determines gender and gender roles.

What is gender training? It is important for us to understand the basics of gender training. We know that society views men and women differently and hence lays down different norms for dividing both resources and responsibilities between men and women. How do we change this in a positive direction? Gender training gives us the opportunity to change the conventional and traditional. The Unit explores both theoretical and practical aspects of gender training.

#### Objectives

After studying this Unit, you should be able to:

- describe the meaning of gender training;
- discuss gender training frameworks;
- list the gender training outcomes which should be achieved; and
- describe the processes of training to meet practical and strategic gender needs.

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## 5.2 WHAT IS GENDER?

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We are born male or female. This biological determination of characteristics or attributes is called sex. Sex is different from gender. Gender refers to the determination of characteristics or attributes of men and women based on cultural, sociological, economic and political factors. What do we consider “masculine” or “feminine”? Gender encompasses these components. Based on the differentiation between sex and gender, we can conclude that while sex remains unchanged, gender is variable. Gender can change from society to society and from time to time.

Gender determines the relationships between men and women. These relationships are relations of power — of dominance and subordination — being superior or inferior in status. In most societies men dominate and women have a lower or subordinate status. The dominance of men over women is referred to as patriarchy. This “rule of the father” also denotes the power relationships and the systems whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways.

What are the implications of this for gender training? In order to change gender relations and develop a positive attitude to the role of women, their contribution to the economy and society and promote action to foster their inherent equality with men, we can:

- emphasize that women can take on any of the roles performed by men and that the roles now performed in the “household” domain are productive and valuable;
- train women/women’s groups to perform roles in the “public” domain, in the production of goods and services;
- build confidence of women in undertaking new roles and equip them with requisite skills;
- help women to organize into self-help groups, cooperatives or need-based action groups and committees;
- help women to control their property and protect their personal rights;
- equip women/ women’s groups to deal with lending and savings institutions such as banks and organizations dealing with enterprise; and
- promote attitude change in men about expanding the roles and range of life options available to women.

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## 5.3 MEANING OF GENDER TRAINING

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Gender training seeks to build an understanding of how sex and gender differ from each other. It emphasizes the reasons for women’s inferior status as emerging from society and societal norms. In other words there is no biological reason for women being considered inferior. Further, gender training seeks to promote improvement in the life choices available to women, encourage them in developing capacities, skills and self-esteem.

Gender training helps us to learn from the lessons learnt from past

developmental policy, practices. It encourages us to examine gender divisions in resources and responsibilities. In other words, gender training:

- provides a way to share lessons about policies regarding women's development and empowerment;
- shows us how these policies were put into practice by development agencies such as the Government and Non-Governmental agencies; and
- generates awareness about how resources and responsibilities are divided and how they should be divided between men and women in the home, worksite and in the larger societal context.

Some of the major target audiences for gender training would include:

- Policy makers;
- Functionaries in development agencies dealing with women's empowerment and other projects;
- Functionaries responsible for implementing field-level activities; and
- Community members especially women from disadvantaged groups.

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## **5.4 GENDER TRAINING FRAMEWORKS: WHAT IS OUR PERSPECTIVE ON TRAINING?**

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Gender training frameworks offer different ways to address the gender interests and gender needs. Gender interests can also be described as prioritized concerns. Gender needs, on the other hand, are the ways or the means by which concerns may be satisfied. Usually gender interests can be translated into planning and training needs or the means by which concerns will be satisfied. An example will make it clearer.

*Gender Interest:* Comparing the interests of both rural men and women in getting access to small loans for agriculture with special reference to the division of labour.

*Gender Need:* Training rural men and women about agencies providing small loans and how to get the loans.

Analyzing the interests of both men and women in this case will provide an insight into the fact that women may need more information, of types different from men; they may emphasize growing different crops – subsistence rather than cash crops. They may need different types of implements. They may face the most problems in developing the confidence to deal with agencies in getting small loans. So, though we analyzed interests and needs common to men and women, we find that we can identify specific training needs of women. We can then design a training programme for women to meet these needs. We must remember that in growing a particular crop, women have clearly defined roles different from men. They may grow crops only for the family especially subsistence crops or hardy plants which can provide food during dry spells or drought.

Gender interests, themselves, can be differentiated into strategic and practical gender interests.

*Strategic gender interest:* Using the previous example, providing equal access to women and men for credit/loan would fulfill a strategic gender interest. It would be even better if only women or women’s groups are eligible for loans under certain schemes. This will give better opportunities for women to access credit especially if they head households and even if they have no legal title on the land they cultivate or in other words if they do not own the land they cultivate. Meeting strategic gender interests needs instruction and change at the policy level in the lending agency and confidence building and capacity building of women in particular.

*Practical Gender Interest:* Women need more money to grow suitable crops for ensuring the survival of the family and earning an income which can be used for productive purposes such as for buying seeds or agricultural implements. The small loans provided would meet this interest. If we look at this description carefully, we can make the following important conclusions:

- 1) Strategic interests emerge from an analysis of women’s subordination and gives possibility for an alternative more satisfactory set of arrangements than those already existing.
- 2) Practical interests emerge from the concrete conditions of women’s positioning within the gender division of labour

From strategic and practical interests emerge strategic and practical needs. What is the difference between strategic and practical gender needs? Practical gender needs are basic needs. These needs emerge from the immediate practical needs of women such as the needs for water, food, health care, housing. Strategic needs, on the other hand, relate to the need to promote empowerment e.g. improving the capacity to take important decisions. Addressing strategic gender needs means bringing about permanent long-term changes. Let us take the example of income generation. The practical gender needs include involvement in production as wage earners, to earn an income, to have employment, to own assets. Strategic gender needs related to income generation may include increase in income to be combined with involvement in purchasing and marketing, handling one’s own community assets. *We must start from practical gender needs (basic needs) and then proceed to strategic needs.*

### **Gender Training Frameworks**

In order to meet strategic and/or practical gender interests, we can identify three types of gender training frameworks:

- Gender roles framework (GRF)
- Triple roles framework (TRF)
- Social relations analysis (SRA)

Let us compare these three frameworks.

Aspect	GRF	TRF	SRA
What it is	Grafting i.e. adding gender into existing planning methods	Gender planning methodology addressing women’s practical needs arising from reproductive, productive and community management roles.	Gender planning methodologies that “seek to locate the problem in the process of planning and training itself.”
What it achieves	Training women for projects to be implemented for women already in the workforce	Training women to meet their immediate felt needs i.e. practical needs	Training women to be active agents of change in the planning and training process.
What it does not achieve	Does not challenge inequalities in how goods and commodities are produced, distributed and consumed.  Does not encourage women to examine their own roles, relationships and networks	Does not address long-term strategic interests in transforming women’s status  Limits itself to meeting women’s practical needs	

*As gender trainers, we need to design and implement training programmes to meet women’s practical needs in way which can improve their status and quality of life. This should be followed by seeking to meet their concrete strategic interests and needs.*

Let us explore the felt need for income generation for poor women. Women’s low social capital (education, status, bargaining power, experience of the political and economic world, self-confidence), their heavy workload and their triple role – all have serious repercussions on the viability of women’s economic enterprises.

Promotion of entrepreneurship is a key objective for many gender trainers. However, this should not be limited to earning an income but also addressing strategic needs linked to confidence building and leadership training. As gender trainers, we can reflect on whether the economic enterprises we plan or help women to plan:

- promote changes in the sexual division of labour in the public and/or private spheres;

- support the development of skills aimed at enhancing women’s productive capability;
- establish women’s rights to training and education;
- generate awareness among the women and the community about gender inequalities;
- strengthen local, regional or national women’s organizations and networking initiatives at different levels and/or between women of different sectors;
- promote women’s control in the management of the enterprise and marketing of end products;
- provide access to new credit and financing opportunities for the women;
- help women control and own cash and the means of production;
- promote the development of leadership skills amongst women;
- promote recognition of women’s contribution to the economy and the community.

Social relations analysis could provide gender trainers with the framework for establishing and using these indicators. Impact can be on all or several of these criteria.

Processes (how we go about it) are seen to be as important as outcomes (what we achieve at the end of training). The indicators suggest how gender trainers can incorporate elements of confidence building, conscientization and leadership training. These are vital in converting income generation programmes (IGPs) serving practical needs into programmes which are more holistic and which also address strategic needs.

IGPs are frequently adopted by NGOs as the main intervention for their women’s development programmes when they enter a community. However, there are numerous other entry points which could be adopted by gender trainers in NGOs such as projects centred around community-based nutrition and health care, literacy and informal education, creches, water collection and improved agricultural techniques. These may also address women’s perceived needs in a strategic manner.

Some important questions we need to ask ourselves as trainers include:

- 1) Who is being targeted by the proposed training and what assumptions are being made about them? What evidence is there that these assumptions are well informed?
- 2) Who devised the goals of the training programme? Are these goals shared equally by women and men? If not, are there reasons for supporting the programme on the grounds that it would enhance gender equity?
- 3) Whose interests are being promoted through the training programme? Are additional resources being provided where additional responsibilities are entailed?

As you would expect, such questions are most important during the planning stage.

Gender analysis can help us understand the:

- Gender differences with regard to activities carried out by men and women, access and control of resources and constraints faced and benefits and incentives received.
- Ways in which an intervention such as a training programme will influence men and women.
- Need to develop specific plans for action or implementation.

The key questions at each stage originally developed by Piza and Francisco for entrepreneurship development training programmes/projects are for example:

**Stage 1: Need Assessment**

Was data collected before the project started (baseline data) about existing and desired skills of women in production, their workload, social and environmental condition and existence of support systems to support and help women (when they are absent from home or reduce their workload at home) within and outside the community?

**Stage 2: Project Design**

How the training/project addresses women’s needs, anticipated benefits, issues related to women’s participation in decision making and control over resources and processes, need for building support networks and systems and preparing community members?

**Stage 3: Project Implementation**

How does the training project shape quality of women’s participation and leadership in ownership, management, production, marketing and finance?

Are there any unanticipated factors of development affecting women and have they necessitated changes in the training project design?

**Stage 4: Evaluation**

What was the net gain from the training project in terms of addressing women’s practical and strategic economic needs?

What has the enterprise achieved and what problems is it encountering to become a self-reliant and/or a viable economic enterprise?

**Check Your Progress Exercise 1**

1) What is gender? How is it different from sex?

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- ii) A group of health workers completed their initial training conducted by teams from SEWA and CHETNA in Gujarat. At the end of a gradual process women in some areas run their own “dawakhana” every day by their own choice. They have even become trainers.
- iii) In another training programme conducted by MYRADA the outcomes were changed in the attitude towards MYRADA and women’s groups; feeling of ownership towards the group; raising resources of groups through savings and group income generating activities and meeting their own credit needs. Group meetings provided opportunities to members to enhance their knowledge on agriculture, sericulture, animal husbandry, developing confidence in themselves and thereby developing an identity of their own and development of appropriate behavioural patterns.

These examples indicate some of the types of gender training outcomes. The outcomes achieved should make a positive contribution to capacity building of women.

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## 5.6 LINKAGES BETWEEN POLICIES AND GENDER TRAINING

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Policies can be of four types:

- Gender-blind;
- Gender-neutral;
- Gender-specific; and
- Gender-redistributive/ transformative

Gender-blind policies do not differentiate between the concerns/interests of women and men. In such policies the interests and needs of women may not be addressed at all or they may be addressed to varying extents quite by accident not design.

Gender-neutral, gender-specific or gender redistributive/ transformative policies focus on addressing women’s needs and concerns but there are important differences. Let us take examples from policies related to education. Gender-neutral policies do not challenge existing divisions of learning resources and responsibilities. Gender-specific policies favour targeting activities and learning resources which women are likely to control or benefit from. These may also leave the existing division of resources and responsibilities intact. For example, suppose we first ask prospective women learners what courses would benefit them. Then we design and develop such courses. We would be following a gender-specific policy. On the other hand, suppose we do not try to find out what women learners want, we would be following a gender-blind policy. As you can understand, providing women learners with the courses they want may not change biases or inequality in society. Women may prefer courses in secretarial assistance rather than accountancy because of their feeling about which type of courses would be appropriate for women to learn. Hence a gender-specific policy would specially target women with inputs to build confidence in taking up subjects such as accountancy or management. On the other hand, gender-redistributive/ transformative policies seek to actively

change existing gender relations through more even distribution of learning resources and responsibilities. They aim to change society – change essential elements of gender relations.

An example will make things clearer.

*Gender-neutral policy:* Both girls and boys will be admitted to school on payment of equal fees.

*Gender-specific policy:* Both girls and boys will be admitted on payment of equal fees. However, poor girls will be provided free uniforms and text books.

*Gender-redistributive policy:* Girls are entitled to subsidized education. In addition poor girls will be provided free uniforms and text books. Also, provision is made for care of younger brothers and sisters during school hours. If necessary, timing is adjusted to suit the girls.

Such policy stances would also lead to differences in the way training material is designed and developed for adults and the way training programmes are planned, conducted and evaluated. A gender-neutral policy, for example, would lead to training which is predominantly instructional. Gender-transformative or gender-specific (in some cases) policies would lead to training which serves both conscientization and instructional objectives.

Now what is conscientization? This basically refers to a process of awareness building with the aim of empowering women for action. Instruction basically means helping learners to absorb new facts, principles ..... new knowledge. Instruction, therefore, does not necessarily empower.

Let us again explore the linkages between policies and gender training with examples relating to a gender perspective in agriculture. At the policy level, gender blindness used to be commonly encountered. The assumption used to be that all farmers are men. In other words, the perception was “blind” to women — their role and their contributions. The facts speak for themselves. Many studies have reported that 80 per cent of agricultural operations are done by women. As a result of this key assumption extension services for farmers, loan disbursement and distribution of farm implements have all been directed at men. Now we increasingly realize that women farmers have distinct needs and they are equal partners with men in agriculture. In some regions farmers are predominantly women for some crops in particular. This realization has led us to suggest ways to address the needs of women farmers through:

- making better use of a female extension agent;
- re-orientation to a male extension agent;
- farmer-to-farmer as participatory training for and by women farmers;
- providing need-based extension services; and
- generating technologies suitable for women.

On the basis of this, suppose we were to design a gender training programme on strategies for improving extension services for women in agriculture. We may select objectives such as aiming to:

- focus on developmental issues of women in agriculture;

**The Process of Training**

- share experiences with regard to different strategies for improving extension services for development of women in agriculture;
- sensitize the participants about the importance of participatory approaches and tools for gender analysis in developing action plans for women’s development; and
- orient the participants about organization of self -help groups.

From the example we can understand that their training programme has emerged from a gender-specific rather than a gender-neutral policy. It is specifically focussing on the needs of women. But it is not challenging existing extension services, improving them not changing them.

If we were following a gender redistribution policy we may decide to give subsidized agricultural implements or seeds only to women farmers or women farmers heading a household (where the husband is absent or dead or has deserted the wife). Such policies challenge the existing power relations between men and women. In a traditionally male dominated sphere of activity, women are given a distinct advantage. Such policies are not easy to implement because challenging power relations means conflict. Or men may get the benefits by making women in their families apply for loans or equipment or supplies. Take the case of Panchayati Raj institutions. Thirty percent reservations for women exist . This has been implemented successfully in many places but in many other cases the women may become just representatives of the men in their families. This is due to the fact that they may not have been trained to perform a leadership role. With the appropriate training, women have become successful sarpanches or heads of the local governance mechanisms in the village.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

1) What in your view is women’s empowerment?

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2) What types of interventions would you select for empowering women?  
Tick the suitable answer(s).

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## 5.7 TRAINING TO MEET PRACTICAL NEEDS: THE PROCESS

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We will try to understand the process of training to meet practical needs with an example. When training responds to a need for income generation, an entrepreneurship development emphasis can be promoted. Six steps can be identified for a rural entrepreneurship development programme:

- 1) Participatory need assessment;
- 2) Setting objectives;
- 3) Selection of participants or engaging volunteers and pre-training motivation;
- 4) Motivation training during the training programme;
- 5) Skill generation;
- 6) Managerial training strategy and methodology;
- 7) Motivational reinforcement after the training;
- 8) Conducting participatory feedback and evaluation of the impact of the training; and
- 9) Follow up.

We have used some terms here that need to be further explained.

*Participatory:* Involving the women themselves in a meaningful way.

*Pre-training motivation:* Telling women why they would benefit from attending the entrepreneurship development programme and encouraging them to attend.

*Motivation training during the programme:* Training women to continue with the programme, constantly encouraging them and highlighting the achievements they would make at the end of the training.

*Skill generation:* Training them to do the essential tasks in the trade or occupation of their choice.

*Management Training:* Training women to manage time, money, materials and people in running the enterprise.

*Motivational reinforcement:* After training, women have to be encouraged and supported and given financial help to start and run their enterprise.

*Feedback, evaluation, impact:* Feedback implies continuous information provided by the trainees to trainers on how the training programme is going. Is it meeting their needs? Do modifications have to be made? At the end of the training, is evaluation done to find out the impact of the programme? How effective was the programme in meeting its objectives?

*Follow-up:* What happens after the training? Is there a systematic, planned effort to apply what is learnt, ensuring practical outcomes of the training not just for the trainee but for the family and community, to encourage and motivate them for future action.

Now let us consider the example of the work done by SPARC in Maharashtra with women pavement dwellers (people staying on the road side). The women had an all important practical need — the need for shelter.

SPARC wanted to organize the women and train them so that they can cope with the pulling down of their shelters and give them the information on other places where they could build their own homes with government assistance. The training did not have the objective of skill generation in building houses.

The steps followed by SPARC included:

- Formulation of training for seeking an alternative shelter because their houses were going to be demolished;
- Pre-training for women (after many meetings with both men and women);
- Training for organizing, mobilizing through women's groups/area committees;
- Identifying suitable locations, developing house designs;
- Evaluating outcomes.

Since the women gained confidence and were able to tell Government officers their need, they were able to get access to better locations for housing. This example tells us how practical needs can be met in an empowering way. The women did not just find ways to meet their practical need for shelter but also learned to use information, talk to officials about their needs in a confident, self assured way though they were the “poorest of the poor.”

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## **5.8 TRAINING TO MEET STRATEGIC NEEDS: THE PROCESS**

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It has been emphasized that the efficient interaction of rural women working together with rural men is one of the primary means by which improvement in agricultural food production, animal husbandry , the land tenure system, the physical environment of the village and the social relationships of the rural community can be brought about. Seva Mandir, an NGO in Rajasthan organized an innovative couple leadership training for rural development. Husbands and wives together attended the training. The rationale was that problems of the poor affect men and women alike – it is essentially a class problem and not a women's problem (Everyone may not agree with this rationale). So, a man and a woman from each selected village were chosen and given leadership training and field support. Their tasks, in turn, were to build village-level groups that would make an agenda for development tasks and work together in implementing plans.

The steps in the process included:

- 1) Selection of couple leaders and problem identification separately by men and women.
- 2) Setting training objectives and preparing day-wise training outline (Day 1 to Day 6)
- 3) Planning and implementation of the training programme

- 4) Feedback and evaluation
- 5) Follow up

Another example could be a training programme on agricultural technology for rural women. The steps could be:

- 1) Asking women to participate and involving them in need assessment.
- 2) Selecting technologies aiming at labour diversification, drudgery reduction and better energy conservation.
- 3) Developing training objectives based on 1 & 2 and preparing a day-wise training outline.
- 4) Selecting of resource persons for technology demonstrations.
- 5) Planning implementation of the training programme.
- 6) Evaluation and follow up.

Another example is a training programme for field level organizers for an awareness generation programme by an NGO called PRAYAS. The organizers were to be trained to mobilize women’s groups in their areas and conduct awareness camps on the problems faced by women. “In the entire process of training, traditional ideas and concepts kept being destroyed and alongside new alternatives were being thought of.

In the place of old sayings and songs, new slogans and songs were created. In the place of the old health set up, a new concept and system of health was visualized. On the one hand, protest was expressed by raising questions on the family structures, male domination and rule by the rich while on the other, new forms of support and cooperation in the form of women’s organizations was also suggested. This process continued throughout.

During the training, pre-thinking was done, necessary information was added on the basis of which new points of views were made. Awareness was raised using many different ways — self-made posters, role plays, folk plays, video films, puppet shows, cultural programmes and local games. In this way the learning process became self-reliant and gained strength for its own momentum and will hopefully be continuously regenerated.

We will explore this in more detail in the PRAYAS case study in Section 5.10. As you will realize, training to meet strategic needs aims at creating an enabling environment for women. It develops the capacities of trainers working with women to create an enabling environment for them in which they can expand their life options and be empowered. As you can imagine, this is not an easy task for the trainer. It means facilitating women in learning of new skills, new ways of handling information, new ways to interact and negotiate with people. Still more important, the gender trainer builds self confidence, self esteem. The most valuable outcome of gender training is the sense of self worth women feel. “I can do these tasks!” There is pleasure in that realization.

Let us take another example — promoting the rearing of silk worms i.e. worms producing the silk fibre. Women are a major workforce in the sericulture industry. State and Central Government organizations have taken steps to develop

women-oriented programmes and promote activities to help women enhance their status.

Some of the areas emphasized during gender training would include:

- highlighting the role of women and encouraging their participation in all activities of sericulture;
- providing information about how women can get access to technology, financial benefits, credit facilities and in decision making;
- promoting their direct access to income from sericulture; and
- training for entrepreneurship in sericulture.

As you would have noticed, gender training to meet strategic needs is built around meeting practical needs. This makes it more effective and enhances the impact of the training. Gender training should encourage not just participation or involvement of women but promote their role as decision makers.

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## **5.9 PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER: CAPACITY BUILDING + CONFIDENCE BUILDING + ORGANIZING FOR CHANGE**

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Gender training usually includes the following components:

- Capacity building (increasing knowledge and/ or improving/developing × 2 skills);
- Confidence building; and
- Organizing for change

Merely emphasizing capacity building is not enough to make a difference. A woman can increase her knowledge and develop the needed skills to start an enterprise, for example, but may still not have the confidence to do it. Or a woman may have the needed knowledge and skills to be a health worker, but she may not have the confidence that she can handle the common health problems. In an environment where a woman's work is not valued and her capacities are undervalued, there is a great need for building confidence and self-esteem.

In addition to confidence building, creating conditions for organizing for change are crucial. We are all familiar with the fact that there is strength in unity. An individual may be weak but a well organized group is strong. This is why it is emphasized that women should form groups, work together towards common goals. The closer the bond between the women, the stronger will be the group. In recent years, the self-help group is being actively promoted.

MYRADA, an NGO active in the field of group formation and promotion has a useful analysis of the relevance of group formation. MYRADA feels that "Most of the poor women not only lack access to adequate options to choose from, but unlike the poor men, women do not even have the opportunity to exercise their choice within the available options. Thus we believe that among the poor, women are the poorest. MYRADA perceives that their low status is the result of their low self-image and self-confidence and also due to the attitudes

and values of men towards women, which the women themselves have internalized, much to their disadvantage. We believe that organizing women into groups will not only expand the options available to them for their development but more importantly, it will provide them with opportunities to develop the confidence and skills required to exercise their choices and simultaneously bring about a change in the attitude of men towards women”.

It becomes important to build into the training an atmosphere that values women, values their labour which to the larger world is invisible, respects them, allows them to discover their potential without fear of being rejected or ridiculed or evaluated. This exploration leads to women building alternative images of themselves and slowly developing a sense of confidence. This can be done through songs, dance and drama. NGOs such as JAGORI have helped women explore their “real” selves through discussions, role plays, docu-drama. Another organization PRAYAS has used existing images of women and contrasted them with real images to enable women’s groups to validate their own understanding of women’s images in society and rejected existing stereotyped ones.

When we explore the experiences of gender trainers, some key aspects we need to emphasize include:

- What are the learning processes of poor women?
- How should the realities and specific concerns of women be reflected in the design, content planning, choice of methods, strategy and follow up of every training?
- What are the various issues that trainers should be sensitive to and the roles they should play in the process of training women’s groups?
- What are the structural support systems that need to be built into a training programme with women?

The content of the training programme should be linked to overcoming their disempowerment and promoting collective action. In an awareness generation programme we should systematically reflect, think, analyze, organize and mobilize. The groups’ thinking should always follow in a sequence from more simple to more complex aspects.

**Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

1) Name three essential components of a gender training programme.

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2) How should the content of a gender training programme be organized?

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### 5.10 CASE STUDIES

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The case study presented in Annexure 1 documents the efforts of an NGO PRAYAS in training field activists. The field activists were NGO-based and were expected to perform an organizing and mobilizing role in an awareness generation programme. In other words this means that their role is to bring together women in the area in which they are working for participating and playing an active role in awareness generation programmes conducted in rural areas. This case study is drawn from “Participatory Training for Women” published by PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia), New Delhi. The case study describes the major activities that took place over a period of eleven days and gives the conclusion in the words of Preeti Oza from PRAYAS and Sushmita Banerjee.

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### 5.11 LET US SUM UP

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Gender is a social construct. In other words, society determines the relationships between men and women, roles and responsibilities of men and women, their control in the family, community and over material resources. As gender trainers we have to address both practical and strategic gender interests. Practical interests emerge from women’s practical needs; strategic interests emerge from women’s position in society. We have to find a mix of both in a training programme so as to be relevant and useful in women’s lives. Gender training should focus on three essential components: Capacity building, organizing for change and confidence building.

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### 5.12 GLOSSARY

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- Development agency** : Governmental or non-governmental organization promoting development activity.
- Development policy** : Statement of strategy to be followed for meeting particular needs through development activity.
- Resources** : Time, money, people, natural resources.

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### 5.13 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

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#### Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- 1) We are born male or female. This biological determination of characteristics or attributes is called sex. Sex is different from gender. Gender refers to the determination of characteristics or attributes of men and women based on cultural, sociological, economic and political factors.

- 2) As gender trainers we need to design and implement training programmes to meet women’s practical needs in ways which can improve their status and quality of life. We should also try to meet their strategic needs.
- 3) (a) *Strategic gender interest*: Providing equal access to women and men for credit/loan would fulfill a strategic gender interest. It would be even better if only women or women’s groups are eligible for loans under certain schemes. This will give better opportunities for women to access credit especially if they head households and even if they have no legal title on the land they cultivate. Meeting strategic gender interests needs instruction and changes at the policy level in the lending agency and confidence building and capacity building of women in particular.

*Practical Gender Interest*: Women need more money to grow suitable crops for ensuring the survival of the family and earning an income which can be used for productive purposes such as for buying seeds or agricultural implements. The small loans provided would meet this interest. If we look at this description carefully, we can make the following important conclusions:

- Strategic interests emerge from an analysis of women’s subordination and gives possibility for an alternative more satisfactory set of arrangements than those already existing.
  - Practical interests emerge from the concrete conditions of women’s positioning within the gender division of labour
- 4) Gender analysis help to understand:
    - Gender differences with regard to activities carried out by men and women, access and control of resources and constraints faced and benefits and incentives received.
    - Ways in which an intervention such as a training programme will influence men and women.
    - Need to develop specific plans for action or implementation.

### **Check Your Progress Exercise 2**

- 1) Women’s empowerment basically means increasing the ability of women to increase their life options, their ability to make decisions, their control over material and non-material resources and their ability to organize themselves to bring about positive change.
- 2) All of the answers (i) to (vii)
  - i) Life skill development
  - ii) Imparting knowledge
  - iii) Raising awareness
  - iv) Building confidence
  - v) Building self esteem
  - vi) Entrepreneurship development activity
  - vii) Mobilizing for change

**Check Your Progress Exercise 3**

- 1)
  - i) Capacity building
  - ii) Confidence building
  - iii) Organizing for change
- 2) Content should be linked to overcoming disempowerment and promoting collective action. Women (and men) should be encouraged to reflect, analyze, organize and mobilize. A sequence from simple to complex should be followed.

*This case study is drawn from “Participatory Training for Women” published by PRIA (Society for Participatory Research in Asia), New Delhi. The case study describes the major activities that took place over a period of eleven days and gives the conclusion in the words of Preeti Oza from Prayas and Sushmita Banerjee.*

The tone of the Organizers’ Training for Women’s Development was set by making the women participants take a joint decision of whether they would like to include the two male participants who came in spite of the trainers insisting that women organizers from the agencies should attend. The participants discussed the advantages and disadvantages of the situation and decided to include the two male members.

## **Training Begins**

### **Day 1**

To begin with, we introduced ourselves to a co-participant of our choice whom we did not know, through conversation (interview). The question we asked each other was:

#### **“Who am I and what do I do?”**

One of the conditions which were laid down for the conversation was that a person should reply to only what was asked of her by the other one. You start talking separately in groups of two, you then introduce your partner in a bigger group. There were certain inhibitions when talking to the male participants present. It also happened that some people asked more questions and some less, some felt shy and some hesitant. It also seemed that some did not put their questions clearly and adequately.

As a result of this, the question then arose as to how one goes about collecting information from strangers, keeping in mind, the specific objectives?

Knowing about this is important because on entering a village, it becomes necessary to collect information from the people there. During this discussion some aspects of an interview were understood.

The participants were divided into three small groups and a list of the things they wanted to learn in the camp was made, which was arranged and tallied with the pre-designed model. It was thus made clear as to what we were going to learn in the next ten days. The design of the training programme and the schedule was made on the basis of the things the group wanted to learn.

Timings for the various sessions were also fixed unanimously after discussions.

### **Day 2**

“Women are like a pair of sandals.” “Money (jewels), land and wives lead to fights between men.”

We all know of such sayings in our regions. One has been hearing them since ages.

“What kinds of images of women do these sayings, poems, stories etc, reflect?”

These sayings were meant to reflect women's nature in a particular light. In some sayings, women's lack of intellectual abilities, in others their inability to be financially independent and in still others their low social status is shown. Is this true?

"Do these values represent the real common woman?"

To answer this we recollected and wrote true stories about the life of the women in our homes and villages. These women have been frightened of these values (of breaking the myths) by struggling in their day-to-day life. One of four brothers pointed out that he had not come across any woman who has won by her own struggle. Perhaps he does not feel that common women's struggle is anything out of the ordinary. In spite of the inhibitions we all came before the big group and related our stories. Many things came out from these stories.

"Which are the elements that help a woman in her struggle and victory and which are the elements that hinder the same?"

Very carefully, we made a list of these. We all noted that some of these elements were true for women's development work also. After dinner we divided into four small groups and made posters showing the various elements which help or hinder women's development. In the light of our inexperience in making posters most of us were doubtful as to whether we would be able to make them or not.

"How do we make posters and why?"

Three groups were able to make posters; one group disintegrated because of lack of confidence. The following question arose:

"How is work done in small groups?"

After we explained our posters, a discussion about this medium was held.

### **Day 3**

"What did we feel and remember of the last two days?"

Listening to the answers to this question given on the previous night encouraged us to learn further. Today we were to know about women and law. Why do women not get the rights given to men? An article titled "Aspects of Slavery" and a booklet "Trapped in the Four Walls" was read in three groups. During the heated discussions on these, one of the participants said that "After all, the Thanedar (the Government) will behave in the same way because he too is a part of society." More heated discussions were held on this. After that it became clear that the violation of women's basic rights was done in the family structure which is supported by the male community, government system (judiciary) and the contractors of religion and caste.

After this we trainers thought among ourselves that perhaps every woman at some juncture of her life must have experienced the denial of her basic rights. We then decided to ask:

"How are women's basic rights violated in their own homes?"

When this topic came up in the big group, silence spread. Perhaps we were thinking of new relations with our own families. Some of us then narrated

incidents from our own life. Some of us were stopped from studying, some married at an early age. But it was not easy to talk about things we experienced ourselves. Our hearts were hesitating to see our reality. Thus, attention was lost in the discussion. And also some chaos occurred due to children crying and moving around in the room.

It was felt that even a sister’s tragic story was not heard properly. We trainers felt that one of the reasons for the hesitation was perhaps the presence of the male friends in the groups. Expressing her worry on that matter, Preeti said, “It would be useless to proceed further if we did not intend to speak or listen. If the presence of men is one reason then there should be no hesitation in saying clearly that till now we are not able to say many things unhesitatingly in front of men, that we are brought up in this way.... “Participants were to decide among themselves and tell the trainers if they wanted to proceed further, and whether they wanted the men to be present. Saying this we trainers left the group.

Understanding the situation, our male friends went out themselves. The conversation picked up. The women sat near to each other. They narrated many incidents that had happened to them. It was felt that irrespective of where they came from, being women - our struggle in our personal experiences was the same. We were bound together.

Observing this feeling we trainers made it clear that apart from our traditional relations (family, relatives), there is a special bond between us from which we can continuously derive support and strength.

That evening we were heavy with these emotions. We lightened ourselves by singing songs and dancing. The way, in which we were bound by sorrows, we got bound in pleasure too.

#### **Day 4**

According to the designed programme, another sister Nirmala joined us. She was to talk about women and health. We were already friendly with her as she had been with us since the previous day. This way it became easier to talk to her. As it was decided earlier, our male friends kept away from this session also. In the morning Nirmala made a list of health problems of women on the basis of her experiences and started a discussion. The list had many things related to our reproductive ability and physiological processes. When discussion was started on this, we realized that we were ignorant about our own bodies and we held some misconceptions about it. For example: “Dirty blood comes out during menstruation.,” “Menstruation is impure.” etc. Then the following question arose:

“Why don’t we know about our bodies and its processes? And why are there so many misconceptions about it?”

Nirmala gave us new information in a very simple manner on these questions. Why and how does menstruation take place? This was made clear with the help of a diagram. Some possible solutions were given together regarding problems of women which they generally hesitate to discuss. It became clear that one reason why we were not able to control our own bodies was due to lack of information.

The same evening a simple booklet on women and health was given for reading, in which information especially about methods of contraception was given. After this a decision to stage skits in two groups on some of the subjects mentioned in the booklet was taken and a lot of skit-related animation started within the groups.

Our male friends were asked to devote the whole “Health” session time on reading two articles “Who Controls Women’s Health?” in the book “Aspects of Women’s Development” (Mahila Vikas Ke Ayam), and “The Story of Rakku.” They were asked to understand the matter and analyze it in the light of some questions. They had to report this to the groups the next day.

After dinner we all saw the skits with profound interest. In one role play we saw the behaviour of government doctors with the patients in the village health centres. The way the village woman health worker treats her patients in the village was also enacted. In the other role play, a woman health worker explained a few methods of family planning to the village women. Both the role plays were entertaining and lively and spontaneously a discussion started on these topics. Things like our health services do not actually reach the poor village women. Most of the doctors and chemists get together for their personal gains and sell medicines which are not required. The question that then arose was:

“Why are such health services run in our country which do not help to reach the poor?”

We were also pleasantly surprised by our potential to do role plays and thought about:

“How can we use this medium of ‘role-plays’ for the process of learning and teaching in villages?”

### **Day 5**

The previous day’s questioning about the health services was still to be understood. Both our male friends presented their ideas at first on the gist of the articles and then on women and health. Satyendra said that women themselves were the reason for their poor health for generally women eat less, only to survive, or give birth to children even in a weak state; or consider the home their only domain for which they are happy to keep working hard. We women got quite disturbed at these explanations and started the discussions with angry questions. We all got together and forced Satyendra to have a look at the situation in his own family, “What would you say if your sister leaves all the work for you and goes out to enjoy?”

We observed from this discussion that the state of women’s health was related to certain social conditions.

“Which are the social conditions that affect women’s health and how?”

The other male friends while giving the gist of “the story of Rakku” raised some points about the structure of the government health system on which a very fruitful discussion was held which helped us in understanding certain aspects of it and gave us some surprises too.

The discussion made us realize that the women cannot attain good health without major changes in the social system and health set up. Then what is the alternative?

“What kind of struggle do women have to wage for staying healthy and in what alternative system can they remain really healthy?”

We then threw some light on the state of women’s health by discussing it in three small groups. Some alternatives were also suggested. After meals, Nirmala gave statistics while explaining the state of women’s health, and made their relation with the existing social conditions clearer.

Right from birth, girls became victims of adverse social attitudes towards them. Participants said that in their villages, in most of the cases girls are given very late medical treatment on falling sick, whereas boys got immediate attention. The diet of girls is also controlled. Stating some serious negative observations made by a study done in Punjab, Nirmala made it clear that there was inequality in the behaviour towards boys and girls, irrespective of the family being rich or poor. Girls were the main victims of illnesses and death.

After four days of discussions and other things which made us think anew, our attention was drawn towards our own regions. After all it was necessary for us to do something about the problems of our regions.

“How do we identify and understand these problems? What are the specific problems of our region and on which of the problems do we want suggestions from others?”

With the intention of giving an opportunity to learn and understand the region and work with each other, we trainers started the process of exchanging information between friends from Rajasthan and Himachal Pradesh, dividing participants into small groups.

“How can you gather information about specific problems?”

With great interest and intensity we shared and understood each other’s problems and became clearer about our own.

After dinner we all got the pleasant opportunity to go out of the training centre. We went together to watch a folk play put up by a voluntary organization in Kaya village. The sad story of the situation of women in a poor tribal community was shown in the local “Gavari” (Folk Dance/ Drama) style, in which women were sold many times over. The play was impressive in spite of some difficulties of language.

## **Day 6**

In the morning we met the play artists, many of whom were tribal villagers themselves. We learned about their ideas on how they use theatre, and its effects for social change.

The leader of the group talked about the uses of theatre with authority but till now they were not used to discussions after the plays nor were they able to associate women with theatre. A friendly bond was created with those artists.

The problems of our regions which we had arrived at the previous day became clearer to everybody after some discussion. A separate list was made of the specific problems of each region on which we wanted suggestions from each other. But mainly the general problems from each of the states were listed.

In the afternoon we got the opportunity of discussing with Bansilal Garg and Sunita, who was with us in the training also, their special experiences in women's development.

“Can a male worker do the work of women's development? Can he work together with a woman worker?”

Four members took the responsibility of getting information from them through an organized interview. Besides getting information on the basis of the experiences of Shri Bansilal and his interesting style of talking, we got inspiration and guidance on how to do concrete work in our areas. Sunita helped him in this. Shri Bansilalji told us how he developed faith in women's development when in various struggles, he saw the commitment and strength in women. Men can also do the work of women's development if they have a positive attitude towards women. Male workers can also hold special discussions with the men folk and make them understand the need for women's development. It is possible to become associated with women by raising their specific problems.

The most important thing about working with a woman worker is to assure and create faith both in the people and in the fellow worker about your reliability and straight character, according to Bansilal. Actually it is necessary to exhibit such behaviour based on equality with the other worker, both in work and relationships. Bansilal like some other male workers has seen many changes in his own life by working for women's development. Now he understands the women in his own home better and helps them in their work. Listening to Shri Bansilalji was so interesting that time just flew and soon it was evening .

After dinner we saw a new video programme. In 20 days time it was not possible for us to meet the village women directly. Therefore, a video film was shown about the poor and backward village conditions, and the story of a united struggle of a woman's organization to improve their financial situation. One was a real story and the other a feature film. In both we got a real glimpse of the problems of the poor because of the lack of economic development. This highlighted two fundamental questions:

“How should we organize poor, illiterate women for development?”

“What sort of schemes would be appropriate for economic development of poor women (how would they help to increase income)?”

### **Day 7**

Six problems specific to certain regions that were listed out in the previous day's discussion were:

- 1) Problems of corruption
- 2) How to eradicate polygamy
- 3) Alcoholism
- 4) Feast following death
- 5) How to oppose atrocities (physical) on women
- 6) Dowry menace and how to deal with it.

We were asked to understand and solve three of these problems in small groups.

First the trainers took the problem of the feast following death and through discussion explained the process of its possible solution. Later in three groups we held discussions and came up with some alternatives to tackle the problems of alcoholism, dowry and atrocities on women. But this process remained a little complicated. Majority of the new workers could not satisfactorily understand the regional problems concretely and think about their solutions.

After lunch we talked with Ginny Shrivastava, from a voluntary organization of Udaipur about her experience in organizing tribal women for economic development.

Last night we had already seen the role of the economic struggle of the sisters from “Brahmanan Ke Varda”. Ginnyji explained in a very interesting manner the background to this work and the problems faced by the workers supporting these women. Important aspects of economic development of women which are often overlooked also came to light. We got concrete tips on organizing women by forming small groups.

The main issues which emerged from discussions with Ginnyji were – women not having access to information to fight against exploitation, distrust of women, and the lack of resources with poor women that restricts them from carrying out any programme successfully for their own development.

Talking to Shri Bansilalji and Ginnyji further clarified those aspects that promote women’s development, especially those related to the role of the worker. After dinner it was necessary to put all these points in a properly organized manner.

Together we enlisted the important points about any programme of economic development of women and Preeti made a systematic summary of them. We ended the night session early that day as we all were tired.

## **Day 8**

In the process of understanding the subject of women and law, we all expressed the necessity of knowing the laws related to the special situation of women through a lawyer. A message had already been sent to the lawyer in Udaipur (nearby city) but no reply had come so far. We trainers were very worried about this but in the same centre the lawyer had come for another law training and finally the programme to meet the participants this morning was fixed up.

It was good that on the previous night the participants had made a list of the laws that we considered necessary to understand. One of us had enlisted these by asking the following question:

“Which laws related to women and related legal procedures do you want to know?”

We got information from the lawyer in simple words.

Before our meeting with the lawyer ended, Shri Gupta, an officer of the Tribal Development Department came.

“What are the governmental schemes for poor tribals?”

It took a lot of time even in giving information about the thirty three schemes.

Because women do not own land or property, they themselves are not directly benefited by any schemes. This Guptaji believed was according to our cultural traditions, but had no problems in benefiting women if they were able to become heads of their families.

We then discussed with the engineers sent by the Assistant Collector about the topic

“What are the Rural Development Programmes and Rural Landless Employment Guarantee Programmes?”

Discussions revolved around local political effects, the rule of fixing the wages on the basis of work measurement, because of which labourers do not receive minimum wages and other such issues which affect these schemes. In the beginning one engineer tried to justify such exploitative rules.

It is a statutory rule that minimum wages should be given either on eight hours work or wage must be fixed piece rate, i.e., certain wages for a fixed work output. By mixing up these two conditions and also the work load being heavy, minimum wages are not procured.

After continuous deliberations the government engineers came to the conclusion that workers should be organized to fight for their right to minimum wages, and voluntary organizations should take a lead in this work. After the discussion with the engineers, we added some more points on the issue of coordinating with the Government. We also added some guidelines on how to get support from the government for women’s development in the present context. Jammu gave the gist of the whole issue in one sentence saying, “Neither salty nor sweet”, we were on the verge of finishing this discussion when two sisters, “Sathins”, Sundari Bai and Dadham Bai of the Women’s Development Programme came along. On entering the room they hugged every woman sitting there with a natural and touching warmth – as if our hearts met! Jhamku, who was taking the training with us and who also works as a Sathin in Jodhpur got especially delighted. Together, the three of them explained to us, with examples, a very interesting way their role in inspiring the women in their villages and organizing them around the problems they faced.

Sundari had managed to secure the wages of women taking some government sponsored training in village Karauli. Dadham Bai had succeeded in acquiring for all homes equal opportunities to work on famine work sites by putting pressure on the concerned authorities through the women’s group. And gradually the extraordinary work of ordinary women was abundantly exhibited before us. The Sathins soon became part of our intimate group as if they were always a part of us.

Before finishing this session we decided to do a cultural programme in the evening. We trainers made groups on the basis of the states from which they came and each group had to present at least one new play and song. And enthusiastically we started the preparations. The two male friends also took part in the cultural programme. Each of us danced a variety of dances. We had suddenly let go of our inhibitions and hesitations.

We sang the songs written by us with inspiring verve.

“Come sisters, let us be united. Let us get the rights which we have been deprived

of.” Satya who was most shy and used to say “no” to every attempt to make her participate, also did a lively dance. We all got bound together in a spirit of enjoyment.

## Day 9

The next day we started the session at nine in the morning, as we had enjoyed till late in the night the previous day. We made a brief review of the things learned till date, and check listed the things that remained to be understood. Earlier during the listing of the things to be learnt, some of the women had expressed the desire of learning certain things for their own development. On one of the days we trainers had put up a list of questions on the wall and explained their importance to the group.

“What was your attitude during the various phases and activities of the training? Why!”

Through seventeen questions, which you had to answer anew each day, the trainers helped the participants to make a sketch of their behaviour. “Do you always hesitate in talking in big and small groups?” Or do you always make your opinion according to the opinion of others?” It highlights an important aspect of our nature if we have never started a discussion. This especially affects our day-to-day life and our work in our area. If we always hesitate in starting anything then perhaps we will have difficulties in starting work in new areas. If we hesitate in giving our own opinions then we may not be able to act and think independently or have an independent identity.

The group wanted to know in general about the questions listed so we trainers explained it. It was made clear from the beginning that filling up the list of questions was everybody’s own voluntary decision. It is imperative for each adult to take up one’s own responsibility of self-understanding and self-development. Others can only support and guide in one’s development. Nobody else can ‘do’ our development. Once filled up, this list was like a mirror. Analyzing our mirror was also left to us and it was decided that whoever wanted the trainers’ support would be given time in the sessions to come. After this discussion the time had come to think about some fundamental questions related to women which had come up during the last seven days and which we had continuously enlisted on a chart. We were divided into three small groups to discuss questions.

“How did the biased beliefs about women come to be popularized? Whose personal interest was hidden in it? What can be done to do away with these beliefs?”

In each of the groups interesting discussions were held. We all thought about these issues in depth. The discussions held in the smaller groups were presented on charts in the big group. This question discussed in the smaller groups were presented on charts in the context of primitive man, trying to understand the situation of women in the society in various stages of history. Perhaps in the primitive age, women also moved around and hunted.

Gradually due to the responsibility of giving birth to children and bringing them up, their movement became less, settlement took place. In this way the economic situation produced some social structures such as family, private

property etc. and hence women were tied to the home even more. One group made clear the analysis of the present reality in which in order to continue to enjoy unlimited independence, it was necessary for men to control women's bodies, strength and labour. The discussion was beautifully handled by Sushmita.

In the meanwhile some members of a women's organization of Kucchi Harijan Basti from Udaipur city came with three workers of a voluntary organization to meet all of us.

After lunch there was an informal talk with them about their problems and the functioning of their organizations. They informed us about the various atrocities committed by men such as alcoholism, goondaism, selling off women and the unprecedented courage shown by the women of the Harijan Basti in their struggle on these issues. These women, who were working in the Sanitation Department of the Municipal Council of Udaipur and who were financially independent, also had to continually face the repression in this male-dominated society. These women workers, much as they wanted to, could not spend much time with us as they had to go back early. A bhajan of Meera sung by them gave a fitting end to this discussion.

In the last three-four days we all had met many such persons and groups and had tried to know about their ideas and work on women's development. The time had come to understand the process of women's organization on the basis of all these ideas and experiences.

“How should we form women's organizations?”

We all sat separately and wrote down our ideas on the basis of these on the three aspects of organizing women i.e., starting to form an organization or a group, the process of consolidating it and trying to give it continuity. Together all of us put them up systematically.

It seemed that the gist of many experiences had come before us. In the evening that day we got familiarized with another enjoyable way of learning.

“How should we talk to people through puppets?”

We trainers were feeling disappointed when we learnt that the artists invited for the puppet show were not coming. But Sushmita did not lose heart and on the basis of her past experiences explained the main rules and ways of doing a puppet show in a very simple manner. In spite of this being the group's first experience with puppets, they presented two beautiful puppet plays.

### **Day 10**

Today was the tenth day of our training. During the last nine days we had taken up various subjects and activities together, and the continued process of teaching and learning went along. The main aim of the training was to understand how to inspire village women and to strengthen their groups and organizations by organizing awareness camps.

“How should we organize awareness camps for women?”

While preparing for the training, we trainers had accepted the fact that methods used and environment created during the ten days of training will be an example in itself to show how to work with women and how to organize awareness

camps with them. The best method was to enable you to identify those aspects of the activities of the training which are important for a successful awareness camp. The trainers believed that if the group understands the objectives of the various processes they will be able to organize the camp independently.

That is why the understanding of the last nine days’ programme was put for discussion by dividing into three groups over a period of three days each. Before sitting in the group the trainers talked about the main aspects of training design and methodology:

“What were the various methods of learning (different subjects) adopted in the camp? Why?”

As we were going through our notebooks to recollect some activities and processes, the field activists (Prachetas) of the Rajasthan’s Women Development Programme whose Sathins we had already met, came to meet all of us. They were scheduled to come along with the Sathins but due to transport mismanagement could not reach on that day!

During our talk with them the trainers came to know that they had organized a long training for women. They had brought with them charts made on different subjects by the Sathins and pictorial representations of the things learnt by the latter during their trainings. It was a pleasant coincidence that they had come to talk to us at a time when we were understanding the methods of training. When we finished our work in the small groups, we gathered together, to talk to the activists:

“Which methods are mainly appropriate in the training of illiterate village women?”

In a simple manner, activists Madhu and Sushma made clear the main points of their work and the methods of training through the charts that they had brought. They also put forward some important aspects of women’s development and made clear the relation between the importance of training and their work. In order to form women’s groups it is very effective to organize village level meetings and public programmes and to invite men to attend them. This way the activities of women’s organizations/groups get recognition also. It is natural and convenient to call meetings at places where generally women want to sit together. There is a lot of pressure if too many issues are taken up at a time, therefore only one issue should be taken up at one time in a systematic manner which should have a proper follow up. An important contribution of the women’s groups is the mutual sisterhood between the members of these which spread in the villages.

After an inspiring discussion with the women activists we came back to the work done in the smaller groups. A summary of the activities of the last nine days emerged through small group discussions which was consolidated in the big group.

After lunch when we came back to the big group it was the beginning of the end of this training. Here we had learnt many things but how would you use them on going back to your homes and work?

“How will we work for women’s development and organize awareness camps in our respective regions?”

At this session Preeti explained about the Awareness Generation Programme of the Central Social Welfare Board. This training of camp organizers was taking place under this scheme and more details were shared with the group. On returning to our organization, women's development work and awareness camps had to be organized under this scheme.

After this the group very enthusiastically worked in order to design a six months programme on raising awareness about women in their work areas through their respective organization. The women did find it difficult to apply the points learnt in this training to concrete reality. Instead of evolving a concrete programme, the objectives and activities required in women's development were being referred to, for example "understanding the religious, economic and political condition of women" and "organizing women and making them aware of their rights".

We then guided them to think about specific and concrete programmes taking into consideration the work they were involved in and the programmes of their organization. Gradually, all of us prepared simple and concrete programmes for ourselves.

After dinner we shared our plans before the larger group to maintain the learning process. Some of us decided to work specifically on the fuel wood problem of women, in the Himalayan region. Some had planned to try to make a federation of different groups, and still others decided to start by meeting the women and understanding their problems.

But our work at the training had not yet finished. Someone's story had to be finished, someone else's song was to be completed. Besides, addresses had to be exchanged. Some administrative work also had to be completed. Gradually the training started winding up by tying up some loose last strings.

### **Day 11**

Today was the day of departure, but we did not feel like leaving as we had been so involved in the training and with each other. Right from the morning there was a little sadness in the air. After completing some administrative work, we all evaluated the training.

"How appropriate were the topics covered and methods practiced to the needs enlisted for the training? How effective were these?"

Each group member had to do a written evaluation of the training as well as about oneself and others. The trainers gave a subject list for this. But how could Jhamku Bai, who could not read, express herself? She was asked to do it by way of pictures for which she was given colours and chart.

Some participants wanted to know about the evaluation related to their self-development on the basis of the list they had filled up. The trainers talked to them individually about this. We exchanged our views through evaluation in the larger group. The trainers also evaluated the training and themselves.

We were happy that we all had developed our potential in this training, contributed towards each other's learning and learnt a lot.

There was a definite enthusiasm even as we were carrying with us the joy of light and sorrow of separation.

To lessen the sorrow of separation we played a game in the end.

“How can little games be used in training?”

On a paper stuck to each one’s back, every body else showed what image they had of that person in the form of a symbol from life and nature. Somebody was a moon, somebody the sun, some one else was an ant and still another was a bird. Someone thought of another as a mountain, and someone else a lock. These figures were our mirrors which we took along with us with the thought of looking at them sometime or the other .

## **Conclusion**

Participatory training is the process of learning together which enthused a constant excitement for learning and the way it went about in this training can be summarized thus:

Knowledge is power and the germinated seed of this power is present in each person. This plant of knowledge flourishes when it gets the necessary fertilizer and water and a proper environment. We had tried to give such an atmosphere and material in the ten days’ women’s development training for activists of voluntary organizations which we had organized. It can be said that there were five main aspects in the training:

### *1) Common Place*

It was always believed that ordinary people like you and me can also work for women’s development. The women in our village who have a very ordinary daily life also lead very brave lives. Their strength can be used in the difficult task of women’s development. The participants’ stories about the courageous women of their villages, the organized struggle of the ordinary women ‘sathins’ working at the village level under the Women’s Development Programme and of the Harijan women of Kucchi Basti in Udaipur against their alcoholic husbands, the self-managed wasteland development of the tribal sisters of Brahmanon Ka Varda are tales of ordinary women.

### *2) Simplification*

Complex concepts can easily be understood by common women. The training design and analysis were based on our experiences and discussions. All this knowledge was understood in simple words. Men’s control in society is the cause for women’s situation. In social sciences this is given the difficult definition of ‘patriarchy’.

During the course of training ‘ordinary efficiency’ and ‘specialization’ were not necessarily differentiated. Together with the trainers, the trainees also at times gave their opinions for organizing different activities. Skills such as puppet playing, poster-making and staging plays no longer remained special professions but became a medium for common people to use in their life and work.

### *3) Togetherness*

Participants from two states together took part in this training. People with different educational backgrounds sat together and exchanged ideas. On the one hand there was Santosh who was a post-graduate and on the other hand there was Jhamku Bai: an illiterate. Our viewpoints were also different. In the

beginning Satyendra believed that women themselves were the cause of their weak health. At this juncture the women participants stood firm on their viewpoint and made Satyendra change his opinion. Another speciality of this training was that men and women together took part in it. In such an atmosphere of diversity it is necessary that each person gets an opportunity to develop his/her own thinking.

Therefore flexibility is essential for such a training, and it was amply built in.

#### *4) Comfortable Environment*

The training atmosphere was always simple and tension free. We held discussions on many issues and went through many processes. We came to know of the contradictions in our beliefs.

We understood the exploitation in our families. Rivalry in the training was to the minimum and co-existence and cooperation was maintained.

#### *5) Creation*

In the entire process of training, traditional ideas and concepts kept being destroyed and alongside new alternatives were being thought of. In the place of old sayings and songs, new slogans and songs were created. In the place of the old health set up, a new concept and system of health was visualized. On the one hand protest was expressed by raising questions on the family structure, male domination and rule by the rich. While on the other, new forms of support and cooperation in the form of women's organizations was also suggested. This process continued throughout.

During the training pre-thinking was done, necessary information was added on the basis of which new points of views were made. Cultural awareness was inculcated through self-made posters, role plays, folk plays, video films/ puppet shows/ cultural programmes and local games.

In this way, the learning process became self-reliant and gained strength from its own momentum and will hopefully be continuously regenerated.