RATIONALE AND NEED
Adolescence is a period of development that adults tend to view with a mixture of fear and fascination. Either they see adolescents as exciting, enthusiastic and fun to be with, or as a frightening mob of unruly, uncontrollable creatures who “ought to be put into deep freezer during the teen years”. Parents of pre-teen children often describe their dread at the catastrophe facing their family--their child is about to become a “teenager’. Somewhere between the two extreme views lies an accurate picture of the period of life we call “adolescence”.

During the period of adolescence in life a new sense of self is formed, This new sense of self is, in part, a result of the sense of oneself that the adolescents brings from childhood. During this period a person "must establish a sense of individual identity & feelings of self worth which include an attraction of his or her body image, adaptation to more mature intellectual abilities, adjustments to society’s demand for behavioural maturity and preparing for adult roles" (Ingersoll, 1989).

Traditionally adolescence has been considered a more difficult developmental period than the middle-childhood years. Some 300 years before the birth of Christ, Aristotle complained that adolescents are "passionate, irascible, and apt to be carried away by their impulses" (Kiell, 1967). Plato advised that boys not be allowed to drink before the age of eighteen percent because of their excitability: "Fire must not be poured on fire" (Plato, 1953). And in a funeral sermon a seventeenth-century clergyman
compared youth to "a new ship launching out into the main ocean without a helm or ballast or pilot to steer her" (Smith, 1975).

Research and education have been slow to give to the adolescent the same concentrated care that has gone into the study of the baby and the young child. We find today a comparatively wide-spread awareness within society of the specific needs and characteristic behaviour of young children whereas research on the inner feelings and sexual behaviour of adolescents is scarce. In order to understand adolescents, instead of being estranged from them or even being at loggerheads with them, research has to catch up fast on the ignorance of what life means to adolescents today and what the world looks like through their eyes. Adolescence, in fact, is a many-splendored thing. Like a kaleidoscope, it takes on different colours and designs depending on how one looks at it. And each appearance bears its own truth.

The list of different perceptions of adolescence is endless, but some of the major interpretations include a modern pathology, the tyranny of immature tastes on the adult world, the happiest and freest time in life, the most depressing and unhappy period, a time of trial-and-error experimentation, a primarily delinquent period, the most creative phase, the age of conformity to the peer group, a subcultural existence, a moratorium on adult responsibilities, the age of rebellion and dissent, the time of sexual prowess and exuberance, the time of being with one's parents, the time of insecurity and search and the crisis of identity (Sebald, 1977).

Before this century, few writers described anything that would be seen as a distinctly "Adolescence" period of development (Demos & Demos,
1969). In his two-volume work with the forbidding title "Adolescence: Its Psychology and its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education", Hall (1904) depicted Adolescence as a transitional period bridging the "savagery" of childhood with "civilized" adulthood. Adolescence was seen as a state of flux, alternating between periods of high enthusiasm and utter despair, between energy and lethargy, between altruism and self-centeredness. These radical shifts of necessity make adolescence a period of turmoil, of "storm and stress".

Adolescence has held social scientists spell bound, it has also seemed to make them lose their heads (Mungham and Pearson, 1976). Adolescents are portrayed either as "rebellious" illfitting members of a well ordered world or glorified as potential rebels .... who will overturn a world which is sick, lifeless and dull. Erikson (1968) reports that adolescents in advanced cultures are insecure, unstable and disturbed. This shows that stresses and strains of adolescence are the effects of repressive cultural customs and conventions.

Oldham (1976) notes many of our conceptions of adolescence are drawn from popular novels that we read. Stories such as Catcher in the Rye, Ordinary People, Go Ask Alice, and The Outsiders seem to reinforce our stereotype. Bleich (1980) points out that a variety of images of adolescents and adolescence are drawn from literature. According to Bleich some young people read these novels and use the characters as models of how to deal with problems.

However, not all writers agree that Adolescence is a tumultuous period. In his research, Bandura (1964) found that most young people with whom he
had contact were not anxiety ridden and stressful. Oldham, (1976) and Adelson (1979) have similarly concluded that Adolescence is not characterized by storm and stress. Bleich (1980) points out young people deal with stress in a positive way.

More recently, Offer, Ostrov and Howard, (1984) concluded that while a notable minority of normal adolescents report difficulty in coping with struggles of adolescence, most do not. The vast majority function well, enjoy good relationship with their families and friends. In addition, most adopt to the bodily changes and emerging sexuality brought on by puberty without undue conflict. Nothing ‘New’ develops in these years except that development becomes very rapid. Hollingworth (1928) says “The sex life of the child begins at birth and very gradually develops with the development of the total organism.”

Physical changes leading to sexual maturity and sexual behaviour are important areas of adolescent development. So it is fair to say that adolescence begins in biology and ends in culture (Adams, 1977). On one hand inherent maturational processes lead to rapid acceleration of physical growth, changing bodily dimensions, the subjective and objective consequences of hormonal changes and increased sexual drive, the development of primary and secondary sex characteristics and further growth and differentiation of cognitive ability; on the other hand culture may facilitate or hinder the young person's adjustment to the physical and physiological changes of puberty. (Conger, 1977).

Puberty is a period with which a constellation of changes occur. Puberty marks an important developmental transition. It is the stage of physical
development in which the individual begins to show secondary sex characteristics such as pubic hair, breasts and widened hips in girls or facial hair, pubic hair and lowered voice in boys. Puberty means “to be (Pubescent) covered with hair” (Katchadorian, 1977). Primary sexual features also mature to their adult function. Strictly speaking, puberty ends when sexual maturation or ability to reproduce is achieved. (Ingersoll, 1989).

Designated by a set of physical changes, puberty is actually a culminating phase in a lengthy and complex maturational process that begins before birth (Peterson and Taylor, 1980). The rate of growth and development occurring during puberty is more rapid than in any other phase of life with the exception of infancy. In general, the developmental changes of puberty average over four years and begin and end approximately one to two years earlier for girls than for boys.

Adolescence has been one of the vast areas of ignorance in the general field of sex awareness. Adolescents are illinformed about sex and its possible consequences. The irony is that it is very often the parents who are unable to communicate about sex to their own children (Soreson, 1973). The adolescent spends much peer group time talking about sex.

Increase in sexual feelings and arousal follow pubertal changes leading to sex awareness. Discussing feelings of sexual desire has remained a taboo. Girls’ emerging feelings of sexual desires are treated as if they did not exist, or worse as if they were not normal. In such an atmosphere, it is not surprising that relatively few teenage girls talk about their desire or masturbation. Boys are allowed to acknowledge sexual arousal via jokes. Sexual experience by
late adolescents has become so common over the last two decades as to be normative.

Societal constructions of youthful sexuality differ for boys and girls. Even as sexual behaviour has increased in girls, as female sexual arousal has been acknowledged, and as reciprocity in sexual relationship is seen as a goal for adults, teenagers still receive linked messages (Fine, 1988), as illustrated by the following rap song (author unknown) cited in "Promoting the Health of Adolescents" (Millstein, Petersen and Nighting 1993).

Sex is gamble/kissing is a game/boys do the action/girls get the blame. One night of pleasure/nine months of pain/four nights in the hospital/and a baby to name. They say you are pretty/they say you are fine/nine months later/they say it's not mine. Think about it/sex is a sensation/to the teenage generation.

Another window on the cultural milieu through which teenagers develop sexual well-being is the media (Adams, 1977). Youth, like adults, are bombarded with media messages about attractiveness and sexuality. At least a third of all prime time commercials reflect this (Tan, 1979).

*Sexuality* is an important area of adolescence adjustment. Whether existing sex needs are gratified or denied affects the total balance between frustration and satisfaction, and hence the overall stressfulness of adolescence. Stress is also influenced by conflict or guilt feelings about sex that impinges on the individual's sexual behaviour. Frustration of sex needs may result in pre-occupation with overevaluation of sexuality.

Expression of sexual urges interacts closely with two other needs, namely need for security or freedom from anxiety, and need for intimacy or close relationship with others. *Sexual maturity* is a central aspect of acting
and feeling like a mature adult person and of being recognized as one (Sullivan, 1953; Erikson 1982). **Sexual maturity** is reflected in the attitude towards sex. At the present time sexual attitudes are more open than at any time in Indian history, although powerful vestiges of traditional thinking and behaving continue to exist. This is more true of rural adolescent as their sex awareness continues to be poor in comparison to their urban counterparts, who have better exposure to information.

Attitude towards sexuality in girls has undergone transition. For most of the girls, sexual feelings are more diffuse and more closely related to the fulfilment of other needs such as self esteem, reassurance, affection and love. Adolescent girls generally display more conservative attitude towards sex than adolescent boys (Bell, 1980, Conger 1990). But, in contrast, today’s adolescent girls believe that women enjoy sex as much as men do, and only one in ten believes that women have less innate capacity for sexual pleasure than men do. (Conger, 1980). In other researches (Masters and Johnson 1970; Master, Johnson and Kolodny, 1988) this view has been supported.

Inspite of relative differences, boys and girls have much in common in their concern about sexuality. They want to know about such practical matters as masturbation, sexual intercourse conception, pregnancy and birth control. Even more important, they need to know how to fit sex into their overall values, how to have mutually rewarding, constructive relations with others, both of the same and opposite sex. On these matters most young people receive little help from the inconsistent, conflict ridden, sometimes hypocritical world in which they live.
Sex development and its **behavioural manifestation**, and the manner in which it is expressed, will vary depending upon a variety of psychological, environmental, biological and culturally linked forces. In boys, rapid increase in sexual drive is difficult to deny. It is impervious and biologically specific, so he must confront it directly and control it without inhibiting (Hauser, 1972).

Although sexuality in the broadest sense is a lifelong part of being human, the hormonal changes accompanying puberty give rise to stronger sexual feelings. These feelings are manifested differently in different individuals. Some adolescents find themselves thinking more about sex and becoming sexually aroused more easily, others are less aware of sexual feelings and more excited by other interests. At the same age one adolescent may be in love and going steady while another may feel that it is much too early for such activities. (Bell, 1980; Conger, 1980; Conger and Peterson 1984). Change in sexual attitudes of adolescents has been manifested in a variety of ways ranging from greater honesty and less heterosocial and sexual behaviours, as seen in several other recent studies (Simmons and Blyth, 1988; Udry, Talbert and Morris, 1988).

Since 1960, much has been written on teenagers' increased permissiveness in their feelings about and attitudes towards sexual behaviour (Fisher, Byrne and White 1983; Conger and Peterson 1984; Peterson 1984; Jones 1985; Johnston, Bachman and O'Malley 1986). The samples and the methodologies of the few studies that deal with adolescents' attitude are quite different and, in some cases, present different results. There appears
to be a trend, however, towards greater similarity in the way both boys and girls think and feel about sexual behaviour for members of their own sex, the opposite sex, and themselves. This single standard was described by Reiss (1966) as “permissiveness with affection” and “the acceptance of a variety of sexual practices without judgement or discrimination by sex, if both partners are consenting and willing”.

New social attitudes towards sex, ready availability of contraceptive devices and legalization of abortion in many states have brought about radical changes in sexual behaviour of adolescents. (Hurlock, 1988) Like all sociocultural phenomena, the norms, attitudes and patterns concerning sex are never static; they are dynamic and ever changing elements in the social system. It is therefore rarely possible to designate a specific year span as a revolutionary period within which have occurred basic changes of social perception. Yet the social and technological innovations that took place during the first three decades of the twentieth century were profound enough to change basic perceptions of the functions of sex and the role of women and thus the label Sexual Revolution is not out of place.

However any scientific study of adolescent sexual behaviour is fraught with problems. In one review, Diepold and Young (1979) summarized and evaluated most of the existing studies of adolescent sexual behaviour and concluded that our actual knowledge of normal adolescent sexual activity is disappointingly limited. Further, they contended that much of what we believed about a major sexual revolution during the 1960s was based on undocumented speculation by the mass media. Whatever research has been done suffers
from problems that force us to be skeptical about what we think we know. As Santelli and Beilenson (1992) argue, the problems in studying human sexual behaviour are difficult enough, but when the humans in question are adolescents, the problems are even more complex. Marwaha (2000) also corroborates their views.

NEED OF THE STUDY

The current standards of sexual behaviour do nothing to minimize the strains of adolescence. At the level of family, the attitudes of many parents mean most homes are not open to discussions on sexuality concerns. Discussions on sexual matters are discouraged, particularly among young people. This situation drives them to seek information elsewhere. Unfortunately, they usually end up getting information from people who are equally ignorant about sexuality. As a result many of our young people get mixed messages and go through their adolescence not understanding the monumental changes that happen to them.

Throughout the world a major revolution is occurring in male and female roles specially in the countries witnessing urbanization and industrialization. We are moving towards greater equality in responsibilities and behaviour. This revolution is affecting how men and women see and behave towards each other. Dating practices, based on commitment are changing. Desirable characteristics for a marriage, divorce, separation and remarriage and place of character in male-female relationships are also beginning to look different. More women have begun to challenge the traditionally exclusive role of wife, mother and new patterns have begun to emerge.
It is estimated that fifty percent of women are employed in jobs outside the home. Most of these women also carry out major responsibilities for the family. Men and women are less likely to stay in a family/marriage they find destructive or emotionally unsatisfying. These events have a significant impact on the children. Parental control is more diffuse, parental male/female models are less available and time demands on parents are excessive. As a result students in general favour sex education in curriculum; teachers want sex education to be introduced in lower classes or at least in university classes (Rao, 1981).

In fact our young people are forced to bear the brunt of the assault of the sexual revolution. If they are sexually insecure, this is perhaps to be expected in an era when sexual insecurity is so prevalent. If they are obsessed with sex, this is perhaps less than strange at a time when sex appears to many as the last frontier for human expression because the present is a time of flux and mobility in respect to sexual attitudes and behaviour. Extreme discussion over sexual standards is probably a forbidden topic for conversation or the act. Freud (1856) pointed out ‘repression was more harmful than action’.

If it is easy on one hand to over-emphasize sexual needs, conflicts and struggle as the underlying cause of all problems that beset adolescents, it is unrealistic to ignore the significance of the fact that adolescents must live in communities where norms formally prohibit or at least severely limit all expressions of sexual behaviour. The discrepancies between the individual and his society and the resulting strains between the generations represent important determinants of the continuing problems of youth. (Kalra and Kalra, 1994).
The world today is passing through a crucial period of social change as never before. India too, is undergoing this change. Specially the change is felt by the adolescents during their transitional period from childhood to adulthood. Of all the developmental events of adolescence, the most dramatic is the increase in sexual drive and the new and often mysterious feelings and thoughts that accompany it. A major hurdle for both boys and girls at this stage is the successful integration of sexuality with other aspects of the emerging sense of self without having to undergo too much conflict and anxiety. In contemporary society, with its changing sex roles and its peculiar mixture of permissiveness and prudery, this is not an easy task to master. Developing into adolescent sexuality is courting hostility and outrage from conservative groups in our country. Yet, it is futile to close our eyes to the reality.

Pre-marital heterosexual contacts, which is a characteristic of sexual development in adolescence, are very limited in India especially among people in rural areas and small towns representing eighty percent of the population. Segregation at school level at graduation and at post graduation level to a great extent makes it difficult to have easy heterosexual contacts. Since it is through these relationships that adolescents begin to formulate sexual behaviour preferences, adolescents have pre-conceived notions regarding sex which need to be corrected.

A youngster in his early adolescence is so malleable and so impressionable that he is at the mercy of any and every influence. This of course is the reason for the general rule that the associates of an adolescent
child are enormously important in his over-all development; but it is especially true as far as his sexual development is concerned. (Farnhari, 1951).

A major influence in the development of sexual behaviour is the media. Exposure to sexual beliefs and practices promulgated by T.V., films, radio, cassette tapes, popular sex magazines tends to exploit the fears and hopes of adolescents. The number and explicitness of sexual references have increased dramatically in the last decade. In 1985, the average teenage viewer saw almost 2,000 sexual references on television; in stark contrast, references to birth control or to STDs were almost nonexistent (Brown, Childers and Waszak, 1990).

The adolescent is subjected to a wide range of sexuality in the mass media and in his neighbourhood (Gordon, 1985). Movies and video cassettes appear to be a peer group activity. Adolescents commonly rent and watch videos. These involve even X-rated films, which stimulate their heterosexual interests. A vicarious satisfaction for those fundamental desires in adolescents which are often inhibited is provided by the movies. Adolescents imitate from their dressing and grooming mannerisms and love techniques like kissing, necking and petting etc.

While the media have the potential to reach all teenagers and their families; for media messages to be effective in changing attitudes or behaviour, they must be repetitive, consistent, understandable and receive community support (Flay, 1987; U.S. Congress, 1991).
According to Adams (1977), some fairly consistent evidence suggests that adolescents' sexual behaviour will continue to advance regardless of feelings of personal guilt or social standards. Fear does not serve as a long term deterrent. Advancing through the stages of sexual development, we need to help adolescents function responsibly. This means giving them access to knowledge, services and educational opportunities geared to their social, emotional and cognitive maturity.

Withholding or neglecting to provide clear answers to young people’s inquires on sex and sexuality related matters forces them to obtain answers from other sources. Unfortunately, many of them, because of mixed messages they receive from various institutions, get their hands on the kind of information and images which treat sex as dirty (Rai, 2000).

Furthermore, the necessity of probing into this area stems from the fact that:

(a) not much research work has been done in this field in our country.
(b) it is difficult to generalise the results of foreign studies for the Indian population as a whole.
(c) It is also doubtful whether the replication of studies done in foreign countries on Indian population will yield similar results in view of the different social set up.

Hence no matter how small a research effort undertaken, its results are likely to make big differences in the understanding of the Indian adolescents.

The results of the study, it is hoped, will also have a strong bearing on the advancement of conceptualisation of theories of adolescent development
and on the understanding of sexual behaviour of adolescents during their most critical phase of life, thereby enabling the curriculum developers to formulate the course content of Home Science and provide guidance and counselling to the adolescents.