



by scientists at Central Drug Research Institute (CDRI) in Lucknow, India? Better awareness about sex related matters, increased number of medically assisted deliveries and better post-natal care leading to decreased maternal and infant mortality rates, increased number of couples with small families, better detection and cure of STDs and overall increased medical facilities for all sex-related problems, etc. all indicate improved reproductive health of the society.

4.2 POPULATION STABILISATION AND BIRTH CONTROL

In the last century an all-round development in various fields significantly improved the quality of life of the people. However, increased health facilities along with better living conditions had an explosive impact on the growth of population. The world population which was around 2 billion (2000 million) in 1900 rocketed to about 6 billion by 2000 and 7.2 billion in 2011. A similar trend was observed in India too. Our population which was approximately 350 million at the time of our independence reached close to the billion mark by 2000 and crossed 1.2 billion in May 2011. A rapid decline in death rate, **maternal mortality rate** (MMR) and **infant mortality rate** (IMR) as well as an increase in number of people in reproductive age are probable reasons for this. Through our Reproductive Child Health (RCH) programme, though we could bring down the population growth rate, it was only marginal. According to the 2011 census report, the population growth rate was less than 2 per cent, i.e., 20/1000/year, a rate at which our population could increase rapidly. Such an alarming growth rate could lead to an absolute scarcity of even the basic requirements i.e., food, shelter and clothing in spite of significant progress made in those areas. Therefore, the government was forced to take up serious measures to check this population growth rate.

The most important step to overcome this problem is to motivate smaller families by using various contraceptive methods. You might have seen advertisements in the media as well as posters/bills, etc., showing a happy couple with two children with a slogan *Hum Do Hamare Do* (we two, our two). Many couples, mostly the young, urban, working ones have even adopted an 'one child norm'. Statutory raising of marriageable age of the female to 18 years and that of males to 21 years, and incentives given to couples with small families are two of the other measures taken to tackle this problem. Let us describe some of the commonly used contraceptive methods, which help prevent unwanted pregnancies.

An ideal contraceptive should be user-friendly, easily available, effective and reversible with no or least side-effects. It also should in no way interfere with the sexual drive, desire and/or the sexual act of the user. A wide range of contraceptive methods are presently available which could be broadly grouped into the following categories, namely Natural/Traditional, Barrier, IUDs, Oral contraceptives, Injectables, Implants and Surgical methods.