

Family

Family: Concept and Forms

Definitions of Family:

- As a biological/reproduction unit consists of a man and a woman having a socially approved relationship and off-spring(natural or adopted).
- As a social unit it refers to a group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption – performing roles based on age, sex and relationship. It makes up a single household or sub-household.
- Aileen Ross (1961): A group of people usually related as some particular type of kindred, who may live in one household and unity resides in patterning of rights and duties, sentiments and authority. Acc. to her there are 4 *sub-cultures*.
 - Ecological sub-culture: Spatial arrangement of family members and their households (how relatives live geographically close to each other).
 - Sub-culture of rights and duties: The division of labour within the household (how the work is distributed)
 - Sub-culture of power and authority: control over the action of members
 - Sub-culture of sentiments: relationship between different set of members

Forms of family

- Acc. to K.P Chattopadhyay (1961) there are 3 types of family: Simple (Man, wife and unmarried children), Compound family (two simple families: man, wife and unmarried children and the man's parents and unmarried siblings) and composite (lineal and collateral).
- **Based on authority:** Husband dominant, wife dominant, equalitarian (equal relations) and autonomic families.
- Acc. to **Burgess & Locke** (1963): Institutional (family is controlled by mores and public opinion) and Companionship (behaviour in family arises from mutual affection and consensus).
- **Based on kinship:** Conjugal (priority given to marital ties) and consanguine (priority given to blood ties).
- Acc. to **Zimmerman** (1947): Trustee (Family members have to conform to family norms and have no individual rights), Atomistic (Individual members can make their own choice and the conventional mores lose significance), domestic (inter-mediate type between trustee and atomistic).
- Acc. to **Ram Ahuja** there is one more type to these types:-
 - Fissioned family which is nuclear in structure and function, separated from the parental family.

Joint Family: Types, Nature and Characteristics

- Essential elements of a joint family:
 - Co-residentiality as an important factor of jointness
 - Karve (1953) gives 5 characteristics of Joint Family: common residence, common kitchen, common property, common family worship, and kinship relationship. Defines joint family as “*group of people who generally live under one roof, eat food cooked at one hearth (stove), hold property in common, participate in common family worship and are related to one another through kindred*”.
 - Joint ownership of property irrespective of type of residence (given importance by T.N Madan and F.G Baily)
 - Fulfilment of obligation towards kin (given by I.P Desai). Types given by Desai (1956): functional family (function under one common authority), traditional family (consists of three or more generations) and marginal joint family (two-generation family)

- Types of relationships in a Joint Family given by Ramakrishna Mukherjee (1962):
 - Conjugal
 - Parental-filial
 - Inter-sibling
 - Lineal
 - Affinal

Acc. to Mukherjee, joint family consists of one or more of the first three relationships and either lineal or affinal.

- Definition by Ram Ahuja: A multiplicity of genealogically related nuclear families, joint in residence and commensal relations and functioning under one authority.
- Types of kin according to Ahuja in Joint Family: primary, secondary, tertiary and distant.

- Types of Joint Family
 - According to M.S Gore (1986) joint family is of three types: Filial joint family (parents, their married son and their offspring), fraternal joint family (two married brothers and their offspring) and Combined joint family (both filial and fraternal).
 - Fissioned family given by Ram Ahuja is a Nuclear Family separated from father's or married brother's family

- Characteristics of Joint Family

1. Authoritarian Structure: power to make decisions lies in the hand of the head of the family.
2. Familistic Organization: Individual's interest are subordinated to the family.
3. Status of Members is determined by age and relationship: Man is higher than wife, status of older generation is more than that of younger generation etc.
4. Filial and Fraternal relationship gets preference over conjugal relationship
Ex- husband-wife relation is of less importance than that of father-son.
5. Family functions on joint responsibility
6. All members get equal attention
7. Authority in the family depends on the principle of seniority.

Changing patterns & Structural changes

- Ram Ahuja contends that instead of large joint families, there will be locally functioning effective joint families of two generations or so.
- Nuclear fissioned family (husband, wife and unmarried children) will be functionally dependent on some primary kin, for example, brother or father.

Empirical studies to study changing patterns

- Desai (1964) studied urban families in Mahuwa, Gujarat and observed Nuclearity is increasing and jointness is decreasing. The joint relations are confined to parents-children, siblings, uncle-nephews.
- Kapadia (1956) studied rural and urban families in Gujarat and concluded that in villages the upper castes have mostly joint families and lower caste have higher number of nuclear families. In urban community there are more joint families and observed that joint family is not being nuclearized.
- Ross (1961) studied Hindu families in Bangalore. She found that there was a break from traditional joint families towards nuclear families or single family units.
- Ram Ahuja observed that although the number of nuclear families are increasing, it does not indicate the disappearance of joint family system.

The types of structural changes

1. Number of fissioned families are increasing but they fulfil obligations towards parents.
2. There is more jointness in rural communities, more nuclearism in urban communities
3. The size of traditional joint family has become smaller
4. The functional type of joint family is sustained through values
5. Changes from traditional to transitional family include new-local residence, functional jointness, equality of individuals, equal status for women, increasing individualism

Factors resulting the changes

1. Differential earnings of brothers
2. Death of root couple who holds economic power
3. Incentive of depending on family labour is disappearing
4. Systems of social security, extended earnings opportunities, savings is leading to nuclearization

Interactional Changes

1. Changes in husband-wife relations

- Power allocation in decision making: The wife is equal in the power role, eg budget allocation etc. The source of power shifts from culture to resource
- Emancipation of wife: Increasing companion role of wife
- Closeness

2. Changes in Parents and children (Parents-filial) relations

- The authority has shifted from the patriarch to parents who consult their children on all important issues.

3. Changes in relation between Daughter-in-law and parents-in-law

- Filial ties does not have importance over conjugal ties

Future of Indian Family

1. The two structures of Joint and Nuclear families will continue to survive in India, only the nature of jointness will change.
2. Future of family as an institution has 4 factors:
 - Technological revolution: Effects of industrial-technological changes results in weakening of kinship ties, occupational and population mobility, abandonment of family economy.
 - Population revolutions such shift away from agriculture, late marriages, migration to urban areas etc. creates problems of readjustment, changes in power structure, desire for smaller families.
 - Democratic Revolution: Demand for individualization, demand of rights by women, decision making through democratic process.
 - Secular Revolution: Shift away from religious values to rational values.

Family of 21st Century

- Possible changes in Indian Family according to Harold Christensen (1975) in the first quarter of 21st Century.
 1. The family will continue to exist
 2. Stability of family will depend on interpersonal bonds than on social pressures
 3. It will depend more on community services and support
 4. Greater control over biological processes (such as family planning, controlling sickness and death)
 5. Remarriage and divorce rate will be high
 6. Parents and Grand parents will support children and grand children even after retirement
 7. Women's position will further improve with increase in economic power
 8. Family will remain husband-dominant

Summing up Dominant Trends of Indian Family

1. Increasing importance of nuclear family
2. Transference of functions to other institutions (such as educational, protective etc.)
3. Change in structure, fewer children to care for and more elderly surviving
4. Freedom of women due to education and economic independence
5. Changing values of youth
6. Liberalization of attitudes and practices towards sex
7. Late marriages, post-puberty
8. Decreasing family size.

Functional Perspective

- Functionalist perspective sees family as an important 'organ' in the 'body' of the society. The functions of the family include: sexual, reproductive, socialising, educational and economic.
- The first two functions indicate that family is useful biologically while other functions point out to social and cultural usefulness.
- Other institutions will only help the family. *Family's role is primary*
- Functionalists follow the naturalistic approach.

Marxist Perspective

Marxist perspective adopts a structural perspective on the family and gender relations. They explain male dominance from a historical context.

1. Nomadic stage: No exclusive sexual possessiveness nor did the private property existed
2. Cattle-breeding, mining and trade led to greater control over wealth of men. Monogamy came about in this stage to ensure that the property stayed with them and passed on to their children.
3. Family became male-dominated and gendered.
4. Women were subordinated and the division labour became gendered. Women's oppression thus is a problem of history and is socially constructed.
5. In future, family will change and allow individual freedom, political voice to women. Family will need to adapt.

Inter-generational conflict and Youth Unrest

- Definition of youth: The stage in life is period between childhood/adolescence and work. And is partly the product of the education system.
- With education and demand for skilled worker, all youths have developed a *shared interest and collective experience based on political independence and democratic values*.
- Informal peer groups allows inter-generational interaction to flourish.
- Sometimes youth turn to culturally deviant norms.
- Leads to inter-generational conflict as they opposed dominant norms and those that acted as a barrier in the attainment of their goals.
- Western culture shifted the values based *on individualism and equality*.

Indian Youth & Family

- Studies point out change in relation between parents and children, but at the same time the children respect their parents & want important decisions to be made by the parents. Shah (1964) noted that the children did not want complete freedom and make decisions jointly with parents, e.g. selection of partner.

I.P Desai (1953) noted the causes of conflict between youth & parents:

1. Imposition of authority by the elders is perceived by the youngsters as unjust behaviour.
2. Youth believing that they are culturally advanced than their parents.
3. Curbing of individualism due to strictness.
4. Unfulfillment of expectations and needs.
5. Difference in attitudes to social customs and religious beliefs.

Family & Law

- Legislative measures have disrupted relations between parents and children.
- Parents can no longer deprive their children a share in paternal property.
- The Hindu Succession Act, 1956 states that the property of a male Hindu will go his heirs (both daughters and sons).
- Family alone cannot be held responsible for juvenile delinquency, youth crime, drug abuse etc., and we should inspect the society as a whole and not the failure of the family.