

SOCIOLOGY

CHAPTER – 9

FAMILY



We learn about the following in this chapter,

- Meaning of 'Family'
- Relationships among the members of the family
- Stages in the development of the individual

Family

The system of Family is strongly rooted in India. Relationship among the members of family is an ancient traditional arrangement. Family is a unit of society. It is like a living cell. The community develops from a family, leading to the creation of a nation.

The family rests on the support of emotional pillars. The mother's love, the father's affection, understanding between the husband and wife, the desire to beget children and nurture them act as the pillars supporting the family.

In the contemporary Indian family, the parents discuss with their children before taking decisions. Whether it is a matter of purchasing some material, giving a gift or matter related to discipline in children, or income and expenditure of the family. The mother's role is important. The mother enjoys equal rights in all responsible decisions taken.

Features of a family

Family is universal. It is a social system seen in all times and all countries. It is the core of society. It is from the family that neighbourhoods, villages, cities and nations have evolved. Right from their childhood, the members of the family not only realise their social responsibilities but also understand co-operation. The social traditions, morality and behavior are all controlled by the family. Thus the family is called a universal, permanent and traditional structure.

Mother-father, husband-wife and children : Marriage is a universal and a sacred social institution. It creates mutual rights and responsibilities between father-mother, husband-wife and children.

According to the Indian tradition, taking care of the wife and children is the responsibility and duty of the husband. Looking after children and educating them are the duties of the parents. Caring the elderly is culturally rooted in the families.

Childhood and youth : Childhood and youth occupy an important place in the social development of an individual. Not only does the child learn the mother tongue but also the fundamental social tenets. A child growing in a familial and social atmosphere develops related characteristics and gains friendly relations with other children of the same age. By mingling with others, the child develops leadership qualities, social behavior, his/her requirements and restrictions that influences a child resulting in the formation of healthy social relationships. Later in youth, it leads to friendship, independence, security and social acceptance. The behaviour and habits developed in the youth continue in the adult and old ages.

Families and generations : The unit of family rests on the support of many several generations. It has many blood relatives belonging to different generations. This phenomenon is seen in all societies. Grandparents belong to the first generation, parents to the second and children to the third generation. Based on the members of different generations present in a family, families are classified as mentioned below :

- I. Family consisting of parents and children. This is called Nuclear or Divided family (minimum two generations)
- II. A family consisting of father-mother, children and grandchildren is called a Joint or Undivided family (minimum 3 to 4 generations).

Types of families :

Families are classified based on different principles. Based on authority, a family can be classified as Patriarchal or Matriarchal. Based on marriage, it can be classified as Monogamy, Bigamy or Polygamy. Based on size, it can be classified as Undivided or Divided family.

1. Patriarchal family : A family in which the father is the head and has all assets in his name is called a Patriarchal family. This type of family system was prevalent in ancient India, China, Rome, Egypt and other countries and is in existence even today.

2. Matriarchal family : A family in which the mother is the head having all property and assets in her name is called Matriarchal family. The Nair community in Calicut in Kerala state and tribal communities in the north-eastern states of India have this system.

3. Modern nuclear family : Based on the structure of the family and the number of generations present in it, a family is classified as either Divided or Undivided family. A family having husband, wife and their unmarried children is called a modern nuclear family. This type is also called Primary family, Individual family or Divided family. This familial system is prevalent in the present society. Privacy, personal happiness, self-contentment, property rights, changing social values, geographical and social structure, advances in science and technology, industrialisation, urbanisation, principles of democracy and equality, decline of religious faith and thinking, spread of materialistic attitude, freedom of women have become responsible for the increase in the number of this type of family.

The main features seen in the modern family are :

- 1. Modernity
- 2. Complexity
- 3. Small size
- 4. Loose social control
- 5. Enhanced freedom of members

Undivided family

In an undivided family, there will be people of more than two generations consisting of parents, their children, grandchildren and great-grandchildren. Normally it is a group of people living under one roof, eating food prepared in one kitchen, having equal rights to the property, engaging in same type of worship and having specific blood relatives.

Features of an Joint family:

Large size : Blood relatives live permanently in the same house. The size of the family is big.

Property : All the members of the family are owners of the property. Utilisation of the property is done in a harmonious manner. An undivided family runs on the basis

Do this yourself :

Trace your older generations from the time of your great-grandfather till today, and with the help of your elders, draw a family tree.



Undivided family

of interpersonal co-operation of all the members. Its head acts as a religious head. It is only with the permission of all the members that any sale or transfer of property is done.

Residence : All the members of the family normally live under the same roof. Even when one son has a family of his own with a wife and children, he continues the earlier relationship with the core family. The new family is considered a part of the undivided family.

Kitchen : The members of an undivided family usually prepare the food in the same kitchen and consume it together.

Religion : Normally all the members of an undivided family follow the same religion. They worship the same gods. Rites and rituals, daily worship form a part of the daily routine of such families.

Self-independent : An undivided family is mostly self-independent. It

Activity :

Talk to your father and learn about the number of members (male-female) in the undivided family of your grandfather. Also get to know the duties and responsibilities of your grandfather.

Activity :

List out the values of undivided families.

encompasses the lives of its members completely. It fulfills the majority of their needs. All members share the household chores. The work is divided according to the effort needed to do the job, the members' age and gender.

Structure of authority : The oldest member of the undivided family has the authority to take decisions. Even when he transfers it, the policy of seniority in age is followed.

EXERCISES

I. Fill in the blanks with suitable words.

1. The living cell of the society is _____.
2. When the father is the head of the family, that family is called _____ family.
3. _____ family is seen among the Nairs of Malabar in Kerala.

II. Answer the following questions.

1. The family is a unit of society. How?
2. Name the different kinds of families.
3. What do you mean by 'Undivided Family'?
4. What is meant by 'Nuclear Family'?
5. What are the features of a family?
6. Describe the role of childhood and youth in the social developmental stages of an individual.
7. Describe the features of an undivided family.
8. What are the reasons for the increase in the number of divided families?

III. Activities :

1. Discuss the advantages and disadvantages of divided and undivided families.
2. Visit a tribal area and learn about their family system.

IV. Projects :

1. Collect more information about matriarchal and patriarchal families.
2. Discuss with your elders and draw a family tree from the time of your great-grandfather to your time.

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