

## Indian Family in Transition

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### Introduction

In Chapters 1-5 you have studied the institution of marriage—meaning, forms, choosing a life partner and the various phases of adjustments in marital life.

In Three Chapters, we deal with the Family, different aspects of family life, the family welfare programmes for the planning of a family and the issues associated with the Medical Termination of Pregnancy.

In this Chapter, you are going to have a clear understanding of Family – the different aspects of family, social changes affecting the Indian family, problems faced by the Indian family, various policies, programmes and laws related to the welfare of the family. Finally we conclude this unit by making you realize the need for planning for a family and becoming parents.

### Family Structure, Functions and Relationships

Family may be defined as a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption or consensual unions, generally constituting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other and creating and maintaining a common culture (Burgess & Locke, 1950).

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**Family Functions**

There are three major areas of functions which have been particularly emphasized. The functions of the family for the society, the functions of the sub-systems within a family and the functions of the family for individual family members. Thus a functional analysis of the family emphasizes the relationship between the family and the larger society, the internal relationship between the sub-systems of the family, and the relationship between family and the personality of individual members. The former may be termed macro-functionalism and the latter two micro-functionalisms.

**Family Patterns**

Family patterns are conceptualized in terms of family composition. A household is one of the dimensions of the family pattern. It is a residential and domestic unit composed of one or more persons living under the same roof and eating food cooked in a single kitchen (Shah, 1973).

The normative family patterns in India are extended or joint family and elementary or nuclear family.

The term joint family is used more commonly in India than extended family. The joint family comprises movable or immovable property, and all the members of the family may or may not be staying together. The elementary or nuclear family comprises couples and their unmarried children and is generally financially independent of other families (Desai, 1956).

**Family Structure**

Family structure is conceptualized as the configuration of role, power and status and relationships in the family. It depends upon the family's socio-economic background, family pattern and extent of urbanization. Family structure has implications for family unity and stability and development of individuals.

The functions that the family as an institution performs are divided among family members in the form of roles. Roles are culturally defined and are passed on to succeeding generations as correct behaviour (Nye & Berardo, 1973). Role expectations are thus learnt from family orientation.

Norms of family relationships may comprise norms and dyadic relationships, familism and kinship orientation.

The dyadic relationships cover the following dyads in the family:

Filial Relation	:	Parent-child relation
Fraternal Relation	:	Relation among siblings
Conjugal Relations	:	Relation between husband and wife
In-law Relation	:	Relation between family members related through marriage and not by blood.

### **Family Practices**

Family practices depend upon the family's ethnic background, extent of urbanization, family structure, and family laws. Marriage practices cover marriage patterns, selection of marriage partner, and age at marriage, age at consummation of marriage, marriage rituals, financial exchange and divorce.

Other family practices relate to lineage, residence, child bearing, child birth, adoption, guardianship and custody of children, maintenance, death and inheritance and succession.

Families are classified into patrilineal and matrilineal families according to the lineage or descent by the father or by the mother. Patrilineal families are generally patrilocal and matrilineal families are generally matrilocal by residence. Neolocal families

establish a new residence after marriage (Leslie & Korman, 1984).

### **Role of the Family in the Socialization of the Child**

Socialization is the process by which persons learn the ways of a given society. Children are taught the ways and values of their society through contact with already socialized individuals. The family is important because it maintains contact with children over a longer period of time than any other group, and through close emotional association is able to exert maximum influence in their lives. Both adult and other sibling members (brother and sisters) act as role models in providing examples for children in the development of their personality, attitudes and behaviour.

### **Family Dynamics**

Family dynamics broadly comprise family interactions and family development as influenced by socialization of family norms of individual members.

### **Family Interactions**

Family interactions refers to the distinctive character of interpersonal relationships which occur between members of the family. An interpersonal relationship is a relation based on personal interaction rather than on any legal or structural basis. The main characteristics of family interactions may comprise cohesion, communication, role performance, decision-making and adaptability. Each subsystem of the family has different interactional patterns.

### **Family Cohesion**

Family cohesion is defined as the emotional bonding that family members have towards one another. There are four levels of cohesion, ranging from disengaged (very low) to separated (low to moderate), to connect

(moderate to high), to enmeshed (very high). It is hypothesized that the central levels of cohesion (separated and connected) make for optimal family functioning. The extreme levels (disengaged and enmeshed) are generally seen as problematic.

### **Family Communication**

Family communication is defined as all the verbal and non-verbal behaviour that occurs within the family, and between the family and its social environment.

### **Role Performance**

The following are the different aspects of role performance:

Role enactment, role performance and role behaviour

The behaviour dimension of roles either validates the cultural expectations or emerges to create new roles.

### **Role Commitment**

Role competence is the evaluation of one's own and another's performance.

### **Role Conflict**

Inter-role conflict takes place when the norms or behaviour patterns of one role are inconsistent with those of another role of the same individual. Intra-role conflict takes place when two or more categories of people hold conflicting expectations concerning the behaviour appropriate to a single role.

### **Decision-making**

Decision making involves recognition of need for decision, identification and weighing of acceptable alternatives, selection of an alternative and facilitating its action.

**Family Adaptability**

Family adaptability is defined as the ability of a family system to change its power structure, role relationships and relationship rules in response to situational and developmental stress.

The four levels of adaptability range from rigid (very low) to structured (low to moderate), to flexible (moderate to high), to chaotic (very high). It is hypothesized that the central levels of adaptability (structured and flexible) are more conducive to marital and family functioning with the extremes (rigid and chaotic) being the most problematic.

**Family Development**

The concept of family development gives a longitudinal view to compare family interactions in different stages of family life span. These stages may be determined by the age and developmental needs of the adults and the children in the family.

The Family Life Cycle is a way of taking look at the family life. It is based upon the recognition of the successive patterns within the continuity of family living over the years.

Evelyn Duvall (1962) depicts the family life cycle as consisting of 8 stages.

Stage I	Beginning families (married couple without children)
Stage II	Childbearing Families (oldest child, birth to 30 months)
Stage III	Families with Preschool Children (oldest child 2½ to 6 years)
Stage IV	Families with School Children (oldest child 6 to 13 years)

Stage V	Families with teenagers (oldest child 13 to 20 years)
Stage VI	Families as launching centers (1st child gone to last child's leaving home)
Stage VII	Families in the middle years (empty nest to retirement)
Stage VIII	Aging Families (retirement to death of one or both spouses)

**Development Tasks**

A family's development task is a growth responsibility that arises at a certain stage in the life of a family, successful achievement of which leads to satisfaction and success with later tasks, while failure leads to unhappiness in the family, disapproval by society, and difficulty with later developmental tasks (Duvall, 1977). Family development tasks are basic family tasks specified for a given stage to development in the family life cycle.

Family life development programmes aim at development of knowledge, attitudes and skills towards democratic family functioning and strong family ecology.

These goals may be achieved through the following tasks:

- Attitude development in favour of family rights and responsibilities.
- Skill training for enrichment of family dynamics and development at each stage of family life span for strengthening family's interactions with its social ecology.
- Information dissemination about family resources such as laws, policies and implementation systems and services.

## **Social Changes Affecting Indian Family**

The family has been and continues to be one of the most important elements in the fabric of Indian society. The bond that ties the individual to his family, the range of the influence and authority that the family exercises make the family in India not merely an institutional structure of our society, but accord give it a deep value. The family has indeed contributed to the stability to Indian society and culture.

Today, the Indian family is subjected to the effects of changes that have been taking place in the economic, political, social and cultural spheres of the our society. In the economic sphere, the patterns of production, distribution and consumption have changed greatly. The process of industrialization and the consequent urbanization and commercialization have had drastic impacts on the family. Migration to urban areas, growth of slums, change from caste oriented and hereditary occupations to new patterns of employment offered by a technological revolution, the cut-throat competition for economic survival and many other economic changes have left their impact on the family.

Briefly speaking, these changes in the socio-economic-political-cultural milieu of our society have led to changes in the structures, functions, roles, relationships and values of the family. In the context of the changes in the economic system, more and more members of the family are moving away from the larger family circle and living as individuals or members of a nuclear unit in urban areas. The patterns or loyalties, obligations and expectations have changed. The case of the child and the aged in particular have become a problem for many due to structural changes in the family.

### **Change in Traditional Functions**

Many functions performed by the traditional family are being taken over by other agencies such as schools,



day care centers, commercial and entertainment centers, etc. For example, an important function of cultural transmission performed by the family has been affected because the nuclear families are scattered cultures. The function of setting moral standards for the growing children and adolescents has been taken over to a large extent by the peer group culture, mass media or by commercial entertainment.

A major area of the family that has been affected by the social and economic changes in the society is that of the role performed or expected of the different members of the family. The traditional role allocation based on sex, age, or kinship has changed. With more and more women taking up jobs outside the home, the traditional role of the wife has changed. Similarly the role of the father, the mother, the husband, the child and the elders in the family have all undergone various changes. The degree of role-overlap depends on the adaptation of the particular family to the changed situations.

The changes in roles have inevitable affected the relationships, among the members of the family. The concept of freedom, individuality and rights of the individual have had their impact on the relationships too. The attitudes of implicit obedience to elders, concern for others, self-denial for the sake of others in the family, acceptances of the authority of parents and superior status of the male are being displaced by attitudes of self-centeredness, assertion of individual rights, clamor for equality and right for self-determination etc.

In the realm of values, today's family is moving towards materialism, individualism and liberalism. The cherished values such as respect for age, concern for the weak, devotion to one's duty, co-operation are being replaced by competition and "getting ahead". It is not surprising that the family in India is also succumbing to the pressures of the time.

The consequences of these changes are many. Problems such as child neglect, behaviour problems in children, indiscipline among the youth, alcoholism, drug addiction, neglect of the elderly, material disharmony etc. are on the increase today and are indications that the family is not able to handle the change in a desirable manner. There is need therefore, to help the families to cope with the pressures and challenges of their life situation which are affected by the interacting forces to change in the economic, political, and cultural spheres.

### **Alternative Family Patterns**

One of the most striking features of contemporary societies is the presence of a range of family variations, from the most traditional, extended families with strict, gender based sex roles to the modern dual career families based on liberal, equal sex roles and to adults cohabiting without marriage. The term “alternative family patterns” suggests family patterns that result from personal circumstances outside one’s control (death of a partner, infertility) or from socio-economic conditions (male migration, work participation of women). In the Indian context, most family variations are a result of personal or socio-economic circumstances. Experimental or chosen lifestyles like living without marrying, and being childless voluntarily are restricted to an extremely small group of people.

The following are the most commonly observed family variations in India.

- Single parent families
- Female headed households
- Dual earner/career families
- Childless families
- Adoptive families

## **Problems Encountered in the Family and Intervention Programmes**

### **Programmes**

The following is a list of major family problem situations which may be entry points for family intervention. The causal factors of the situations may be multiple, located in the family ecology, socialization of authoritarian family norms, dysfunctional family interaction patterns or problems with individual member's developmental tasks. These areas are, therefore, not mutually exclusive. Some of these problem situations are:

- **Families with individuals having problems**

- Families of the disabled

- Families of the chronically/terminally ill

- Families of substance abuse addicts

- **Problems with child bearing**

- Infertility

- Unwed motherhood

- **Marital problems**

- Marital disharmony

- Marital breakdown

- **Abuse and violence in families**

- Child abuse in family

- Family violence against women

- Elderly abuse in family

- Family abuse of the disabled

- **Families in conflict with other systems**
  - Families with unemployment/indebtedness
  - Families with inadequate or no land/housing
- **Families affected by dis-equilibrium in other systems**
  - Families facing political violence
  - Families facing environmental disasters
  - Uprooted/refuge/migrant families
- **Family deprivation**
  - Destitute children
  - Destitute adults
  - Destitute aged

These family situations, in turn, may affect the family functions, interactions, and individual members. The family may become incapable of carrying out some individual members. The family interaction patterns may change as a coping mechanism. Harm may be caused to physical and mental development and health of individual members, particularly children, women and the aged. In the extreme situation family may disintegrate and individual members may become destitute.

### **Family Intervention**

A family practitioner's role comprises planning and implementing a combination of interventions ranging from development to remedial, using individual, group, as well as community methods to strengthen these families, coping mechanisms and then rehabilitate them. Family counselling, marital counselling, family and marital therapy crisis intervention, encouraging self help groups and legal aid are specific methods that

may be used.

The groups needing family intervention may be children, adolescent, youth, women, couples, or the aged; but the family as a whole may be considered the unit for intervention.

Besides, planning and implementing the services, the practitioner needs to monitor and evaluate them and raise public awareness about these services.

### **Government Policies and Programmes for Families**

Family policy means everything that the government does for the family explicitly or implicitly. The Constitution of India does not make an explicit reference to the family. However, it lays down the fundamental rights of individual citizens in terms of equality, nondiscrimination and protection. Its Directive Principles of State Policy state that, "The state shall strive to promote the welfare of the people by securing and protecting as effectively as it may a social order in which justice, social, economic and political shall inform all the institutions of the national life" (Article 38). Article 41 specifically lays down that, "the state shall, within the limits of its economic capacity and development, make effective provision for securing the right to work to education and to public assistance in cases of unemployment, old age, sickness and disablement".

#### **Social Policies and the Family**

Reviewing the social policies of India that affect the family, one can conclude that India has explicit family policy with explicit goal for the family only in the form of the Family Welfare Programme (1977) of the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. This programme pursues family planning as an integral part of a comprehensive

policy, covering the total health care delivery system. However, the policy has the limited goal of promoting planned parenthood with a two children/one child norm, through the independent choice of family welfare methods.

We have a National Policy for Children (1974) that aims at full physical, mental and social development of children. As far as the family is concerned, it states that, "In organizing services for children efforts would be directed to strengthen family ties so that full potentialities of growth of children are realized within the normal family, neighbourhood and community environment". In 1992, India adopted a "National Plan of Action" for children, based on the recommendations of the World Summit of Children contained in the plan of Action for Survival, Protection and Development of Children. The long-term goals of the National Housing Policy (1988) are eradication of houselessens, improvement of the housing conditions of the inadequately housed, and provision of minimum level of basic services and amenities to all.

The National Policy for Child Labour (1987), the National Youth Policy (1988), the National Policy Education (1986) and the National Health Policy (1985) aim at specific services for select groups of individuals and implications for the family are implicit. India has a forest policy which aims at protection, conservation and development of forests. Thus, we have many policies for the family and its members.

A draft of the national policy for the aging is being discussed. A National Policy for Women is yet at the stage of recommendations of the National Perspective Plan for Women (1988). Our social security legislation is applicable only to work force in the organized sector. A large number of families at risk remain uncovered by any social security against poverty, old age, disability, illness and environmental disasters.

### **Family Laws in India**

India has different personal laws for families belonging to different religions, and therefore, do not have any agreed upon goals about this important aspect of civic life. Hindus, Muslims, Christians, Jews and Parsis, have their own personal laws, which cover matters of personal relations and family practices such as marriage, divorce, adoption, maintenance, guardianship and custody of children, and inheritance and succession. As these laws draw from the respective religious norms, they often perpetuate traditional patriarchal norms and slow down the process of reforms.

Although Article 44 of the Constitution maintains that, "The State shall endeavour to secure for the citizens a uniform civil code throughout the territory of India", very few attempts have succeeded in enacting secular family laws that apply to family practices of all Indians. These secular family laws are, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, 1929. The Medical Termination of Pregnancy Act, 1972, Special Marriage Act, 1974, Dowry Prohibition Act, 1961 and provisions made in the Criminal Procedure Code and Indian Penal Code.

### **Government Schemes and the Family**

In the absence of an overall family policy, the government schemes that affect/benefit families and their members are divided among different ministries.

### **Provisions under Ministry of Welfare**

The Ministry of Welfare has five bureaus for the following purposes.

Social defense, welfare of the handicapped, minorities, tribal development and scheduled castes and backward classes.

The Bureau of Social Defence controls the problems of family and social disorganization which are manifest in the forms of delinquency, juvenile vagrancy, drug addiction, alcoholism, and other such problems of personal and social deviance, within the framework of specific laws and allied measures. This Bureau implements the following schemes.

- For the welfare of children in need of care and protection;
- For the prevention and control of juvenile special maladjustment;
- For spreading awareness about the ill effects of drug abuse and providing counselling, de-addiction, after-care and rehabilitation services;
- For refugees from other South Asian countries (Relief and Rehabilitation schemes);
- For grant-in-aid to welfare programmes of the aged; and
- A scheme for the development of street children.

### **Provisions under Ministry of Human Resources Development**

The Ministry of Human Resource Development runs the Department of Women and Child Development which has two bureaus: Bureau of Nutrition and Child Development and Bureau of Women's Welfare and Development.

The Department runs the following schemes for children:

- Integrated Child Development Services for Children;
- The Adolescent Girls Scheme;



- A Scheme of Crèches/Day Care Centers for Children of Poor, working and ailing women and;
- Early Childhood Education Programme.

The Department runs the following schemes for women:

- Hostels for Working Women Belonging to Low Income Group;
- The Scheme for Employment cum Income Generating Production Units for Women;
- The Scheme for Training Centers for Rehabilitation of Women in Distress;
- The Scheme for Short Stay Homes for Women and Girls;
- Public education for the Prevention of Atrocities against Women; and
- The Support to Training cum Employment Programme (STEP)

The Central Social Welfare Board, which is an autonomous organization working under the Department of Women and Child Development, offers the following schemes:

- The scheme of Opportunities for Education For Adult Women;
- The Socio-Economic Programme provides opportunities for work and wages to needy women that include the economically backward, the destitute, the widowed, the deserted, the physically handicapped, and so on;
- The Awareness Generation Project for Rural and Poor Women Programme;
- Mahila Mandals;

- Family Counselling Centers;
- Voluntary Action Bureaus;
- Welfare Extension Project; and
- Scheme of Balika Mandals for Adolescent Girls.

### **Provisions under the Ministry of Urban Development**

The following Social Housing Schemes are implemented by the Ministry of Urban Development:

- Housing Scheme for economically weaker sections;
- Housing Scheme for low income groups;
- Housing Scheme for middle income groups; and
- Rural housing sites cum construction assistance scheme for landless workers;

The Ministry is also implementing the following programmes related to urban poverty alleviation:

- The Nehru Rozgar Yojana;
- The urban basic services for the poor; and
- Environmental improvement of urban slums aims at ameliorating the living condition of urban slum dwellers.

### **Provisions under the Ministry of Rural Development**

The Ministry of Rural Development implements various schemes. However, with the formation of every new Ministry and Government at the centre, each of the programmes gets a new name or are put into different categories. Some of the well known programmes include:

- Integrated Rural Development Programme (IRDP)

- National Scheme for Training of Rural Youth for Self-Employment (TRYSEM); and
- Development of Women and Children in Rural Areas (DWCRA).

## **Human Rights in the Family**

The goal of the International Year for the Family (IYF), 1994 is “Building the smallest democracy at the heart of the society”. The plans for the IYF seek to promote the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms accorded to all individuals by the set of internationally agreed instruments formulated under the aegis of the United Nations, whatever the status of each individual within the family, and whatever the form and condition of the family.

According to the United Nations (1987), “Human rights could be generally defined as those rights which are inherent to our nature and without which we cannot live as human beings. Human rights and fundamental freedoms allow us to fully develop and use our human qualities, our intelligence, our talents and our spiritual and other needs”, their being met is, therefore, not a matter of choice, but an imperative of basic justice.

The human rights need to be applied to the family for enriching family life. Denial of them creates conditions of exploitation, deprivation and destitution of families and their individual members. Family responsibilities are as important as family rights to ensure family happiness.

The following human rights instruments are applicable to the family:

The U.N. Declaration of Human Rights (1948);

The U.N. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (1976); and

The U.N. Convention of the Rights of the Child (1989).

Desai (1993) has applied these human rights instruments to family and added family responsibilities at three levels:

The individual's right to have a family;

The individual's rights and responsibilities within the family, and

The family's rights and responsibilities with reference to its environment. These family rights and responsibilities can form the goals for family well-being that cut across the diverse forms of families.

### **The Individual's Right to Have a Family**

- 1) Every child has the right to be reached by his or her natural family. Parents have the primary responsibility to rear their children.
- 2) Every adult has the right to marry and form a family
- 3) Every elderly person has the right to be cared by his or her children.

### **The Individual's Rights and Responsibilities within the Family**

There are natural humane and caring qualities in family relationships. These may be used and strengthened by promoting and protecting every individual's rights for status, worth and dignity; equality and nondiscrimination; freedom and choices in family life; social security from family members; and protection from family abuse and violence. It is the responsibility of every individual, family, community and the state to promote and protect these rights. Every individual has responsibility to enrich family interactions. These rights and responsibilities are further elaborated below.

- 1) Every family member is equal in dignity and worth, irrespective of age and gender. Every family member, therefore, has the right to equal allocation of family resources, and equal responsibility towards household work.
- 2) Both the married partners have the right to gender equality in marriage with respect to monogamy, role, power and status; parenting, guardianship and custody of children; title to matrimonial home and property; and dissolution of marriage and division of matrimonial property.
- 3) Every family member has the right to freedom and choice in family life.
- 4) Every family member has the right to care and support from other family members in crisis events such as disability, illness and in old age.
- 5) Every family member has the right to life and security of persons.
- 6) Individuals need legal protection of the state for their rights within the family.
- 7) It is the responsibility of every family to register birth, marriage and death of every family member.
- 8) It is the responsibility of every family member to promote sensitivity and responsiveness, positive communication patterns, democratic decision making and peaceful and nonviolent approaches for resolving conflicts in their family interactions.

### **Planning for Family and for Responsible Parenthood**

A marriage undergoes a transformation when husband and wife suddenly become parents. The word “suddenly” is appropriate because the transition to the status of parent is quite unlike the transitions to other major

statuses in life, such as marriage or an occupation. People have relatively greater preparation and experience for entering marriage or an occupation, and they also have a grace period during which they gradually assume the responsibilities of the new status.

The transition to parenthood is quite different and often dramatic. It may constitute a crisis in the life of married couple, as it forces them to take on an important and demanding responsibility. The task of parenting allows the wife and husband much less time to devote to each other. And as the child becomes an interacting individual in the family, complex relationship pattern emerge.

Once the motivation for the good life is created, couples will be able to come to mutual decision regarding each pregnancy so that every child in the family will be a 'wanted child' and not a "product of chance". Every pregnancy will place husband and wife in a new human setting and far from experiencing pregnancy as a pathological condition. It will place them in a revived experience at the very centre of human destiny.

The decision to marry and to bring a child into the world is the couple's decision. They must responsibly prepare for parenthood so as to provide for themselves and their children in an environment in which they can grow personally and as a family.

Marriage and conjugal love are by their nature ordained towards the begetting and educating of children. Children are really the supreme gift of marriage and contribute very substantially to the welfare of their parents. Hence conjugal love requires in husband and wife an awareness of their mission of "responsible parenthood".

### **Aspects of Responsible Parenthood**

- Responsible parenthood means the knowledge and respect of their functions.

- The deliberate and generous decision to raise a family, or by the decision, made for some motives and with due respect for the moral law, to avoid for the time being or even for an indeterminate period, a new birth.
- The responsible exercise of parenthood implies that husband and wife recognize fully their own duties towards God, towards themselves, towards the family and towards the society, in a correct hierarchy of values.

**Future Trends**

The future of parenthood will include a greater awareness of what the role involves, increased sharing by both spouses of the birth of their child or children, new techniques of delivery, and more emphasis on fatherhood. There is need for preparation for parenthood classes available to potential parents as Lamaze classes (the Lamaze method emphasizes active involvement of the father in the delivery process).

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, first we introduced you to the essential characteristics of the basic group in a society, i.e. the family. Also we have dealt with the interactions taking place in the family and the developmental stages of the family which is otherwise called as Family Life Cycle.

The Social change which taken place in India due to westernization and industrialization, has affected the family and in turn the various alternative patterns of the family have emerged. Alongside, there are many problems, confronting the family. We have briefly mentioned the various intervention programmes, and also the various policies, laws and programmes existing for the welfare of the Indian family.

Finally, we have dealt with the Human rights within the family and the need for Family Life Education for the family life enrichment. The basic focus of this unit is the planning which is very important in family life and we have emphasized the concepts of Responsible/Planned Parenthood.

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