
UNIT 7: STRUCTURE AND CHANGE: FACTORS AND DYNAMICS*

Structure

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7.0 OBJECTIVE

The objective of this unit is to enable students be able to:

- Discuss the variations in family in terms of their structure and form;
- Critically analyse theories of change in family and apply a joint-nuclear continuum to understand structure of family in India;
- Identify the major forces responsible for change in the institution of family;
- Explain the new forms of family which are not based only on biology.

7.1 INTRODUCTION

Family is the universal and basic social institutions. As a social institution family can be seen both as an ideal and as a reality. The family system is an ideal because it serves as a guide to behaviour and as values, or a set of norms that are passed down from generation to generation. The structure of family is patterned and re-patterned over time within a society and in a particular group. Mating, procreation, and the associated activities of child rearing necessitate personal closeness, habitation in the same dwelling, and cooperation of the members in the provision of domestic services, therefore nuclear families are normally residential units. Families may own property and engage in economic production simultaneously. Historical family study has successfully dismantled earlier myths about family behaviour in the past over the last two decades. Economic, political and social forces have brought about changes in the specific characteristics of family units in a particular way. As a result, the size, composition and behaviour of the members of a family have changed over time in different society.

In unit 2 which is on family you must have already read the way in which family as a social institution has been conceptualised by anthropologist and sociologists. The various terms such as household, domestic group and kin as related terms to family were also discussed. In this unit we will look at different types of family to understand how family structures differ in different societies. Family as social institution had undergone changes and there is variation on authority and organisational structure. A number of theories have been given to comprehend the dynamic of change, especially the impact of economic processes, industrialisation and urbanisation, social and cultural changes and change due to enactment of new legislation and government policies.

7.2 TYPES OF FAMILY

Despite the fact that the family is a universal institution, its structure and form varies from one society to another. Sociologists and anthropologists have described the different type of families that exist in different cultures. Classification on the types of family can be done on the basis of i) size and composition, ii) generation and iii) membership.

7.2.1 Size and Composition

Depending on the size and composition family can be classified into:-

- a) **Nuclear family**—the most basic and ideal form of family, found all across the world. A husband and wife, as well as their unmarried offspring, make up a nuclear family. This is a basic family unit, and the family size is tiny. This is a self-contained, autonomous unit. This is often referred to as the major family. Its components are orientation and procreation.
- b) **Conjugal family**—family comprising of a husband and wife who have been married for a long time with or without children. The composition of the family is smaller than joint family.
- c) **Extended or joint family**—this type of family has a larger size than a nuclear family. It's also possible to have more than two nuclear families. This is the most prevalent sort of Hindu joint family. Father, mother, their sons and wives, unmarried daughters, grand children, grandfather, uncles, aunts, and their children, father's parallel cousins and their offspring, and so on make up

this family.

7.2.2 Generation Principle

Depending on the number of generation of members comprising the family, it can be classified into two or three generational family. In simple society, family could also be upto four generation, tracing backwards from great grandfather, father, son and grandson.

a) **Two generation family**- this consist of members from two generation- father, mother and their children or mother and daughter/ father and son. Murdock described the nuclear family as a two-generation family made up of the mother, her husband, and their children. Such kind can be found in both hunter-gatherer and industrial societies.

b) **Three generation family**- An extended family consisting of members from three generation, grandfather, father, his brothers and their children in patrilineal society and grandmother, mother and daughter forms a unit in matrilineal family.

7.2.3 Membership

On the basis of how members are assigned to the group, Murdoch classified family into two types:-

a) **Family of Orientation**-A family in which one is born. The family serves to socially situate children and plays an important part in their socialisation. This is understanding of family from the perspective of children.

b) **Family of procreation**- A marriage-based family is referred to as a procreation family. The family functions to produce and socialise children. When individual grow up and marry, they initiate the formation of new conjugal family through copulation and procreation.

7.3 VARIATIONS IN THE STRUCTURE OF FAMILY

Family as an institution is also dynamic, that is, there has been continuous shifts and continuities in the structure of the family. The variation can be understood at two level, first at the level of authority - whether authority in the hands of men or women and second in terms of authority structure, that is kinship relations between members residing together. The most common structure used in anthropology to understand the nature of change in family is joint and nuclear family.

7.3.1 Authority structure

The authority structure within the family differs from society to society and is largely determined by the line of descent. On this basis two types of family can be identified:

1. *Patrilineal or patriarchal Family*

A patrilineal society is one which follows unilineal principle of descent, it traced through the male line. In patrilineal society the authority is in the hands of eldest male member or the father (patriarch) Therefore patriarchal family is one where the paternal side holds all of the power. The patriarch exercises his control over

the family members and is the guardian of the family property and preside over the household's religious rites. He has complete and indisputable authority over his wife, sons, and daughters in the developed patriarchal system of the past. The residence pattern in patrilineal society is patrilocal (residence with groom's father) or virilocal (residence with husband's relatives) which leads to women transiting from their maternal home to the marital family. The patriarchal family has existed in numerous forms. In some cases, such as in India, it is part of a joint family. It is sometimes a 'stem-family,' with only one of the sons moving his family into the paternal home.

2. Matrilineal of Matriarchal family

In societies where the female line is used to trace descent, and property is likewise passed down through the female line of ancestry. This type is known as matrilineal family. Matriarchal family is a type of family in which the wife or mother is the chief authoritative figure. The matriarchal family system implies that the mother, not the father, is in charge of the household. Women have the right to perform religious rites in this type of family, and the husband resides in the wife's home. The status, name, and sometimes inheritance are passed down through the female line in a matriarchal family, also known as a maternal family or a mother-right family. The Khasi and Garo tribes of Assam and Meghalaya, as well as the Nayars of Malabar in Kerala, have this type of family.

In anthropology, while looking at the position of men and women many scholars have highlighted the privileged position of mother's brother (MB) and sister's son where they are regarded as more authoritative than father of the ego. That is though line of descent and residence is through female, power and authority passes from female to male. Audrey Richard refers to this ambiguity as 'matrilineal puzzle' (Richards, 1950). It refers to the conflict generated in a matrilineal society due to competition between in-marrying husbands/fathers and maternal brothers due to prevalence of principle of female succession and masculine authority. Due to the ambiguity of women's authority in matrilineal society, many scholars have suggested that a matriarchal society is utopian and is rarely found.

7.3.2 Organisational Structure

A nuclear family consists of two generations of a family living in the same home. In most cases, this meant that parents and their children shared a home. An extended nuclear family was defined as joint family. Therefore joint family is the extension of nuclear family horizontally as well as vertically i.e. lineal and collateral. The family becomes a joint when more relatives are added to the nuclear family. As a result, a joint family includes nuclear family as well as all relatives living in the same household from the husband's and/or wife's side. Joint family is also known as extended family. The phrases joint and extended are used interchangeable in sociology and social anthropology. A joint family is made up of multiple nuclear families who are linked by an extended parent-child tie. It could also suggest an increases in the number of siblings of a particular sex, as well as their spouses and children. When ancestry is traced through the male line, the extended/joint family is based on the extension of the father-son relationship. On the other hand, a matrilineal extended/joint family is formed through an extension based on a matrilineal line.

Irawati Karve defined joint family as a corporate group. Joint family is a group

of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked in one kitchen, who hold property in common, participate in common family worship and are related to one another as some particular type of kindred (Karve 1968). Joint family often symbolises a close bond between members of family. Following are the characteristic features of joint family:

- Shared residence
- Joint kitchen
- Large in size and composition
- Affinal and consanguinal relatives are important
- Principle of seniority on age and gender
- Distribution of responsibility on basis of position
- Mutual rights and obligations
- An economic unit of consumption
- Common religious functions and rituals

Joint family is typically found in India, China, Japan because a large population in these countries are connected to traditions in agriculture. Joint family is one of the three most important fundamental institutions in Indian society, the other two being caste and village. Thus 'joint family' is the norm for familial institutions in India. Joint family consists of father, his married sons, all stay together with their wives and unmarried children. The Hindu joint family is one notable institution. Large joint family existence reflects the rich culture of Hindu society. The Hindu joint family is a group consisting of known ancestors and relatives and exists in large size in which members generally live together under the same roof, eat, cooked food in one hearth, hold property in common and who participate in common family worship and are related to each other. In this type of family each child gets special attention, love, and care under the guidance of grandparents or elders. Children learn, and in the process imbibe cultural, traditional, social values from their elders in a joint family.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What is matrilineal puzzle? How does it affect the position of women in society?

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2. Give two characteristics of joint family.

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7.4 FACTORS FOR VARIATIONS

Generally the factors leading to changes in the family are discussed in the context of the issue of disintegration of the joint family.

7.4.1 Monetisation of the Economy

The shift from barter exchange to exchange of goods and services through cash, diversification of occupational opportunities for employment in varied spheres, improvement in information and communication technologies not only brought about a change in the economy but also impacted the structure of family. The monetisation of economy was the outcome of colonial policy but it drastically transformed Indian social structure.

7.4.2 Industrialisation and Urbanisation

India's family life pattern was seen to be shifting as a result of the two processes of industrialisation and urbanisation. The acculturation of an urban lifestyle resulted from people migrating from rural to urban areas to work in industries. Density of people, heterogeneity of population, job diversity and specialisation, and complex division of labour are all hallmarks of urban living. Better access to educational and healthcare institutions is also part of the plan. In addition to a lack of living space, urban life is characterised by impersonality and anonymity. A continuous movement of people into cities seeking education, jobs, medical treatment, and other services has occurred, partly as a result of population pressure on land. Due to family members' transit from one location to another, residential separation has an impact on the size and composition of the family.

7.4.3 Social and Cultural Factors

Opportunities for higher education arose in a big degree during British period once again. In areas of education, all castes and communities had access to the English facilities. Some of those who were able to gain access to and exposure to English-medium education (especially exposure to individualistic, liberal, and humanitarian ideas) began to question some Hindu rituals and traditions relating to child marriage, denial of women's educational rights, property rights, and ill-treatment of widows. Educated young men not only desired to marry at a far later age than family tradition demanded, but they also wanted to marry women with some educational background. Uneducated or less educated women were anticipated to have a different kind of influence on family matters than educated women (especially college educated women).

7.4.4 Legislative Measure and Government Policies

Employment, education, marriage, and property laws have had an impact on the family system in certain way. The Indian Workmen Compensation Act (1923) and the Minimum Wages Act 1948, both passed for the benefit of the employee, aimed to decrease the economic reliance of members on the joint family for economic support. The Hindu Gains of Learning Act of 1930 declared that the property acquired by a Hindu as a result of his education was his personal property, even if his education had been paid for by the joint family. In 1929, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in order to prevent child marriages. It determine the limit age for boys and girls to marry at 18 and 14 years old, respectively. This Act also aimed to provide women more opportunities for education. In India, the minimum age for marriage is now 21 years old for boys and 18 years old for girls. Post-independence, the Hindu Succession Act of 1956 was passed, giving a daughter and a son equal rights to their father's property. These statutes challenged the inheritance patterns that existed in joint families before to the Act's enactment, as well as the family's dependence on women.

The other factors which have been held responsible for encouraging smaller

units are

- i) Opportunities for higher education
- ii) Heightened ambitions
- iii) increased occupational mobility
- iv). Growing sense of individuality (i.e., thinking in terms of individual needs and ambitions rather than in terms of kinship needs and larger familial requirements).

7.5 THEORIES OF CHANGE: FROM JOINT TO NUCLEAR

The structure of family has been changing due to the impact of economic, cultural and political changes. Different theorists have tried to explain the changes taking place- evolutionary theories see changes from large size family to conjugal family. Nuclearisation theory uses the evolutionary framework to explain the emergence of nuclear family. In the context of India, the evolutionary plane fails to describe the dynamics of change and hence a continuum is used to explain the joint and nuclear as different stages in the development cycle.

7.5.1 Evolutionary Theories

The evolutionary theory of the change in the family structure was summed up by the work of Maine, 'Ancient Law' (1861) where he argued for change from status to contract. The transition from status to contract was visualised as a shift in the institution of marriage (centered on family and kin (i.e. status orientation) to individual choice (i.e. contract orientation). Evolution from status to contract was used by many thinkers to explain the emergence of nuclear family. The joint family based on kin relation gave way to conjugal or nuclear family. A general theory of social evolution was used to explain the development of the nuclear family. Structure differentiation is a process that occurs during the evolution of societies. As a result, a number of new social institutions emerged, each specialising in a role. Many of the functions of the traditional family have been taken over by new specialised institutions such as schools, colleges, workplaces, and hospitals in these conditions. This has aided the formation of nuclear families.

7.5.2 Theory of Nuclearisation-From Joint to Nuclear

The genesis of family nuclearisation theories may be traced back to the start of the industrial revolution, when the process of modernisation impacted the structure of family. Nuclearisation of the family is considered as the outcome of its impact. Such an interpretation presupposes existence of non-nuclear family. Industrialisation and urbanisation has altered traditional family institutions which was described as 'joint' and led to formation of single conjugal family labelled as nuclear family. Many sociologists argued that industrialisation, urbanisation, spatial and social mobility, individualism, and the increase of women's education and position have resulted in significant changes in family structure. According to Talcott Parsons (1956), the emergence of modern industrial society led to the growth of "isolated nuclear family", one which is "structurally isolated" because it's not part of a larger kinship network.

Goode (1968) agrees with Parsons that rising industrialisation is weakening extended family and kinship networks. He does not, however, believe that industrialisation is the root cause of the disintegration of extended family ties.

The move to an industrial family has been far faster than projected by the degree of modernisation. Goode argues that the nuclear family's philosophy is what has aided its spread, particularly in developing countries. This is due to the high regard with which western lifestyles and values are held in many of these emerging countries.

According to Engels (1884-1972), there was no family during the early days of communism, and promiscuity reigned dominant. With the development of private property and state institutions, the monogamous nuclear family developed. The emergence of private property required its transfer to legal heirs. To control female sexuality and assure legitimate progeny, the monogamous nuclear family evolved.

7.5.3 Joint-Nuclear Continuum

In contrast to the theory of nuclearisation theory, sociologists in India have argued that the nuclear and the joint family systems in India has to be seen on a continuum. K.M. Kapadia (1972) has highlighted the fact that families who have moved to cities maintain their ties to their joint family in the village or town. They do not function as an isolated or completely separate unit in the city, even after they residentially separate themselves from a joint family and form a nuclear family. The kinship orientation and joint family ethic are retained in these families. The physical presence of family at specific events such as birth, marriage, death, illness, and so on demonstrates this. Sometimes members of city families travel to the village to participate in such celebrations, and sometimes members of rural family's journey to the city to participate in the functions, ceremonies, and activities of their kin. In the performance of particular roles, the joint family ethic is quite clear.

Kolenda in her book 'Regional Differences in Family Structure in India' (1987: 4) argued that joint family got strengthened due to industrialisation. In joint family the economic conditions has to be good enough to support large numbers of its members. Industrialisation provided this as more hands were needed in a renewed family enterprise in which kin helped one another in striving for upward mobility.

I.P. Desai, in his famous work, *Some Aspects of Family in Mahuva* (1964), points out that in Gujarat 'a residentially nuclear group is embedded in social, cultural and other non-social environments, which are not the same as those in the societies of the West. M.N Srinivas (1969) in his study of social change in India also rejects the theory of evolution from to nuclear family. He says: "Even if figures of urban areas show a dwindling in the size of the family, it does not mean that the joint family system is breaking down. Urban families are frequently not autonomous entities but limbs of bigger families situated elsewhere. Any crisis in the parent or offspring family will be faced as a common problem. Weddings, funerals and other ceremonies are usually celebrated in the parents household. There is occasionally transference of persons from one family to the other" (Srinivas, 1969:72)

A.M. Shah in his book *Family in India* questions the assumptions the evolutionary theories suggested towards a breakdown of joint family to nuclear family. His study of family life in a Gujrat village suggested for re-defining 'joint family'. According to Shah, industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation rather than leading to decline led to increase in the size of households. Further he

asserts that though the number of nuclear family may have increases yet the commitment to the values and norms of joint family prevails in both rural and urban India.

According to a number of Indian sociologists (Desai ;1964, Madan:1965, Dube:1955) the dynamic of family structure cannot be understood with reference to the Western binaries of joint and nuclear. Instead despite process of change, the two coexists and therefore change in the structure has to be understood as joint-nuclear continuum. Joint and nuclear families can be viewed as two stages on a cycle's continuum. This implies that these two forms are part of a developmental cycle. In terms of size, composition, role and status of individuals, family and society norms and punishments, the structure of a family evolves over time. They contend that, due to the phenomenon of fission and fusion, family should be described as a process that goes through cyclical changes. Death and partition "deplete" family structure from joint to nuclear, but marriage and birth "expand" family structure from nuclear to joint. Relatives that comprise a combined family are generally maintained together.

In India, there are probably few families that are perennially nuclear in nature. Additional family members, such as an elderly parent or unmarried brothers and sisters, are frequently invited to live with a man, his wife, and their unmarried children. The nuclear family, then, is a stage in a cycle that includes other types of family units. Even when certain causes have made it impossible to establish a nuclear family, ritual, economic, and sentimental bonds with relatives who form up a joint family are often maintained for a long time.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Do you agree with nuclearisation theory that joint family has disintegrated to nuclear family?
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2. What is development cycle? How can it be used to understand change in the structure of the family?
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7.6 EMERGENCE OF NEW FORMS OF FAMILY

Families have been changing and affected by multiple forces and variables like industrialisation, growing independence of women, rise in levels of education, economic change, legal regulations, feminist critiques and political discourses. Since the 1970s, changes in the structure of the family has been taking place. There was the emergence of new forms of family like single parent family, same-sex or family by choice and co-habitation without marriage. These forms were referred as 'non-traditional' family as it did not fit into the classical definition of family formed on basis of biology and alliance. However, many in academics preferred to use the term 'new families' to refer to forms of family that did not exist or were not visible until the later part of twentieth century. This section focuses on the some of the multiple patterns and arrangements that mark a shift

from conventional understanding of family

7.6.1 Family by Choice

The term 'families we choose' was used by Kath Weston to describe queer forms of kinship different to the biological family. Also described as 'families we create' suggests that individuals have a choice in the formation of family. According to Weston, in gay and lesbian communities in 1980s San Francisco, "Kinship began to seem more like an effort and a choice than a permanent, unshakable bond or a birth-right." Weston's (1991) study provides a significant basis to re-conceptualise and redefine the concept of family and kinship in view of relationships between gay men and lesbian women. It questions the genealogical basis to kinship by bringing it to scrutiny and de-naturalising it, implying that kinship need not be postulated taking procreation as the base or center piece. The study reflects on the non-procreative, non-material and symbolic relations of lesbian women and gay men in the U.S., which provide a critique of kinship and its underlying assumptions.

The family by choice is an illustration of the fact that biology is not the only defining feature of kinship. People can be kin without sharing blood and marital relation. Kinship is based on love and enduring solidarity expected to characterise these familial relationship. Further it also negates the ideas of procreation based on heterosexual identities. Family is no longer seen only as unit for reproduction rather it can be a non-procreative unit. Such family ties are based on ideology of choice and love, and stand in opposition to biological model of kinship. The families of choice therefore, emerge as an important basis to question biologically modelled heterosexual domain of kinship, which has failed to provide support and care to lesbian women and men.

7.6.2 Live-In Relationship

Live-in relations, set a departure from the conjugally established familial units, have emerged as preferred form of arrangements among many. Live-in relationship i.e. cohabitation is an arrangement whereby two adults decide to live together on a long term permanent basis in an emotionally and sexually intimate relationship outside the wedlock of marriage. The live-in relation may be entered into both by heterosexual and homosexual couples. There is a preference for living-in relation among the younger generation in the urban cities across the globe. There are a number of reasons that may govern individual's preference for live-in relations. It finds its foundation in the fundamental right of an individual to have the liberty to choose his or her partner. For many it has emerged as a basis to assess the mutual compatibility or to establish financial security prior to entering into a legalised wedlock. For some it provides an escape from marriage expenses. Also, those unable to enter into marital alliance may enter in live-in relation for e.g. members of same sex, interreligious or interracial group.

However, live-in relations are seen by many as immoral and viewed encouraging free-sexual behaviour. They are seen as threat to the traditional institution of marriage and family. Added to this, the children born from these relationships are pointed as to have less secure future. In short, these relations are viewed as threat to the legally wedded wife and her children and are seen to give encouragement to extra-marital affairs. Such relations have also been contested on medical grounds and pointed as responsible for rising HIV/AIDs cases.

The live-in relations are considered far short-lived than relations based on marriage as they do not require legal recourse to be terminated. Though live-in relationships have been accorded legitimacy along with children born from such arrangements, the latter is not entitled to claim inheritance in Hindu ancestral coparcenary property (in the undivided joint Hindu family) and can only claim a share in the parent's self-acquired property.

7.6.3 Surrogacy Families

The term 'surrogacy family' is used to refer to a family formed with the help of third party (generally a women) who rents her womb for the gestation of the child. The surrogate enters into a legal contract with the fertility clinic that after the delivery of the child, she will have no claim or relations. Surrogacy family functions as traditional family but the only difference is that the notion of maternity is complicated. Motherhood is not defined by the period of gestation but by the capacity to rent a womb. The absence of gestational link between mother and child does not affect their physical and emotional relationship. Surrogacy provides an opportunity to individuals who due to medical reasons cannot conceive, to same-sex partners and those who are want to bring up children without necessarily marrying.

7.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt that the structure of family gives rise to different types of family depending on size, composition, generation and membership. Family as social institution had undergone changes and there is variation on authority and organisational structure. A number of theories have been given to comprehend the dynamic of change, especially the impact of economic processes, industrialisation and urbanisation. Social and cultural changes and change due to enactment of new legislation and government policies are also factors that change nature of families. Due to these changes there is the emergence of number of new family forms which are established not on the basis of biology, example are : homosexual families, live in relationship and surrogacy families.

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7.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Matrilineal Puzzle is a term coined by Audrey Richard. It refers to the conflict generated in a matrilineal society due to competition between in-marrying husbands/fathers and maternal brothers due to prevalence of principle of female succession and masculine authority. Due to the ambiguity of women's authority in matrilineal society, many scholars have suggested that a matriarchal society is utopian and is rarely found.
2. Two characteristics of joint family are:
 - i. Joint family often symbolises a close bond between members of family.
 - ii. Joint family exists in large size in which members generally live together under the same roof, eat, cooked food in one hearth, hold property in common and who participate in common family worship and are related to each other.

Check Your Progress 2

1. According to the nuclearisation theory, industrialisation and urbanisation altered traditional family institutions which was described as 'joint' and led to formation of single conjugal family labelled as nuclear family. However this theory applies more to Western society where the peasantry shifted to industry and established singular-conjugal family. In the context of India such an evolutionary pattern has not been witnessed and the concept of joint is complex and found in industrialized and urbanised society.
2. Joint and nuclear families can be viewed as two stages on a cycle's continuum. This implies that these two forms are part of a developmental cycle. In terms of size, composition, role and status of individuals, family and society norms and punishments, the structure of a family evolves over time. They contend that, due to the phenomenon of fission and fusion, family should be described as a process that goes through cyclical changes. Death and partition "deplete" family structure from joint to nuclear, but marriage and birth "expand" family structure from nuclear to joint. Relatives that comprise a combined family are generally maintained together.