

**RECLAIMING REALITY:  
A SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS OF FAMILY  
IN THE CONTEXT OF DEVELOPMENT**

*Dissertation submitted to the Jawaharlal Nehru University in Partial  
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**MASTER OF PHILOSOPHY**

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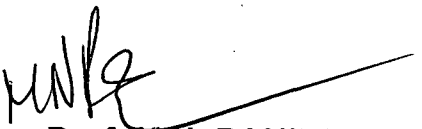
**CERTIFICATE**

This Dissertation entitled "**Reclaiming Reality: A Sociological Analysis of Family in the Context of Development**" submitted in partial fulfillment for the M.Phil degree of this university has not been previously submitted for any other degree of this or any other university and is my original work.

  
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We recommend that the dissertation be placed before the examiners for evaluation.

  
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***DEDICATED***

***TO***

***MY LOVING PARENTS***

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# CONTENTS

	Page No.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	
1. INTRODUCTION	1
2. ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE FAMILY	10
3. FAMILY STUDIES IN INDIA: APPROACHES AND CONTENTS	46
4. DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND GENDER ROLES WITHIN THE FAMILY	70
5. CONCLUSION	111
BIBLIOGRAPHY	121

## **Chapter- I**

### **INTRODUCTION**

The family is the only social institution other than religion which is formally developed in all societies. It is one of the most powerful forms of informal social control and is the fundamental instrumental foundation of the larger social structure and all the other institutions depend on its contributions. The content of the socialization process is the cultural tradition of the society. Philosophers and social analysts have noted that society as a social system is made up of families and that the peculiarities of a given society can be described by outlining its family relations. Hence, family attracted much attention from sociologists and anthropologists who explored its functions, structure, history and evolution. The studies were so vast and varied that they even examined class, caste and regional differences in family patterns. A number of eminent social scientists like Srinivas (1966), Desai (1964), Kapadia (1966), Shah (1964), Madan (1962) and others have made valuable contributions in this field.

Their writings obscured the relationships maintained by the individual within the family and the society at large due to the all-powerful ideal of the family form that gained persistent ideological dominance. Most of these studies have not take into account the interpretation and inference of role relationships within the family, particularly the relations between the male

and female members. Doubtless, these interactions determine the solidarity of the family, but they fail to throw light on the gender dynamics within the family. It was invariably assumed that in a joint family the eldest male authority governs everybody and a woman's role was in holding the family together. Kinship studies is one area in which there is some discussion on women and gender.

In analyzing the effect of the development policies and programmes on the family, these scientists were concerned with the changing patterns of the family and have confined themselves mostly to the question of joint family becoming nuclear. It was always taken for granted that a woman's role would change with economic development as they enter the work force. Technology and new policies were expected to liberate them from their dependency positions and hence women in particular have never been the focus of these studies. It was the feminist scholars of the twentieth century who first attempted to study women and their relationship with men in the process of development. They deconstructed the concept of sharing and the idea of a harmonious family, and emphasized on the gap between the members, family ideologies and household arrangements.

The current study, begins with an analysis of the development process i.e., to see if development has brought about any perceivable change in family and family roles. To understand

development, its process and features, it is pertinent to discern the theories of development.

The first chapter looks at the concept of development and how development perspectives shape studies on the family. Here, the aim is to show how the theories of development have provided the framework for studying the family. Development was largely conceived purely in economic terms (meaning growth plus change) and that industrialization was considered as a step towards development. Majority of the theorists then, had worked on the attitudinal and institutional factors that would propel industrialization. These theorists were criticized for their adoption of the western paradigm to measure the growth of other countries particularly the third world countries. They neglected the relativistic approach and functionality of alternative patterns of development. The underdevelopment theorists debunked the juxtaposition of tradition to modern, developed to underdeveloped and drew attention to the positive aspects of tradition that usually do not get a balanced assessment. They questioned the concept of 'modern' and 'development' in the contemporary world which is characterized by depersonalization of labour, growth of slums etc.

It was the myth of the inevitability of development and the west signifying 'the developed', that made the study of other structures and institutions tilt towards their contribution towards development. The 'developed west' was used as a



standard against which development in the rest of the world was evaluated. Sociologists too did not escape from this modernity spell. They studied family in its evolutionary model, advocating the nuclear family pattern as the ultimate model that adapts itself to industrialization.

The functionalist model focussed on the functions of family in the wake of industrialization. Accordingly the family has become more specialized and performs functions directly on behalf of the personality that would help the individual adapt himself to universal expectations of the society and specific value patterns of the family. The modern societies are seen to be best served by the conjugal family that integrates itself with the demands of the industrial society by its emphasis on emotionality, free choice of career, mobility etc. which is an important source of economic progress and technological development. The compatibility of the nuclear family with that of changing culture was studied and now the emphasis was more on conjugal relationship and strengthening of bonds rather than with entire kinship units.

The conflict school, too, adopted a progressive approach towards the family, but their functions were studied in terms of their ideological reproduction of the economic organisation. They view the family as a microunit of the conflict that is found in the society at large. The contemporary Marxists have therefore recommended the abolition of the family so as to establish a

new system of economic organisation that would entrust community ownership. The family was seen as a device for indoctrinating the values of the ruling class therefore stifling individual development. Infact, the conflict model paid attention to women as a category who are subjugated by men and the necessities of the ruling class. The overthrow of the family as an institution was suggested to liberate women from the traditional roles and this was possible only by changing the present economic order. Thus economic institutions become the edifice of all other institutions and even the micro interactions among individuals are studied as a part of the macro economic order.

As the general theories of development have predicted a change in family and kinship relations along the lines of the west, the persistence of the joint family is considered as an indicator of the failure of economic development. The institution of joint family has undoubtedly been assumed to be the social reality of traditional Indian society and therefore with the advent of industrialization, it is assumed that in contemporary times the joint family is giving way to the nuclear family. This perception however, has been challenged by Indian sociologists who have based their conclusions on empirical fieldwork.

The second chapter reviews some of the Indian studies, and throws light on the preoccupation of the Indian sociologists with the structure of the family, which had been the primary focus of western sociologists and development theorists. The variation in

the findings of these studies can be attributed to the lack of uniformity in the definition of the 'household' and 'family' and the number of generations contained in them. Some sociologists have defined joint family in terms of generation depth, others consider it as a property holding group, a ritual performing group, etc. and still others extended the functionality of the kin to further obligations.

There has been no unanimity on the definition of a joint family, and the availability and interpretation of the quantitative data has also contributed to the confusion about the concept of the disintegration of joint family. An important fact in our assessment of the strength of the joint family, which should not be lost sight of, is that a family which appears to be nuclear is infact not and on closer investigation it may turn out to be a part of a joint family. Although, the joint family has not disintegrated as is commonly assumed, the traditional type is passing through severe stress and strains.

The rethinking on the study of family and its inter-relationship is analyzed elaborately in the third chapter. It was only in the latter half of the twentieth century that some feminist scholars who were not satisfied with the conflict model began to have a closer look at the intra family relationships. Women were found to be in a subordinated position and their roles were to a large extent dictated by conventional norms inspite of development. Dimensions of power and the changing roles of women have

never been the focus of family studies, since it was always assumed that women's status and roles would change with economic development. Moreover, women and kinship system were seen as two separate domains and women were seen as mere reproducers. The continuum between intra-household, extra-household and wider community relations were ignored.

Feminist scholars challenged mainstream views for their groundless assumption of family being a homogenous welfare group and their neglect of gender and conflictual relationships within it. They strongly criticized the western paradigm of development adopted by the state that has led to the marginalisation and deterioration of the status of women. Family was criticized for being internally fractured in terms of individual and structural endowments resulting in the inequitable access to development resources among the sexes.

Even women's employment and entry into the economic world hardly made any change in their status. Their role and role expectations were created by the values, beliefs and ideas of the traditional society. Even in the market sector, they are exploited in terms of wages, job placement etc. Development has also enlarged the traditional feminine role of women. Consumerism, specialization of family functions, development of child psychology as a discipline, etc. have elevated the importance of women's traditional role in the household like childcare.

The technology and development projects too have made women vulnerable to the demands and exploitation of family members. Technological implementations in the field of agriculture, industry, etc. have displaced women labour and has taken away their marginal freedom and subordinated them to the position of mere dependents.

The new development policies introduced by the government have also pushed women to the periphery and they have been under lasting physical and emotional strains. They are deprived of basic amenities like nutrition, health care, sanitation etc. Moreover, the demand on their roles as the caretaker of the household and child has enlarged since they now allocate more time and energy in search of the scarce resources.

These studies done by feminist scholars then recommend a reinterpretation of the western pattern of development that would include the inter-household dynamics within the study of family and would do away with the false assumption of a 'glued together society'.

The existing paradigms on studies on families are thoroughly analyzed in this work and further recommendations for new and alternative paradigms are suggested. The current work largely attempts to study the condition of women under the impact of development and the consequences on family dynamics. Though the subject is vast, this work seeks to highlight a few key

aspects such as (1) the concept of development and its expected effect on family structure and family relations (2) The extent to which the study of the family by main stream sociologists were guided by the development theorists and thereby the preoccupation with the composition and form of family. (3) the lacunae in the early family studies as pointed out by the feminist scholars who attempted to study the role dynamics within the family. The analysis of these factors has been done with the available literature. There have been numerous studies on family and the current study has attempted to cover most of the but omission of a few herein may be excused. The current study is analytical and descriptive in nature and relies mainly on secondary sources like books, journals and other printed matter.

## CHAPTER-II

# ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND THE FAMILY

### **Concept and theories of development:**

The concept of 'development' has always been understood as economic development and economists focussed their attention primarily on economic growth. The basic idea was to make calculated input to ensure capital formation as well as raising of the output. In analysing the sharp turns that development theories have been taking since their evolution, Dube writes that in the first phase, development meant economic development and it was assumed that once the growth process gained momentum, an 'invisible hand' would take care of the distribution dimension. The 'trickle' down effect of growth would increasingly lead to a more equitable distribution. Meier in his book, *The Meaning of Development-A Note* observes, "development is taken to mean growth plus change there are essential qualitative dimensions in the development process that may be absent in the growth expansion of an economy through a simple widening process". Thus industrialisation was seen as the key to modernisation. European American models of development were set as examples. Development was said to start with economic development.

In the second phase, as Dube notes, the relationship between economic development and social change was more keenly realised and its consequence emphasised. It was felt that development and social change were hindered by institutional factors. Thus modification in the institution and attitudes were to be contemplated to facilitate the process of economic development.<sup>1</sup> This gave birth to the modernisation paradigm but, this phase was short lived, as Dube says despite the fact that it was tilted towards western capitalist model and rarely sought to examine the totality of the infinitely complex development process, posing some right question and finding tentative answers to them led to some rethinking on the question of development..

The third phase was born out of a strong reaction to the inadequate paradigm of development and modernisation and responded positively to more successful praxis of development. The question of unequal development was related to the unequal distribution of power. Human centred development emerged replacing growth centred development.

The fourth phase he terms it as a reflective phase, which tries to understand world order and also the national order. It redefines the culture of development in terms of the alienating character of technology, transfer of resources etc.

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<sup>1</sup> Dube, S.C. "Development Theory: From Present Impasse to a Fresh Orientation," in Iqbal Narain (ed.), *Development, Politics and Social Theory*. New Delhi, Sterling Publishers, p.6.



Hence, earlier progress was seen as inevitable. In understanding 'development' the unit of analysis was always the nation where the developing nations were placed in an evolutionary scale and at the apex were the modern western nations which would diffuse the ingredients of development. But, later on, the development scholars saw the 'inevitability' as a myth. They saw it as a manipulative idea to perpetuate the duality with a view of distracting the third world from a share of world resources. They saw development process to be unequal. Development was seen as maintaining a disguised colonial relationship with the underdeveloped.

In disciplines like Sociology, the concept of modernisation is used to convey a type of social change which originated in Europe in the sixteenth century. In the words of Pandey, "here the analysis of social change have mainly been concerned with the forces which were responsible for the drastic social transformation out of a feudal social order."<sup>2</sup> In this sense development denoted the transformation of 'traditional' or 'underdeveloped' countries in the direction of the economic or structural features of western countries .

William Smith, too in his book *Modernisation of a Traditional society* notes that in contemporary societies,

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<sup>2</sup> Pandey, Rajendra, *Sociology of Development: Concepts Theory and Issues*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1985, p. 95.

modernising a nation is the goal and it is invariably presumed that modern designates something good and something ideal. He, therefore, remarks, "what modern means is not really clear. Not everything new is good, further, not everything contemporary is modern".<sup>3</sup>

Thus 'modernisation' and 'tradition' were seen as a continuum in an evolutionary scale. While discussing modernisation and tradition, western countries became inevitably models of modernisation and non-western societies became models of tradition. M.N.Srinivas refuses to assume modernisation as a cumulative process since there may be set backs in them.

Hence, while development is seen as a movement towards a valued state, modernisation may be evaluated as good or evil, contributing towards development. Development is linked to progress, which involves a change from one state to another. Modernisation is an aspect of westernisation involving changes, which contrast with a previous traditional society.

In the past modernisation theories tried to equate modernisation and development. They focused on the new nation states and assumed that what had occurred earlier in the west need to be repeated in the other countries. But, it was in reaction to this, that underdevelopment theorists criticised them saying that the expansion of western capitalism had

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<sup>3</sup> Smith, Wilfred Cantwell, *Modernisation of a Traditional Society*, New Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p.7.

exploited the third world and had not paid any attention to the domestic structures of the country. They laid down that underdevelopment must be explained in reference to the structural position of the third world societies and not by the backwardness of their people, tradition, lack of education etc.<sup>4</sup>

In the same way, Smith, had criticised the approach of how modernising India is always defined in terms of what other nations have evolved. It is never comprehended by its own. For the development theories modernity would simply mean introducing western patterns. Smith postulates three reasons why India or any other non-western community can not just copy the west in its transformation:<sup>5</sup>

1. India is different and the paths to arrive at the goals may be different or the same procedure may lead to different results.
2. Modernisation in India cannot be completely given a western answer, since the west itself is in the process of change and cannot provide a significant answer. Western development is becoming self exploratory, self conscious etc.
3. He writes:<sup>6</sup>

Modernity is no longer a goal but a process, no longer something to adopt, but something to participate in. It is not something that one has, but something one does, and does well or badly.

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<sup>4</sup> Harrison, David, *The Sociology of Modernisation and Development*, New Delhi, Heritage Publications, 1989, p.35.

<sup>5</sup> Smith, op.cit., p.11.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*, p.15.

3. Modernising west cannot be achieved in isolation. It has to be integrated in the total modern world in which India itself would be a part.

Dube also criticises the western conception of modernisation. He points out that retardation of less developed countries is explained in terms of their tradition that is believed to obstruct modernisation. The more positive aspects of tradition does not get a balanced assessment and their potential to inspire modernisation remains unexamined.

Modernisation theorists like Levy and Hoselitz imply that there is some kind of fit between some role orientation and economic growth i.e. rationality, universalism and functional specificity.

This approach to modernisation basically comes from the fundamental tendency to think of 'modernity and tradition' as contrasting systems, an analysis which goes back to the evolutionary scheme of Tonnies' *'Gemeinschaft, Gessellschaft'* (Fundamental Concepts of Sociology, 1940 and Community and Association, 1955); Durkhiems' Mechanical and Organic solidarity (Division of Labour in Society, 1938) and Comte's three stages of society. Parsons, also in studying the change in social relationships in the transition from non-industrial to industrial state postulated the 'pattern variables' where individuals have to make a choice among the five variables which constitute a system. Hoselitz, who uses Parson's theories

argues that the advanced economies exhibit, predominantly the pattern variables of universalism, achievement orientation, functional specificity and collectivity orientation, While underdeveloped countries are characterised by their opposites i.e., by particularism, ascription, functional diffuseness and self orientation. This view postulates that for underdeveloped countries to develop they need to eliminate the pattern variables of traditional societies.

In a different vein, Max Weber, had tried to build up an entire framework of theory suggesting that the spirit of capitalism, which lay at the root of all 'development' was directly related to Protestant ethic and capitalism. In the *'Protestant Ethic and Spirit of Capitalism'*(1958) Weber's emphasis is on the relationship between religious radicalism and economic progress. He points out that Protestant Calvinism had creative certain values which allowed development like hard work, thrift, self-reliance and the inner urge to achieve economic success, there by creating the capitalist industrial west. It was the absence of this ethic that Weber considers as being responsible for the failure of other countries to develop capitalism which is considered as the first step towards development. Similarly, Parsons has based his assumptions on the dichotomy between tradition and modernity. By this an underdeveloped society is said to move towards the goals specified by the developed countries. The underdeveloped countries then are expected to

eliminate their social, political, cultural and institutional features, which are described as obstacles for development. One such obstacle is concerned with kinship organisation.

However it must be understood that not everyone argued that tradition and modernity are incompatible. For instance Srinivas's twin concept of Sanskritisation, and westernisation reveals that tradition and modernisation go hand in hand. Yogendra Singh too, in his book *Modernisation of Indian Tradition* has written about the adaptive process of tradition.

Mc Clelland, on the other hand offers a psychological view point of development. He sees the need for achievement or individual motivation as the cause of economic development. This he argues, vary between and within societies. He saw economic growth as a causal chain beginning from early childhood and socialisation process to that of personality factors that give rise to entrepreneurship .

The theories of economic development on which the whole edifice of modernisation has been based is dependent on the principles of economic liberalism. The concept of liberating the private enterprises from state control began towards the end of the eighteenth century. This became popularly known as *laissez faire* doctrine through which high level of economic growth could be achieved.

Adam Smith was the first to study economic structure as a whole and to outline some basic principles, which underlay the system and also determine each other. The central point in his ideas about growth is a specialisation or division of labour, which is stimulated by the interaction of demand and supply.

Rostow in his *Stages of economic growth* attempts to demarcate the stages of development and define development as the transition from traditional to modern society taking place through demarcated stages. Once stages are specified, it is assumed that all societies pass through these stages. He has introduced a scheme of five stages of economic growth. In this context he writes, "it is possible to identify within one of the five categories: the traditional society, the pre condition of take off, the take off, the drive to maturity and the stage 'of high mass consumption'.<sup>7</sup> The essence of the five stages of economic growth are as under: A traditional society has limited production functions but it is not static. They have to devote a high proportion of their resources due to their production limitations. The "precondition for take off" is the second stage where the traditional society takes time to transform itself through exploiting the fruits of modern science and in the finding of diminishing returns. In this stage the economic progress is possible which creates some necessary conditions

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<sup>7</sup> Rostow, W.W., *The Stages Of Economic Growth: A Non-Communist Manifesto*, London, Cambridge University Press, 1960, p.4.

for good ends like national dignity, private profit etc. Education for a few, at least is seen to change and suit the needs of modern economic activity. The third stage is the 'take off stage'. It is the stage of the intermission when the old blocks and resistance to steady growth are finally overcome. In it, the forces which construct economic progress come to dominate the society. The take off is defined as an industrial revolution tied directly to radical changes in methods of production. For the take off to be successful it must lead to sustained growth which implies changes in the economy and the society as a whole.<sup>8</sup>

When the society achieves maturity, Rostow characterises it as a welfare state where society moves to hold social welfare and security, the real income per head is said to increase and the structure of the working force not only changes the urban population but also proportion of the working population.

Myrdal presents an institutional approach to the analysis of development and underdevelopment. He sees a disparity between the developed and under developed countries and recommends a large scale planning which is necessary to integrate these differences. In this process, the developed countries should help the underdeveloped through the transfer of capital, planning and by raising their export prices. He hypothesises that the underdeveloped countries have wide inequalities. He advocates that equality is a pre requisite for

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<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 213-216.



development. The causes of inequality are both economic and non-economic factors. Therefore, he writes, "greater equality in underdeveloped countries is almost a condition for more rapid growth".<sup>9</sup> He also classified six conditions which are closely inter related.

1. out put and income.
2. Conditions of productions.
3. Levels of living.
4. Attitude towards life and work.
5. Institution.
6. Policies.

He notes that the movement of the whole social system upwards is what all of us infact mean by development".

Malthus in his book, *Principles of Political Economy* (1951) analysed development from the view point of population. The starting point of his theory is propensity i.e. passion between the sexes and the power of the earth to produce'. Malthus assumes that the population will constantly increase in geometric ratio and the food production in arithmetic ratio. The increase in real wages will tend to increase population by decrease in mortality. The resulting supply of labour will result in the reversal of this trend. Mortality would rise to that rate in which equilibrium between the size of labour force and the

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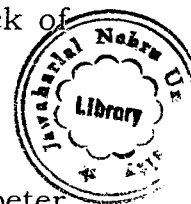
<sup>9</sup> Quoted in Pandey, op.cit., p.333.

demand of labour is re-established. According to him, population growth by itself is not sufficient to bring about economic development. Rather it is the result of the development process. Population growth increases wealth only if it increases effective demand. And it is increase in effective demand which leads to increase in wealth.

Malthus then devotes his attention to the analysis of checks-positive and preventive. Having said so, Malthus analyses the causes of development and underdevelopment. He believed that these two checks are the true causes of development in Europe.

The main problem of these theories however, was to find ways and means of getting growth started in undeveloped countries. It was to resolve this difficulty that the concepts of limited market, small savings, little capital and low production etc. were put forward. A balanced growth approach was favoured and the importance of capital accumulation and the capability to save and invest their savings in industrialisation was stressed. The understanding of underdevelopment was limited to the lack of savings and the resultant lack of capital to invest.

In his book, *Theory of Economic Development* (1934) Schumpeter views development as occurring, when new investment horizons are exploited accompanied by the expansion of the electrical and automatic industries which seems according to him, the most interesting and important type of economic development. He



postulates the existence of a continuous stream of innovation possibilities. For him, development includes the following elements:

1. The introduction of a new good.
2. The innovation of a new method of production.
3. The opening of a new market.
4. The conquest of a new source of supply of raw materials.

Rationalism, in the process of development is also seen to extend to family life. Parents begin to weigh the advantage of children on a kind of cost calculus, comparing the joys of parenthood with the alternatives of increasing leisure, freedom and real income. This attitude weakens the traditional idea of the home with all its implications in social and economic sphere and there is a reduced desire in finding a family dynasty.<sup>10</sup>

### **Family: An Obstacle to Development**

The Development theorists held that in order to bring about the desired type of development, a transformation was required in the traditional structures and relationship in the society. It was contended that joint family would be replaced by nuclear family with equal conjugate relationship with the advent of development. This is necessary because the extended family is seen as an inhibiting factor to mobility, savings, risk-taking

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<sup>10</sup>Meir, Gerald M. and Baldwin., *Economic Development: Theory, History, Policy*, Delhi, Asia Publishing House, 1960, p.89.

etc. which are the primary ingredients of development. The incentives to take risks in entrepreneurship is also blunted. The necessity to save and acquire assets is reduced since the family provides insurance for dependants and security for old age. Another factor is the system of inheritance, which may divide land equally among children affecting the size of land and also mobility. Therefore, the change in the family structure is important for development. It was widely assumed that as economic development proceeds from the force of positive rather than negative factors, those negative aspects of family structure which stand in the way of development will crumble and be modified. Hence, the theories of development are primarily theories of economic development concerned with the utilitarian aspects of human life and neglect the social and cultural aspects of development. These western paradigms of development, which focus on the increase of material benefits which are believed to later on percolate to other aspects of social life.

### ***Functionalist Theory***

Talcott Parson, (Family, Socialisation and Interaction Process, 1955) the proponent of the functionalist theories, asserted that the extended family would transform itself into a nuclear family to meet the functionalist requisites of the modern society. But to first understand Parsons' theory on family it is necessary to understand the functionalist perspectives.

The functionalist theory of the family explains the existence of the family in term of social function that is, the performance of the activities have certain effect on the other social institutions which go to make up the society. When functionalist speak of the social function of an institution, they are concerned with those effect without which a society would not exist. Functionalist may either list the activities which must occur to ensure the survival of the members of the society and examine the ones that the family universally performs or he may look at the activities which the family performs, to examine how far they are indispensable to the society. Most theorists however, prefer to describe the effect the family activities universally have.

Thus, as seen earlier, Murdock identifies the functions of the family as sexual, reproductive, economic and educational. Besides regulating sexual relations in the society, the family facilitates the production and rearing of children. The family, apart from being an economic unit, serves as an agent of education for its members.

Talcott Parsons takes as his starting point the family itself and attempts to define a list of functions which the family performs for the society and for its members. Parsons (1949) has argues that the modern industrial society is featured by an 'Isolated Nuclear Family' which is functionally and structurally isolated from the wider circle of kin. As development encourages

migration and individualism, Parsons notes “the occupationally induced geographic mobility” as a significant characteristic of this society. Other Functionalists also assume that the expansion of economy, produced the wealth of individual opportunity and increased spatial mobility with the development of modern method of transportation which made ambitious individuals to sever his kin ties with the wider kin. They held that membership tends to revolve around the consanguine only since the advantage is greater.

In isolated nuclear family, Parsons considers the rules governing the behaviour of individuals that provide for the formation of nuclear groups only. It is ‘structurally isolated’ because it does not form an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationships. However, there are social relationships between members of nuclear families and their kin but these relationships are based more on choice than obligations. Hence, he points out that the main feature of an isolated nuclear family is - that the members of the nuclear family consist of parents and still dependent children but does not include members of both the spouse’s families of orientation, though relation to the family of orientation is not broken. <sup>11</sup>

Parsons tries to explain the functions of isolated nuclear family through a process of ‘structural differentiation’ by which a

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<sup>11</sup> Parsons, Talcott and Robert F. Bales, *Family, Socialisation and Interaction Process*, London, Free Press, 1955, p.7.

society enters in to development. The family as he observes, no longer continues to perform those functions that were earlier carried out by kinship groups. He writes "The process by which non-kinship units become of prime importance in a social structure inevitably entails " loss of function on the part of some or even all kinship units.<sup>12</sup>

In Parsons' conception, structural differentiation and loss of some important functions of the family to specific agencies, does not mean, loss of the importance of the family in the industrial era. This only means that the family has become a more specialised agency than before. This represents a decline of certain features which traditionally have been associated with families. This trend, points to the beginning of the relative stabilisation of a new type of family structure, one in which the family is more specialised than before, but in any general sense not less important because, the society is dependent more exclusively on it for the performance of some of its vital functions.

In the impersonal setting of the modern industrial society, the family is seen as providing the only opportunity to participate in a relationship where people are perceived and valued as whole persons. The specialised institutions such as schools and hospitals have also added to and improved the family's function e.g. state health and welfare provision has provided additional

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid. p.9.

support for the family and made its members more aware of the importance of health and hygiene at home. Socialisation of the young is as important as it was and remains an important function of the family. It is claimed that though the functions of the family have been taken over by specialised institutions the family has become more specialised. The reduction in the size of kinship units which has resulted in the nuclear family structure has led to the transfer of many functions to the organised sector which ' means that the family has become a more specialised agency than before, probably more specialised than it has been in any previously known society'.<sup>13</sup>

In the modern industrialised societies, Parsons claims that the family is no more a productive unit, the production process is transferred to specialised economic institutions. Where the kinship system is not used to form productive groups, the individual is not bound to a particular residential location by the occupational, property or status interests of other members, which makes them more occupationally and geographically mobile individuals catering to the needs of modern society. This according to him is a functional relationship between the isolated nuclear family and the economic system in the industrial society.

As referred earlier, Parsons sees the growth of successful activity as associated with the adoption of values of

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<sup>13</sup> *ibid.*, p.11.



'universalism and achievement'. The kinship relations based on inherent qualities is opposed to the modern industrial enterprises which are governed by universality and achievement values. Parsons hypothesises that the isolated nuclear family is the best form of family structure to suit these values. On the one hand, it enables the economic system to operate unhampered by wide ranging familistic obligation, and on the other hand, it ensures that in a mobile individualistic and impersonal world adults and children have a stable if limited, set of affective relationships. It also implies that the modern family system serves individual needs because it provides a stable, primary group within which children may be socialised and spouses may find in each other and in parenthood personality stabilising psychological satisfactions.<sup>14</sup>

Moreover, modern occupations which are characterised by 'universalistic' and 'achievement' values emphasise more on impartiality and individual achievement, and stress on the use of merit and ability as criterion for selecting people for occupational positions. They are opposite to familial values based on particularistic loyalties. Cohesive kin groups which establish a wide range of kin obligations are incompatible with the values and demands of the economic system. By contrast, a family system based on the independence of the nuclear system

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<sup>14</sup> Elliot, Faith Robertson, *The Family: Change or Continuity?*, U.S.A., Humanities Press International Inc., 1986, p.37.

limits family obligations.<sup>15</sup> Therefore, Parson concludes that the isolation of the nuclear family is an adaptive response to a technologically-advanced industrial economy and typical of modern societies.

Major difficulties are thus averted by reducing the size of the family to that of the nuclear family. In the nuclear family there is only one earning member and the wife is responsible for raising the children. There would not be any conflict between the ascribed and achieved status of different members of the family. Thus there are two types of segregation. The nuclear family is cut off from wider kin in the sense that the most stringent ties are confined within it and because its members do not perform economic roles opposite one another. It is also segregated from the economic system except for the husband who is the bread winner of the family. In this way intrusion of family values into the sphere of work is avoided and work values do not disrupt the solidarity of the family.

Interestingly, the studies in America by scholars like Pitts (1964) which show that financial aid are transmitted to married children have proved to be consistent with Parsons' hypothesis. Their aid is very often designed to 'further the more speedy establishment of the independent nuclear family'.

A central place in Parsons' general sociological theory is occupied by the idea of socialisation, and this process, in which

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<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p36.

the family plays such an important part is discussed in an edited volume comprising a collection of essays (1956). Parsons at the very outset points out that family is not separated from the occupational structure. Such an overlap is necessary since the child in the family has to learn and internalise the values which govern activity in the economic sphere. For Parsons, therefore, the family must not be completely segregated from other social institutions, because, if it were, new members of the society would not be socialised and hence could not take part in the activities, which characterise other social institutions. Hence he suggests that for the process of socialisation it is necessary for the internalisation of culture of the society by the agents of socialisation, and this is affordable only by the family as a system.

Parsons, in this context writes “ that the basic and irreducible function of the family are two: First, the primary socialisation of children so that they can truly become members of the society into which they have been born; second, the stabilisation of the personalities of the adult population of the society”.<sup>16</sup> These functions gain their significance in the growing anonymity of the development process.

The second primary function concerns the regulatory function of the balances in the personality of the adult members of both

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<sup>16</sup> Parsons and Bales, *op.cit.*, p16.

the sexes. The nuclear family emphasises a sharp discrimination in status of family members and non-members. Spouses are placed in a more strategic position since they do not have any of their kinship networks to fall upon. They are in a 'structurally unsupported' situation. This emphasises on the marital relationship where the emotional support that the couple provides for each other acts as a counter weight to the stresses and strains in one's personality.

The other role that the family performs concomitant to development is in underlining the distinct roles of the husband and the wife. Parsons writes, "The enhanced significance of the marriage relationship both for the structure of the family itself and for the personalities of the spouses, means that the complementarity of roles within it tends to be accelerated".<sup>17</sup> The husband plays the 'instrumental' role and the wife the 'expressive' role in the socialisation of the young. The instrumental role played by the father establishes the status of the child and establishes his relationship with the outside society, while the expressive function of the wife stabilises the personality of the child and provides a feeling of warmth and affection. Parsons, says that the fundamental reason for such allocation in the bearing and early nursing of children may establish a strong primary relation of mother to the small child and this in turn establishes that the man who is exempted from

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<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p.24.

performing this function should specialise in the 'alternative' instrumental function.

The articulation between the family and the occupational systems focus instrumental responsibility for a family very sharply on its adult male member, and the isolation of nuclear family from kinship relations focus the responsibility of the expressive role more sharply on adult women.

Parsons, writings on the family have been subjected to some criticisms partly because it is based largely on the American middle class family. In the first place, his approach lacks any serious historical dimension. Parsons compares the features of the nuclear family with the requirements of Industrial production and argues that they fit, and that the extended family would be inconsistent with such a system. But, the Indian contemporary family system is contrary to his assertion and the extended family has in many ways contributed to the economic development of the country and the kinship systems plays a pivotal role in the entrepreneurial activities.

Parsons, has been accused even of idealising the family with his picture of well-adjusted children and sympathetic spouses caring for each other's every need. Even divorce in the family has been explained in terms of the demands executed by the couples on each other as a result of the strengthening of the bonds. However, it cannot be disputed that Parsons, remains

one of the leading exponents of the functionalist perspective of the family and is also the first one to predict the functions of family in terms of personality. His theory was one of the first significant work done in this field and later theories were to be enumerated under this topic.

Like Parsons, William J. Goode (1963) also holds that the advent of industrialisation has undermined the extended family and larger kinship groupings. One major characteristic of modern Industrial society is that an individual is given a job on the basis of his ability. His link with the job is 'functionally specific', which necessitates geographic and social mobility. Goode also recognises the loss of many functions that the family once performed to outside agencies. Individual's achievement is measured universalistically. The enterprise may not dictate his behaviour except in so far as it is directly relevant to getting the job done. He brings out several features, which explain the 'fit' between the conjugal family and Industrialisation. These are:<sup>18</sup>

1. The neolocality of the conjugal system frees the individual from specific geographical ties or parental location.
2. Individuals with a limited kin network are facilitated in selecting the industrial job best suited to their skill.

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<sup>18</sup> Goode, W.J., "Industrialisation and Family Change", in W.E. Moore and Hoselitz (ed.), *Industrialisation and society*, Mouton, 1963, pp.240-243.

3. Family is separated from its role of a productive organisation, where the universalistic, functionalistic specific criteria are free to operate as against the ascriptive, particularistic and emotionally diffuse criteria.

4. Individual ownership allows greater mobility of capital for investment.

5. The talents of both sexes are given greater scope for development to fit the manifold demand of complex ties.

6. Omnilineal in pattern, this system maintain no lineage and does not concentrate a family land or wealth in the hands of one son or daughter.

7. Since youngsters choose their own spouse and should be economically independent, a long period of family dependence is legitimated. This enables each individual to find a niche appropriate to his talent in the industrial system.

Goode suggests that the conjugal family is important in the present context due to the changes taking place. It asserts the worth of the individual, against the kinship controlled element or wealth or ethnic group. The conjugal family integrates itself with the demands of industrial society by its emphasis on emotionality especially in relationship between husband and wife. The conjugal system also specifies wider status obligation of each member in lesser detail, therefore enabling them to fit

the range of demands by the industrial system and also the family.

Goode also offers another alternative where the kin network may contribute to individual mobility and social capillarity. There he observes that the class differences go along with kinship relations. The upper and middle strata recognise the widest extension of kin, while the lower strata are free from the weight of kin, since they adjust well to the industrial system catering to its need. As he says, the job demands of the industrial system, move the individual about making it difficult for him to keep his kin ties active, and since his kins are also in the lower strata he has little to lose by relinquishing those ties.<sup>19</sup> This means that the individual attempts to obtain the best bargain in his relationship with others. He will maintain relationships with kin and submit to their control if he feels he is getting a good return on his investment of time, energy and emotion. This statement seems quite contradictory to A. M. Shah's assertion (explained in Chapter III).

A further inference drawn by Goode, relevant to the middle and upper strata for maintaining the kin ties is that they have (a) more resources with which to resist the undermining pressures of industrialisation process and (b) have a considerable interest in holding their family system intact against those pressures.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Goode, W. J. , *World Revolution and Family Patterns*, New York, Free Press, 1963, p. 13.

<sup>20</sup> Goode, op.cit., p. 244.



Therefore, the inference here is that persons in the lower strata adjust their family pattern more swiftly to industry, whereas those in the upper and middle strata gain from the new opportunities only by loosening their kin ties more slowly.

But Goode on the other hand, explains that there should not be any misconception of the new system being incompatible with extended family pattern, since there is wide scope for such a system operating with the development of the transport system. However, the 'alternative pattern of payments' provided by the industrial society provides a better bargain for many people, since they gain more by rejecting close and frequent contacts with kin beyond the nuclear family rather than by retaining them.

Goode, in addition, has also highlighted the inconsistencies between the family demand and industrialisation. He notes that the weakening of kinship ties and specialisation of tasks has only added to the burden of women. His study indicated that the proportion of women in the established professions in the U.S. did not change greatly and the percentage of college educated women who were in the professions dropped. Goode then questions the term 'conjugal family' and holds it as a theoretical construction in which several crucial variables have been combined to form a hypothetical structural harmony. He points out that this ideal type does not fit the reality and social

theory. The family unit is still influenced by stronger emotional ties. For example: the grandparents cannot stay without meeting the grand children.

Thus his theory could be seen as emphasising on two points (i) limits of the family's adjustment to outside pressures and (ii) the problem of how the industrialisation process must adjust to the family. It is important to note however, that Goode does not causally relate the conjugal family and the modern industrial system, he speaks of the independence of the two sets of variables the familial and the industrial as well as the presence of some disharmonies' between the two.

Another insight into the family is provided by Ogburn who studied family in the light of the changing material culture. He hypothesises that the developments in material culture played a disorganising role in the family. He states that before the development of industrialisation the family was seen to be fairly well tuned and well adjusted. It possessed economic, educational, recreational, religious and protective functions along with the biological functions. But, with the development of the factory system, production was taken out of home, which reduced the wife's economic importance to the family. Marriage has become a contract and the bearing of children a matter of rational planning. However, he saw family performing certain personality functions at two levels in the relationship between parents and children. In earlier days, the arduous conditions of

life, the detailed division of labour within the family and the emphasis on economic productivity did not encourage great concern with the quality of the emotional relationship between the spouses.<sup>21</sup>

With the weakening of many of its traditional possibilities, couples became concerned with happiness of their marriages, seeking personal growth and fulfilment. Parents sought not only food and clothing and shelter for their offspring but increasingly emphasised their social and emotional development. Therefore, according to Ogburn the family has fewer functions today but may be performing these few functions as well or better than in the past. Ogburn's study is concerned with the adjustment of the family to the changes in the technology or material culture. The family becomes more functionally adaptive and specialised in its functions.

### ***Marxist Approach***

The Marxist tradition too presents us with an account of the modern western family and its relationships to the wider society which is radically different from the functionalist tradition. They, like functionalists view change in the family as related to change in the economy and posit a 'fit' between the present economic order and the conjugal family. But unlike the functionalists,

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21 Referred as in Leslie, Gerald R., *The Family in Social Context*, London, Oxford University Press, 1967, p. 237.

they see the family as reproducing the capitalist system. For the Marxists, productive activity was considered as central to the ordering of the society and they maintained that the forces and relations of production form a base for all other aspects of the social order-the family, education, political and legal institutions. Therefore, their treatment of the family is not entirely consistent with their central arguments. They treated the family as peripheral to, and of marginal interest in the analysis of social life. Marxist accounts of the family take as their starting point the premise that the family is dependent upon the dominant mode of production. As a result they treat family as peripheral to, and of marginal interest in the analysis of social life. This understanding of Marxism has led to economic reductionism and to some what static structural analysis in which capitalism is depicted as requiring and producing a certain family form which sustains capitalist mode of production.<sup>22</sup>

On the basis of this premise, Engels did not see the family as a 'causal' influence, but as a microcosm of the conflict in the larger society. "It is the cellular form of civilised society, in which the nature of the oppositions and contradictions fully active in that society can readily be studied."<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Elliot, op.cit., pp. 11-12.

<sup>23</sup> Engels, Fredrick, *The Origion of the Family, Private Property and The State*, Calcutta, Burmon Publishing House, 1942, pp.75-76.

Engels took an evolutionary approach to family in which the first stage in the evolution of monogamous marriage is the consanguine family, where the members of the same generation are husbands and wives to each other. The second stage, is the punaluan family, where the brothers and sisters are excluded from sexual intercourse. This led to the division of members into two classes; those in one class remain brothers and sisters and those in the other class, the children of ones' mothers' brother in one case and of ones' fathers' sister on the other cannot be brother and sister any longer. This type of family slowly gives rise to pairing family. To develop it further to strict monogamy other causes were required i.e. private property. Property was owned by male members and in order to pass it on to their heir's they must be certain of their legitimacy. This needed greater control of their women to be assured of the paternity of their offspring. Monogamous marriages provided an effective device. In his view, monogamous marriage was one such institution and was evolved by men as a mechanism for ordering the relations of human reproduction so that they could be sure that they were in fact the fathers' of their prospective heirs.

Hence, here the transformation of family life is seen as a result of the transformation of economic life because of the absence of any dynamic process within the sphere of biological reproduction, which could transform the relations of production.

The concentration of childcare within the nuclear family has been the central theme in Leach's *A Runaway World* (1967). He considered that previously the kinship relationship had provided a practical and psychological anchor for the individual whereas the nuclear family is isolated from the wider network of kin relations. The emotions generated by the child rearing process in nuclear family are concentrated among very few individuals. There is an emotional domination by the senior generation. The interaction, therefore, is reduced to a single member in terms of marital relation. The domestic household looks inward upon itself and there is an intensification of emotional stress between the husband and wife and parents and children. Sometimes, the intensification of relationship in terms of demands and expectations, are more than it can withstand that it results in conflict.

David Cooper, in his book *The Death of the Family* (1971) condemns the family as an institution, "which reinforces the effective power of the ruling class in any exploitative society by providing a highly controllable paradigmatic form for every social institution".<sup>24</sup> He contends that family works as "an ideological conditioning device,<sup>25</sup>" which produces obedient members, who are easily manipulated by ruling classes. Each child has the potential for some specific talent but this is stifled

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<sup>24</sup> Cooper, David, *The Death of The Family*, London, Penguin Press, 1971, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> He uses this term for denoting the family as socialising the members in terms of the ideology, culture, values of the ruling capitalist class and therefore serve their needs and demands, perpetuating their domination.

by the social controls implanted by the family which makes the individual submit to the elaborate system of taboos. As he points, "There are numerous taboos in the family system that reach much further than the incest taboos and taboos against greed and merriness, one of the taboos is the implicit prohibition against experiencing one's aloneness in the world.<sup>26</sup>

The roles of the individuals in the family and extending to the society as a whole is contrived by the family. This is the groundwork for 'indoctrination' into roles at school, work and in society generally. As Cooper argues, "the family specialises in the formation of roles for its members rather than laying down conditions for the free assumption of identity". Further, instead of the feared possibilities of acting from the chosen and self invented centre of oneself; one is taught to submit, or else to live in an eccentric way of being in the world<sup>27</sup>. The family, thus, in its function as 'primary socializers' exerts social control in its children. The children are taught not how to survive in society but how to submit to it.

Following similar lines, contemporary Marxist thought has emphasised the ideological importance of the family for capitalism. They present the family as propagating values, which are supportive of the capitalist system and as inhibiting the working class challenge to the capitalist order. They have

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<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p. 25.

stressed the opposition between family and economy and the functionality of family for capitalism and for the prime socialisation of transmission of bourgeois ideology. Using Marxist concepts, some feminist argued in the 1960's and 70's that in the capitalist society, the family produces cheap labour so that the capitalists do not have to pay for the production and rearing of children.

The family apart from producing the labour power also maintains it in good order, by the wife attending to husbands needs thus enabling him to perform his role as a wage earner. In the exploitative capitalist society the head of the family is invariably subjected to frustration, but due to his conformist socialisation he cannot revolt against it. On the contrary, he seeks to deflect his frustration and anger by exercising almost dictatorial domination over wife and children.

Secombe (1974), in his contribution to the debate, maintains that the family is indifferentiable from the economy. He says that it is a dual-faceted institution that both maintains the material world through the reproduction of labour power and the consumption of goods, and sustains the coherence of the social world through the reproduction of the relations of production. He argues, that family is a two-fold process involving the generational reproduction i.e. ensures the future production of labour and daily sustenance i.e. ensures the



physical and emotional fitness of workers.<sup>28</sup> Other writers have suggested that the family secures for capital, unpaid domestic labour which provides a reserve army of labour in that housewives can be drawn upon in periods of high demand for labour.

The family as an agent of socialisation, educates as well as motivates young children to respect and obey the family authority and their place in the hierarchy of the society. Family, in this process preconditions the child to conform and submit to a class stratified social order, reinforcing the capitalistic ideology.

Zimmerman, too, in his book, *Family and Civilisation* assumes that there is a close connection between the nature of the family organisation and the nature of larger society. He also, assumes that changes in one are all closely associated with corresponding changes in the other. Giving an evolutionary perspective of family, he states that there have been three main family types in western history - the trustee family, the domestic family and the atomistic family.

In trustee family, individual needs are subordinated to group needs and there is no concept as individual rights. The authority of father or the husband is delegated in his role as trustee and for carrying out family responsibilities. The state

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<sup>28</sup> Referred as in Elliot, op. cit., p. 64.

and the family are fused together. The domestic family, is the intermediate one and the state erodes the power of the family and a concept of individual rights is maintained. The atomistic family replaces familism by individualism. The power of the family is reduced to a minimum and the state becomes an organisation of individuals. Marriage becomes a civil contract instead of a sacrament.

He adds, that the cycle gets underway because each stage carries with itself the seeds of destruction. The authority character of the trustee family led to abuses and disputes in the family. The domestic family arises from the desire for more equitable treatment. On the part of family members, the atomistic family is associated with moral degradation where, the family cannot carry out its basic functions and the decay continues until eventually the trustee family emerges.

The western sociologists were, therefore concerned with two questions, whether the traditional family was going nuclear to 'fit' the demands of the modern society or should the family as an institution be abolished. This tilted debate over the compatibility of family structure and functions with development has influenced other empirical studies conducted in this field. Though the studies questioned the correctness of the nuclear family to development, they too were preoccupied with the form rather than any other feature of the family.

## CHAPTER - III

# FAMILY STUDIES IN INDIA: APPROACHES AND CONTENTS

Relatively speaking family studies in India have been rather limited and they always constitute a part of kinship study. Patricia Uberoi in her introduction to *Family, kinship and marriage in India* points out that 'the reluctance to study Indian family is not due to its insignificance or marginality of the field, but rather from its importance and sensitivity. It is as though critical interrogation of the family might constitute an intrusion into that private domain where the nations' most cherished cultural values are nurtured and reproduced, as though the very fabric of society would be undone if the family were in any way questioned or reshaped'.<sup>1</sup> Hence, in this context kinship provide the domain within which family and marriage are to be studied. This approach, as T.K. Oommen notes, has its approach in the nineteenth and the twentieth centuries, when western anthropologists and ethnographers focussed their attention on small scale and preliterate societies where kinship provided the idiom not only for domestic relations but also pervaded all other spheres of social life.

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<sup>1</sup> Uberoi, Patricia, *Family, kinship and Marriage in India*, New Delhi, Oxford University Press, 1994, p. 2.

Having this, family researchers in India have dealt with one or another variety of the ideal family- Joint or nuclear- which are seen as inevitable and imperative.<sup>2</sup> The transition from joint to nuclear was seen in an evolutionary scale as the society develops. The impact of industrialisation, urbanisation and modernisation was to move all societies towards the pattern now presumed to be dominant in the west, 'a pattern which was taken to represent an essential, irreducible and functionally necessary and sufficient structure of the family'.<sup>3</sup>Theories of modernisation, following the western paradigm predicts that joint family becomes nuclear, if a nation adopts the lines experienced by the west. The persistence of joint family is believed to impede economic development for it stifles individual interests and initiative.

Madan has also observed that the western scholars view of Indian society was based on a comparison between civilisation and the lack of it. They tried to identify the reason for economic, political and social backwardness, with their ethnocentric view of India. They establish a relationship between nuclear family and modernisation in the west and the joint family and socio-economic backwardness of the east.

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<sup>2</sup> Oommen, T.K. , "Family Research in India: Issues and Priorities", in Keynote address to the National Seminar on 'Research on Families with Problems' organised by TIS, April 17-20, 1989, p. 23.

<sup>3</sup> Risseuw, Carla and Rajni Palriwal, *Shifting Circles of Support*, New Delhi, 1996, p. 18.

Goode and Parsons', conclusions based on Industrialised societies, have further provided an impetus to study family in the light of transformation from joint to nuclear. The nuclear form of family was seen as an universal phenomenon in any developed society. This Madan says, "is an example of the structuralist fallacy of viewing modernisation everywhere in the world today".<sup>4</sup> The western scholars see modernisation as an essential feature everywhere and they show empirical evidence indicating that family in all societies are changing into nuclear.

Uberoi also points out that, the developments in family studies have always followed and reflected the changing paradigm and concerns of anthropology and sociology in the west.<sup>5</sup>

Rudolf. has questioned the Eurocentric approach to tradition and modernity seeing them as contrary. On the basis of Indian data, he argues that traditional structure and norms can be adapted and transformed to serve the needs of a modernising society. According to him, social change and the new realities, rise not only from the impact of objective, or exogenous or revolutionary forces on established systems, but also from alternative potentialities within such systems. M. N. Srinivas, also shares this view and wrote that tradition and modernity can co-exist in different compartments of life.

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<sup>4</sup> Madan, T.N., "The Hindu Family and Development", in Patricia Uberoi (ed.), op.cit., p. 418.

<sup>5</sup> Uberoi, Patricia, "Family, Household and Social Change", in Patricia Uberoi (ed.), op.cit., p. 5.

Thus, the development theorists, in analysing societies, undermine the dynamic features underlying the process and hence, present a partial study supporting the western interests with their preoccupation of the nuclear family. Carla Risseuw and Rajni Palriwal write that, "the historically changing character of the family and of the relationships, an individual maintained within the community at large have been obscured due to the all powerful ideal of the nuclear family from which gained persistent ideological dominance as natural and timeless."<sup>6</sup>

In this context many writers have questioned the empirical evidence in the west. Studies in Japan, China etc have questioned the assumption of the universality of nuclear family. Madan, has shown that nuclear family is not essentially a feature of modernisation, since they are found in many primitive societies. He also refers to the study of Laslett, where he shows evidence of the household, in England, growing larger rather than shrinking with the coming of Industrialisation.

In India, studies conducted by different sociologists have provided us with varied findings. While some have endorsed the western studies, others have challenged them. The confusion resulting in varied findings is attributed to the complexity of the problem and the failure of the scholars' to recognise the analytical distinction between the 'family' and 'household'. In

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<sup>6</sup> Risseuw and Rajni Palriwal, op.cit., p.24.

this regard, Nongbri writes, “the failure of the joint-nuclear dichotomy to capture the diversities of the empirical reality and the Euro centric slant inherent in this perspective have made some sociologists adopt household as an analytical category”.<sup>7</sup>

The family may be broadly defined as a unit of two or more persons united by ties of marriage, blood, adoption or consensual unions generally constituting a single household who interact and communicate with each other. The popular conception of a household is a residential unit or living arrangements of a family or domestic group.

However, it was A.M. Shah (Household Dimensions of family in India, 1974), who made an explicit analysis of the distinction between the family and the household. First, he refers to the family being defined in two ways. One, is the genealogical model without any definite indication of the activities or functions of the persons composing a model and on the other hand, to social groups having certain activities without any definite indication of the persons comprising the group.<sup>8</sup>

The term family is used in the sense of the household as well as of a wider kinship unit whose members may be living in more than one household. This, Shah remarks, as an important step in the study of the family. The joint family is defined as a group

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<sup>7</sup> Nongbri, Tiplut, “The International Year of the Family: An Exploration into the Family and Household Structure”, in Trends in Social Science Research, Vol. II, No.1, June 1995, p. 35.

<sup>8</sup> Shah, A.M., *Household Dimensions of Family in India*, Delhi, Orient Longman, 1974, p.4.

based on patrilineal descent and patrilocal residence. They are defined in terms of the genealogical composition but, these are ideal types and may not live in a multifunctional household but, may be bound by a number of other activities.<sup>9</sup> Therefore, some sociologists have delineated the property holding group which is composed of two or more households or analyse the relations between the households.

Joint family is considered as the fundamental institution of the Indian society and taken as the norm for familial institutions in India. The antithesis of Joint family has been the elementary family. But, sometimes, these elementary families are comprised with an additional member of patrilineal descent and it has been unrealistic to lump all these types into one elementary family. Only a few writings have referred to these types of families. A. M. Shah distinguishes between complete 'ideal' elementary family with married couples and unmarried children and incomplete elementary family with a patrilineal relative. Cohn distinguishes three subtypes of nuclear families, and Nicholas between irregular and regular families. Even the term joint family had not been uniformly defined.

This has given rise to certain problems in classifying different types of families. The social scientists are divided in their opinion as to whether the types of family should be determined on the basis of 'form' or the 'function' it performs and which in

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<sup>9</sup> *ibid.*, pp.138-143.



turn determines the type of household. While some have defined the joint family on the basis of its composition, others have preferred to define the joint family on the basis of its functions. Moreover, in India, there is a wide variation of domestic groups ranging from patrilineal to matrilineal. Besides, the household quite often did not contain the entire domestic group in one residential unit but, it may be spread out in one or more residential units close to other. This has led to certain controversies in delineating the household.

Apart from this, there is much confusion in definition of the joint family, because it meant different things to different people. Under the *Mitakshara* and the *Dayabhaga* Hindu law, they primarily constitute the property holding group and persons having rights of maintenance from the property holding group. The sociologists conception of joint family is said to have been influenced considerably by the Indologist's perception of joint family, particularly held by Henry Maine, who conceived joint family as a group of patriarchal descendants held together by their subjugation to the eldest male.<sup>10</sup> Some typical definition of joint family describe it as a multi-functional group with common property, common house and common worship.

Milton Singer in an article 'The Indian Joint Family in Modern Industry' (1968) is of the opinion that 'jointness' is a

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<sup>10</sup> Rao, Usha, "Gaps in Definitions and Analysis: A Sociological Prospective", in Saradmoni (ed), *Finding the Household: Conceptual and Methodological issues*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1992, P.56.

multidimensional phenomenon, which includes common residence, common festivals, property and maintenance of kin ties even between separate households. Some authors like Kapadia and Desai consider the fulfilment of the obligations towards kin as an essential ingredient of jointness. Desai, observes that jointness is a sentiment that exists between the relatives. He lays down three indices of jointness: (1) kinship relationships obtaining among the members of a family; (2) whether they have property owned in common; (3) whether certain institutional mutual obligations exist between members of the household and the relation outside. Kapadia, considers the functional lineage as one important component in the structural aspect of the family.

Vatuk also uses a social exchange approach to family studies. Bailey and Aggarwal, conceive joint family as a property owning group, attached to the family of orientation through some sentiments, obligations etc.

Madan (1968) has avoided to use the term joint family as the usual central concern in his study of the family of Kashmiri Pandits. Describing the structure of household in terms of the development cycle, he defines joint family as consisting of a number of married couples and their children living together in the same household and related by blood.

According to Karve(Kinship Orgination in India, 1953) a joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof and one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common family worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred.

Most of these writers have used 'generation' to define the limit of extension in the formation of joint family. In some writings, the number of generations refer to both the dead and the living and some others, only the living. But, in almost all the writings, the generation depth is described as a multi-functional group, common property holding group etc. But a generation depth of three to four generations have been taken as the ideal.

But, what is important to note is that, while the Indological and Hindu laws' conception of joint family need not include even a single married couple and members of joint family as so defined need not be co-resident, while the sociologists have laid stress on the single residential unit. A. M. Shah, therefore, points out that it is the conflation of these two quite differently grounded notions of joint family and the cultural valuation of the joint family as an ideal, which have led to the prevailing confusion.

### **Variations in the existence of joint families**

One of the questionable hypothesis in the study of family is, whether India has typical joint or extended families. The census of 1951 however, showed that a few large families existed

proving that joint family was a romantic myth. Irrawati Karve suggests that a large or smaller joint family is typical of India. S.C Dube too suggests that the nuclear family or small joint family is typical.

A.M. Shah's analysis of 1820-30 census data on household in a Gujarat village has shown that the average size of the household was 4.5 and the progressive development of household did not go beyond the phase of coresidence of two or more married sons during the life of their parents. Even Ghurye's study of a village in Maharashtra supports the same. A.M. Shah then states:<sup>11</sup>

...the early nineteenth century data, thus, indicate that we cannot start the study of changes in the family in India with the assumption that villagers in traditional India always lived in large and complex household of three or four generations.

Moreover, in the nineteenth century, the towns had a high proportion of high castes and there was a high proportion of joint families, while the villages had a high population of lower castes and hence high proportion of nuclear families. Shah then provides us with reasons for the less number of joint households: (1) joint family was a norm of the high castes which were also the property owning class; (2) the life expectancy was low and hence, there could only be a maximum of two generations in a household at a particular time; (3) the sacred

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<sup>11</sup> Shah, A.M., *The Family in India*. New Delhi, Orient Long man, 1998, P. 59.

Hindu texts do not hold joint residential living for a property holding group. He thus observes:<sup>12</sup>

...although the ancient ideal of the joint household was prevalent throughout Indian society, it was basically a Sanskritic ideal, practised mainly in a small section of society composed of upper castes and classes, which constituted the majority of Indian society. Therefore, the average household was small and simple which was contrary to popular belief, that every Indian did not live in a joint household

Even, the studies of the present family structure has shown that the incidence and spread of a variety of household forms cut across region, class and cultures, making it difficult to establish exact corelations between household types and socio-cultural factor. Kapadia's (Marriage and Family in India, 1966) data from Navsari, a partly industrialised town in south Gujrat, shows that the agricultural castes live in joint family. The same is said to apply for artisan castes.

Kolenda (1967), in her studies, has held that a very low caste group tend to have a lower proportion of nuclear family as compared to all other caste groups. She has also hypothesised that relatively high proportion of nuclear family characterise regions where the wife has greater 'bargaining powers'.<sup>13</sup> I.P Desai says that occupation is related to jointness. Greater

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<sup>12</sup> Shah, A.M., "Changes in the Family and the Elderly", *Economic and Political Weekly*, May 15, 1999, pp.1179-1180.

<sup>13</sup> Kolenda, Pauline, "Region, Caste and Family Structure: A Comparitive Study of the Indian Joint Family" in Milton Singer and Bernard Cohn (ed.), *Structure and Change in Indian Society*, Chicago, Aldine publishers, p. 364.

jointness is a feature of agricultural and business castes and that lower degree of jointness is found among people having new types of occupations.

Mukherjee (1965) has also associated occupations with family types and found that joint family is over-represented in the trade and commerce sectors of the economy and in high and middle grade occupations. M.S.A. Rao's (Urbanisation and Social Change, 1970) study also emphasised the importance of joint family in new types of economic activity. Shah asserts that this principle is stronger among the more sanskritised higher castes than among the lower castes.

Kolenda's comparison of the quantitative data on the frequency of various types of families from twenty six studies suggests marked regional and sub-regional difference in family structure. Attention is given to the hypothesis that joint family is more characteristic of upper and land owning castes than of lower and landless castes. She also maintains that there are regional differences in the proportions of joint families. There are higher proportions of joint family in the Gangetic plain than in central India or West Bengal. Another hypothesis held by Kolenda is that there appears to be definite differences in the customary time of break up of the joint family in various places in India.

One major concern among sociologists is about the family structure in the Indian society. There has been a debate over

the joint-nuclear structure following the assertion of the western writers that the nuclear family structure is consistent with the industrialised, developed and modernised society.

Ross (1961) among others show that industrialisation has changed the joint family structure to nuclear family. According to Ross, the joint family, along with caste, strongly limits social mobility and social change; the lack of occupational and geographical mobility over generation stabilises the family. But, her own data has shown that relatives may help each other with education and in getting jobs and thus promote occupational and social mobility.<sup>14</sup> Moreover, her findings hold that migrants provided economic assistance to those in rural villages. She also finds a trend towards the formation of nuclear families. She points out that the extended kin ties are weakening among the younger generation and modern women want separate homes. In urban areas, the traditional division of labour between husband and wife break up and there exists a stronger conjugal and filial ties.<sup>15</sup>

Ramu in his study showed that joint family has lost its relevance in the modern phase of the Indian society. The transition of the joint family to nuclear family is less viable in the urban area since, according to him, the urban families were primarily nuclear.

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<sup>14</sup> Ross, Aileen, *The Hindu Family in an Urban Setting*, Canada, Toronto University, Press, 1961, pp.75-78.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*, p.179.

There are some sociologists who consider the family structure as undergoing a cycle of family types in their normal sequence. Meyer Fortes' concept of the development cycle is an important contribution to the debate of the question of joint family and nuclear family types and the direction of social change. Fortes has postulated that members of a unit and the activities that unite them undergo some changes that culminate in the dissolution of the original unit and its replacement by one or more units of the same kind.

Gould (1968), in his data from eastern UP, finds that the Indian family goes through a cycle of development determined both by demographic contingencies and by cultural factors. The sequence he indicates are: (1) the replacement of daughters by daughter-in-law: (2) the death of the senior male agnate: (3) severance of male siblings coparcenary ties<sup>16</sup> - a sequence which Patricia Uberoi finds as an oscillation from nuclear family to joint family and then to nuclear family.

A.M. Shah's analysis of the family in Gujarat village suggests that if different household types are found in a community, it has to be held in mind, that they are either undergoing a process of progression or regression. He mentions three factors as responsible for this:<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Gould, Harold, "Time Dimension and Structural Change in an Indian Kinship System", in Singer and Cohn (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.418.

<sup>17</sup> Shah, A.M., *op.cit.*, pp.8-15.



1. demographic factor;
2. series of explicitly stated norms regarding residence;
3. patterns of interpersonal relations based on norms of behaviour for different kinship relation.

Versions of the hypothesis that the nuclear family is functionally appropriate for a modern urban industrial economy and that the nuclear family will develop wherever a modern urban Industrial economy has stabilised and associated it with the name of Parsons, Goode, Ogburn, Linton etc. Parsons had put it in this way, " there has been a historic trend to whittle down the size of kinship units in the general direction of isolating the nuclear family".

Contrary to this western conception of family change accompanying development, there are scores of studies which have indicated that only a limited or little change takes place in family patterns in India. However, considering the variations and diversities, within the Indian culture, the authors take pain to warn us that their findings cannot be generalised.

According to Shah, the belief that the joint family is disintegrating arises from the trend influencing the professional classes, who have adopted a small family norm and the dispersal of the member to far away places due to their jots, but on the whole like joint family in India has not been

disintegrating. A.M. Shah closely studied this aspect through an analysis of census data,

**Proportion of nuclear and joint households in rural and urban India, 1981.**

	<b>Nuclear</b>	<b>Joint</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Rural</b>	52.52	47.48	100.00
<b>Urban</b>	58.92	41.08	100.00
<b>India</b>	54.02	45.98	100.00

He notes that percentage of nuclear household is more than joint households, but the difference is only six per cent. But, this data needs a qualitative reinterpretation and he gave the following reasons for the preponderance of joint households:<sup>18</sup>

1. Though the percentage of joint households in urban areas is 41.48 percent, the people living in these households would be much higher.
2. Migration to towns initially creates nuclear households though they develop into joint in future. But, as few households turn joint there are few nuclear households established by new migrants.

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<sup>18</sup> Shah, A.M., op.cit., pp.74-75.

3. The family always undergoes a cycle of progression and regression.

According to him, joint family has become a more prominent feature of the modern Indian society, because of the preponderance of assets among the citizens. Joint family then becomes the appropriate pattern for maintaining the property. Moreover, with more opportunities and social mobility, the lower castes have been sanskritising themselves on the models of the upper castes and thereby adopting the joint family pattern, while the high castes have been slowly discarding them.

Milton Singer (1968) presents the findings of a study of nineteen industrial leaders done through their family history. He discusses the process of functional adaptation that operate to maintain and modify joint family structures among the families of the Madras Industrial leaders. He has showed that though the married sons are allowed to set up a separate home, but, within the same compound, they do not show a trend towards the nuclear family.<sup>19</sup> They, according to him, indicate “structural continuity and persistence. He also notes that kin ties were extremely beneficial in the running of the business, where the sons, nephews etc., of the industrial leaders represent a new vision of the old principle of family specialisation.”

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<sup>19</sup> Singer, Milton, “The Indian Joint Family in Modern Industry”, in Singer and Cohn (ed.), op.cit., p. 437.

Writing of Industrial entrepreneurs of Okhla, Srinivas observes that 'kinship' plays an important part at every stage and in every aspect of entrepreneurial activity. They represent the most important sources of financial and in starting an industry, sharing responsibilities power and income, and, it is a very common feature for a man to recruit his partners, managers and technical experts from among his caste kindred. Andre Beteille, on similar lines, has shown how the capitalist enterprises have led to the consolidation of kin lies among Marwaris, whose joint family members consists of two to three descendants and, though they live in different parts, they perform their family rites collectively.<sup>20</sup>

Partitioning of the household is also seen as a movement towards the nuclear family type, thus depicting the emergence of a new type of joint family organisation based on partition rather than succession. Mala Kapur<sup>21</sup> terms it as 'succession planning', when it is initiated by the patriarch, who is involved in running the business group. She cites the example of Nandas, where H.P.Nanda partitioned his business between his sons. This division could not be seen as a breaking up of the joint family. Similarly, in Goenka family, though the two sons own and run their companies separately, they often consult their father. The compatibility between joint family living and

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<sup>20</sup> Beteille, Andre, "Family and Social Change in India and Other South Asian Countries" *Economic Weekly*, Feb. 1964, p.239.

<sup>21</sup> Kapur, Mala, "In Business", *Seminar* 1994, pp. 35-39.

business, which have been revealed in some of the earlier studies on entrepreneurs, thus, contend even today.

However, Mala Kapur agrees that differences exist between the family members in terms of their risk taking activities, pace of growth etc. This difference of opinion among members, she relates to what Max Weber called as 'Patriarchal Bureaucratic structure'- a term introduced in dealing with different types of authority.

Gore, in *Urbanisation and family change*, (1968) takes note of both the role of the nuclear family subsystem within the joint family, and the existence of the western type nuclear family with a narrow range bilateral kinship system. His analysis, is thus closer to empirical reality. The Aggarwals pursue their traditional occupations or other allied new occupations, which needs little education and mobility.<sup>22</sup> However, the author concludes that there has been a limited change, which he attributes to education and nature of occupations. However, the community conforms to joint living pattern in behaviour, role perception and attitudes.

I.P Desai, in '*Some Aspects of Family in Mahuva*', has discussed the concepts of jointness and its indicators and measures. Jointness, is determined by the number of generations, which he takes as three and classifies the households into nuclear and

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<sup>22</sup> Gore, M.S., *Urbanisation and Family Change*. Bombay, Popular Prakashan, 1968, pp. 71-74.

joint and their subtypes ranging from zero degree jointness to highest degree of jointness.<sup>23</sup> He has shown that jointness is associated with business and agricultural castes and established that jointness is also a predominant feature of Urban and Industrial area.<sup>24</sup>

Madan, in his study of Kashmiri Pandits, postulates that 'chulahs'<sup>25</sup> were functionally important group, the breaking up of which is not culturally approved. But, with maximum extension of the Chulah group to three or four generation there would be partition. But, he observes that even after partition, the brothers share their dwelling home and constitute the estate owning group. Other bonds, which unite them, are obligations and responsibilities. Therefore, he concludes that "partition does not involve complete severance of ties, it is partly or satisfactorily reorganisation of relations".<sup>26</sup>

A study of Karimpur villages also postulate the increase of joint families due to the advantages that are associated with them ranging from political labour benefits to sharing domestic chores.

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<sup>23</sup> Desai, I.P., *Some Aspects of Family in Mahuva* Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1964, pp.160-162.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>25</sup> The 'Chulah' is the functionally most important group. The importance of the bond of agnation is indicated in its structure and functioning. It is characterised by patrilocal residence and common kitchen.

<sup>26</sup> Madan, T.N., *Family and Kinship: A Study of the Pandits of Rural Kashmir*, Bombay, Asia Publishing House, 1965, p.182.

Ursula Sharma's field work in Punjab demonstrates that there is, at one pole, minimal individuation of interests of particular members, and at the other pole, there is a situation where a number of individuals live separately and have separate budgets, but they continue to co-operate in certain spheres.

Sylvia Vatuk's research on Urdu - speaking Muslims, who are members of a single 'khandan', shows that due to increasing demographic and material constraints that go with development, joint family has been on the rise. She cites a few examples to substantiate her argument. Men leave their wives with mothers on migration. Co-residence is dictated by the need of elderly, young or non-employed kin for support. Moreover, the increase in rental housing has become an important factor in determining where a family will live. She adds that the continual movement and telephone communication also keeps the kinship interrelatedness and provide a kind of social framework.<sup>27</sup>

Saroj Kapur in her article 'Family and Kinship Group Among the Khatri in Delhi' has reported that the joint household of Khatri secedes when the smooth functioning of solidarity of the group is threatened. Secession is only maintained to continue kinship bonds and ties.

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<sup>27</sup> Vatuk, Sylvia, "Household Form And Formation: Variability and Social Change Among South Indian Muslims" in John Gray and David Mearns (ed.), *Society from the Inside Out: Anthropological Perspectives of South Asian Household*, New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1989, p.137.

A study by Dan A. Chakki, among the Lingayats and Kalyans, shows that the impact of modernisation on the urban kin network in India is likely to be different. The kinship relations among these communities are multilateral and the kinship solidarity is strengthened more by preferential marriages, shraddha ceremony etc. He writes, "The number of obligations in many cases are voluntary and this strengthens kinship cohesion."<sup>28</sup>

Victor D'Souza's, study is significant in that, he had used family as an independent criteria than a dependent one on modernisation as has been done in earlier studies. He had, therefore studied family as a psychological determinant. He says that:<sup>29</sup>

the attitudes of members in different family types in the traditionalism-modernity dimensions would be different and that the family types which foster more modern attitudes in their members play an instrumental role in industrialisation.

His study, among the workers in Patiala district, shows that the workers living in the nuclear family are more modern in outlook than those living in quasi-joint or joint family. He also draws a relationship between education and family types. He then concludes that the migrants are better able to adjust to their new environment due to their favourable family structure, thus

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<sup>28</sup> Chakki, Dan, A, 'Modernisation and Social Change: The Family and Kin Network In Urban India' in George Kurien (ed.), *The Family in India: A regional View*, Paris, Mouton, 1974, p.227.

<sup>29</sup> D'Souza, Victor, 'Family Types and Industrialisation in India,' in George Kurien (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.155.



establishing that the independent personality traits developed by the nuclear family are instrumental in industrialising societies.

Hence, it could be perceived from the above studies that the researches in the field of family have been interested in the examination of the classical theory advanced by the sociologists like Parsons, Goode etc and hence, family research have been mainly concerned with such questions as to whether there is a change in the traditional joint family. In this preoccupation they have neglected the other aspects of study in the family sphere. Since these studies were concerned with the ideal typical, value loaded families, those that lie outside the purview of this definition has not been explored. Commenting on this, Shalini Bharat observes that "family sociologists were generally preoccupied with defining and describing the above family form which has been considered the dominant form in most societies. This has resulted in the neglect of research on family patterns that were different from the traditional forms of family living.<sup>30</sup> She then proceeds on to cite the reasons for this negligence. Firstly, the variation in family patterns existed in few numbers and hence, invisible. Secondly, there was a bias towards the ideal forms, due to the weak position of women in society. Thirdly, the studies which were mostly conducted by the upper

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<sup>30</sup> Bharat, Shalini, 'Alternative family Patterns and Policies', in *Enhancing the role of the family as an Agency for Social and Economic Development*, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Unit for Family Studies, Bombay, p.72.

class males had a patriarchal bias and limited to those normative forms. They viewed family as an 'unchanging cultural norm', which glossed over varied, changing experiences and possibilities.

T.K. Oommen also notes, the 'artificial division of intellectual labour' in the study of family is preventing the understanding of the problems of the family. Studies of the aged, children etc., are undertaken by the social workers, family planning studies, population studies etc., which has prevented the family study as a whole in getting established.

The model of the modern nuclear family borrowed from the west not only influenced the studies, but also the socio-economic policies in the country. However, in the contemporary Indian society, these studies are challenged due to the presence of a range of family variations from dual carrier families, adopted families, single headed families etc. The neglect of these variant family forms is only a reflection of the family studies being occupied with the ideal typical family types and which has been further consolidated by their total negligence on marital relations and role dynamics within the family.

## **CHAPTER-IV**

### **DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND GENDER**

#### **ROLES WITHIN THE FAMILY**

A common feature of family studies has been its preoccupation with the type or form of family rather than its functional or internal dynamics. The family studies in sociology and anthropology have so far confined themselves to the structure, functions and evolution of the family. The role relationships and the role dynamics have always been the neglected part of the family studies. Though women's roles and status have been studied earlier, they were not linked to the context of family. It was the feminist scholars who attended to this neglected field of study and made valuable contributions. Women were always taken for granted and their status and role was presumed to undergo a change with development. As a result, they have never formed the analytical category within the dimensions of the family. In this regard Neera Desai, points out certain dimension from which the women's role within a family is analysed by some scholars. Firstly, they consider the need to treat gender as a central variable in understanding inter family relationships. Secondly, they challenged the notion of considering family as a homogeneous group where all members occupy equal position and derive equal benefits in terms of resources, training and opportunities. Thirdly, they refer to the

question of family boundaries. Fourthly, they also recognise the prevalence of conflictual and consensual relationships in the family.<sup>1</sup> Thus, family here assumes significance where there is acceptance of hierarchical structure as an inevitable component.

The relationship between state and family also indicates gender implications. The development discourse adopted by the government sidelined women and women's welfare. Women's needs and capabilities were not integrated with the development efforts, and as noted earlier Gross National Product [GNP] sufficed as an adequate measure of development which often was not accompanied by increase in employment, equality and anti-poverty measures. It was mainly targeted at the male population while women were relegated to the periphery.

Buvinic (1983) makes a useful point when she refers to different approaches involving women in development. First, they were regarded as productive agents in their capacity as housewives, mothers and as risk producers, which were very much of a residual nature. In the second decade of development, women were linked with poverty alleviation and basic needs which retained a continuity with the earlier welfare approach and the equity approach which emphasised women as economic agents

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<sup>1</sup> Desai, Neera, "Gender Dimension in Family Studies" in Ghanshyam, Shah, (ed.), *Social Transformation in India*, New Delhi, Raiwat Publication, 1997, p. 474.

came only when there was a large scale deterioration of world economy.<sup>2</sup>

The neglect of women in the development process further enhanced the domain of inequality and deterioration of women's status both within the family and the society. The changed notion of the economy, the separation of the economic and the social and the division between reproduction and production further subordinated women to a great degree. Development planning being confined to economic growth did not have the same effect on men and women. Swarna Jayaweera remarks that the progress has since been disappointing. Small scale income generating projects including aspects of family health, water, sanitation etc. have been implemented treating women as mere receivers rather than active contributors. This concept was based on western understanding that women have nothing to do. In these aspects, there arises a great need to examine more extensively contemporary features of family with the advent of development. Highlighted, below are some of the studies of feminist scholars who have studied women and their roles within the family in the light of development.

### **Allocation of resources and gender inequalities**

One of the themes running through studies of family and kinship was the idea that altruism was the characteristic

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<sup>2</sup> Referred as in Kabeer, Naila, *Reversed Realities*, New Delhi, Kali for Women; 1995, pp. 4-8.

feature of the domestic sphere and reciprocity of kinship relations, as against self interest was the driving force of economics. This view, Oommen considers as half-truth and dangerous. It ignores the fact that the family is not monolithic but internally, fractured and the constituting units often maintain hostile relationships among themselves even as they project a picture of harmony for those outside of it. This debate has given rise to a controversy centered on the “irreconciliation of the official model of family as a democratic institution geared towards the welfare and support of its members and the feminist assertion that the family is a site of violence and”<sup>3</sup> this controversy has given rise to a critical introspection among the sociologists in the field of family studies.

The gender inequalities are linked with development through two distinct sets of conditions, namely individual endowments and structural constraints for gender equity. The former refers essentially to the resources that a household will allocate to its women. Intra household allocations that discriminates against women cannot be attributed to particular macro policies but the prevalence of inequitable gender relations in society determines the outcome. The consequences find their expression in education, entitlement to household consumption etc Amartya Sen, the renowned economist has provided a very useful insight into the discriminations shared among entitlement in the family.

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<sup>3</sup> Nenghai, op.cit., p. 31.

He makes a strong plea for bringing families into economic analysis, which would result in raising questions about economic theory and policies. Sen conceives the household as characterised by co-operative conflict, where there are many co-operative outcomes but the different parties have conflicting interests in deciding among the set of effective co-operative arrangements. The resources available to be shared include material resources such as food, clothing and shelter, as well as, the resources devoted to the development of individual capacities, which result from adequate health care, education, and the ways of developing skills. In his study on 'Gender and Co-operative Conflicts' Sen, comes out with some disturbing findings. He finds greater mobility of women vis-a-vis men in Calcutta as a whole and among the slum population in particular<sup>4</sup>. He remarks 'while the level of health tends to improve with income, the differential of men vis-a-vis women seems to be maintained, never expanded.' Similarly in the use of medical facilities in Bombay, he states that there is a clear bias in favour of the male. Girls have consistently a lower hospital utilisation ratio than boys.

In Amartya Sen's research, the debate was cast in terms of unitary versus bargaining models of the household. The former

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<sup>4</sup> Sen Amartya, "Gender and Co-operative Conflicts" in Irene Tinker (ed.), *Persistent Inequalities*, New York, Oxford University Press; 1990, pp. 125-128.

was typically characterised by the aggregation of the preferences of all household members into a joint utility function so that the household is treated as a single decision making unit. Whereas the latter consider the household as a site of both conflict and co-operation where intra-household allocation is the outcome of a bargaining process. Collective models describe the household as a group of individuals with their own preferences among whom collective decision making process takes place.

Naila Kabeer also reviewed the studies debating the welfare maximisation models versus subjugating models of household. Her review of various studies confirmed the existence of gender bias in intra-household distribution. The studies documented not only the existence of female mortality among younger groups and among women in their reproductive years, but also provided evidence of gender related differentiation in household health and nutritional behaviour. This disjuncture in sex differentials and in mortality rates, she attributes, to the response of parents to gender differential in employment rates.<sup>5</sup> Hanna Papanek, while dealing with inequalities in resource allocation on the basis of gender defines, entitlements as being governed by ideas, norms and customs of society.

In spite of development programmes women are still handicapped due to shortfalls in the available infrastructure. In

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<sup>5</sup> Kabeer, op.cit., pp. 95-135.



India the mainstream Hindu traditional practice has always denied property rights to its daughters. After independence, the Indian State has made several gestures towards promoting gender just property laws. However, this was never accepted fully either in spirit or in practice. Meanwhile, as properties have become more valuable through the process of development the earlier community specific conventions, which had given them some rights, have also been eroded. This in turn, affects women in the labour market as she does not have funds to invest in capital or any collaterals against which she could borrow money at less interest.

Aggarwal and Choudhary (1994) note that in the wake of the rising land prices and growth, families have adopted diverse tactics to ensure that such assets do not go to other families through the daughters. This has increased the prejudice against the girl child in the family.

Even in the tribal societies where egalitarian norms are supposed to prevail, a woman's access to land resources is constrained by several social and cultural factors. In many tribal societies social taboos are used to prevent women from enjoying ownership rights. Nongbri, cites the example among the Hos and the Oraons, where a woman's use of the plough is restricted by the belief that it would result in economic and

social calamity. In addition, other retrograde practices like witch hunting are used to dispossess them of their holdings.<sup>6</sup>

Bina Aggarwal too, in her book, *A Field of Ones Own*, has paid attention to women's lack of resources. She puts in three arguments for women's need to possess land. They are Welfare, Efficiency and Equality argument. Land ownership, she says, affects women's bargaining position, social treatment and well being of her children.<sup>7</sup> She also, highlights the gaps between law and social reality which act as a barrier for inheritance. She identifies them as;<sup>8</sup>

1. voluntary giving up of claims;
2. necessity of male mediation;
3. hostility from communities by preventing inheritance by manipulating information;
4. male bias in administrative and judicial bodies.

Another major reason for women's lack of assets lie in the growing privatisation of communal property resources i.e. forests, pastures, gram sabha lands etc. Women have usufruct rights to collect minor produce from the forest for nutrition or marketing, raw material for small-scale industry etc. With forest

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<sup>6</sup> Nongbri, *Gender Issues and Development*, in Rajiv Gandhi institute for contemporary studies, Paper no.47, 1998, p. 31.

<sup>7</sup> Aggarwal, Bina, *A Field of Ones Own*, New York, 1994, pp. 30-40.

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 260-282.

corporations coming up, with their bureaucratic machinery, women's rights have been usurped.<sup>9</sup>

The assessment during the International women's year was that women own less than one percent of world income.<sup>10</sup> Inherent, to the inequalities to entitlements is the differential attainment of education. The Kothari Commission, has described education as the main instrument of change. Regarding the type of education that one should have, the Committee on differentiation of curricula for boys and girls under the chairmanship of Smt. Hansa Mehta (1961) suggested, "that in the ultimate democratic and socialisation pattern of society, education will be related to individual capacities, aptitudes and interests and not related to sex. There would be no need in such a society to differentiate curricula on the basis of sex."

However, despite the great expansion in education after 1947, the progress of literacy among women is slow. Though female literacy has risen from 0.60% in 1901 to 39.42%. In 1991 it is still way behind male literacy, which was 63.86% in 1991<sup>11</sup> Although female literacy rate in India has increased with the rise in population, the total number of illiterate women is increasing. The base of the educational pyramid in India is also narrow as the stage of education rises,"for every 100 girls in

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<sup>9</sup> Swarup, Hemlatha and Pam Rajput, *Women and Globalisation*, New Delhi, Ashish publishing house, 1994, p. 105.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, p. 104.

<sup>11</sup> Census of India, 1991.

class one in rural areas, there are only 40 in class V, 18 in class VIII, nine in class IX, and only one in class XII -the corresponding figures being 82, 62, 32, and 14"<sup>12</sup>. These figures while examined reveal that the drop out rate is 60 at primary, 82 upto upper primary, 91 at secondary and 99 at the end of the higher secondary stage. This was later correlated with the girl child's responsibility to take care of siblings, increased entry of adolescents in the labour force, industrial recession etc.

Hanna Papanek, in her study, was able to locate the reasons for differential educational allocation to boys and girls. She observes:<sup>13</sup> that apart from class and income distinctions, male employment opportunities are seen to be much better than daughters are and moreover, daughters are needed at home to free mothers for wage work or self-employment.

Another study, by Neera Desai, among the Anavils, highlights the school dropouts of girls with the increase in age. Her findings have substantiated the observation that because of household needs the girls are removed from school. This attitude was largely related to the sex-linked division of labour, where daughters are seen as the 'natural helper for the mother.'<sup>14</sup> The mothers too are not keen to send their daughters,

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<sup>12</sup> Swarup and Pam Rajput, *op.cit.*, p. 107.

<sup>13</sup> Papanek, Hanna, 'To Each Less Than She Needs From Each More Than She Can Do: Allocation, Entitlement and Value' in Irene Tinker (ed.), *op.cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>14</sup> Desai, Neera, *op.cit.*, pp. 480-481.

since ultimately she is expected to carry out gender-specified roles at home and kitchen.

Other studies, also asserted that attitudes and expectations of girls towards work, marriage and future in general lead to low educational qualifications. Girls are schooled with the marriage market in mind and their attitude towards work reflect their school experience and their cultural definitions of women's role.

In the middle class, where education is imparted to girls as a status symbol, deprivation of education operates in a very subtle way, where less encouragement is given for girls going in for non-conventional courses like, engineering, medicine management etc.

With the liberalisation and privatisation of education this pattern has changed to a very less extent. With the cost of education escalating, there is a high drop out rate of girls from schools, therefore, sacrificing their academic career for brothers whose education is seen to be of more familial value since daughters do not contribute anything to the family after marriage. Moreover, the increase in the migration of men with industrialisation has burdened the women with household work who retain their daughters to assist them in domestic chores and in collection of scarce material like fuel, fodder, wood etc.

Education is also neglected for another reason. Education broadens the horizon of world experiences and perspectives of

women, which is seen as threatening the scripted role of women. Education is also perceived as immoral where the girls are confronted with chances of pre-marital affairs. Moreover, the demand for dowry remaining unabated in India, with the rise in economic gains and material aspirations, the demand for dowry for educated women and the problem of securing an equally educated man has also been one of the factors.

Nutrition and health status are also the result of the balance between energy expended in production and that obtained through consumption and so the aggregate household 'energy level' is an important determinant of the health of its members. Low status is reflected in poor female nutrition levels, which make women more vulnerable to disease. Men and boys are fed first and receive major allocation of protein. Sons seen as the embodiment of the family's future were favoured with the justification that they must quickly grow and work for the whole family. On the other hand, female work was valued lower than male work and the requirements of women were presumed to be less than man.

It has been shown that in rural Indian families the percentage contribution to the human energy needs of the household by women, men and children is 53, 31 and 16.<sup>15</sup> However, if they fall ill, men are likely to receive medical assistance. Illness of

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<sup>15</sup> "The Power to Change-Women in the Third World Redefine their Environment", *Women Feature Service*, New Delhi, Kali for Women, 1992, p. 13.

girls and women are fatalistically accepted in families. A comparison of male and female death rate for the five year age-group reveals that, females have high mortality than males upto the age of 35 years. This results in lower female life expectancy. This has reduced female sex ratio to 927 in 1991.<sup>16</sup>

In her study on intra-household consumption and authority in north-west India, Rajini Palriwala, notes that household members do not eat together. Male agnates have first priority since they are considered as the earners in the family. Women, as a norm, are supposed to eat after serving food to the adult male members of the family. Also, although women decide on the daily/weekly requirements of food grain, their control over the grain stock is not absolute. As men conduct and control the sale of agricultural products they could veto women's assessment on the quantity to be retained. Hence, Palriwala remarks that commercialisation and money economy were diversifying men's options but whittling away women's control. Therefore, women have to sometimes spend their personal earnings on vegetables and fruits for household purpose.

### ***Women's employment and status role in the family***

The discrimination with respect to entitlements in resources within the household are reproduced in the labour market. Women are excluded from the training programmes and

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<sup>16</sup> Census of India, 1991.

imparting skills that are aimed at improving productivity. In Asian countries, many studies have shown that the male-female differentials in agricultural productivity have been aggravated by the programmes that give pre-eminence to men as heads of the households. Jain shows that it is the men who are provided with training despite the fact that some of the operations are performed exclusively by women. As a result the non-formal education programmes gives women less access to information, which reinforces and stereotypes the traditional roles and abilities of women. These programmes emphasise that women, have to play a supportive and subordinate role in social and economic development .

In traditional societies, the integration of domestic life with productive work was a constant feature. The separation between house and work has become a feature of the industrialised society. The socio-economic changes that accompanied the development strategy gave rise to a class of working women, who entered the informal sector. The rising cost of prices, western education etc. have aroused aspirations for a better standard of living which is the prime factor responsible for women to enter the market sector.

Women's employment in the occupational sector has been determined by economic necessity rather than wage payments. This was further, offset by the 'flexibilisation of labour policy'



adopted by the government to promote Industrial growth. The policy led to the increased use of casual, temporary and contract labour, since the firms preferred employing “flexible” labour, which could be disposed off without being obliged to pay non-wage benefits. They moreover, provided a ‘reserve army of unskilled labour’<sup>17</sup> since they did not have the same educational capital and skill like men. The characteristic of female labour supply was described by Bannerjee (1984) as its lack of response to wage rates and its determination by level of family income. Because, women aim to make up for the deficit in family income which is low, they are prepared to take up any work and at any rate. Employers are able to take advantage of the short-term considerations of women workers and absence of alternatives for the women by hiring them at wages far below their productivity.

Even where women have entered home based industries as a result of state policy, they are accorded the status of ‘family workers’ with no control over their earnings. As in Delhi, droves of women became home-based workers with the closure of hundred and sixty eight industrial units as a result of pollution control orders of India’s apex supreme court. Desperate to keep their families together, they were pushed into employment for

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<sup>17</sup> Reserve army of unskilled labour means the labour used in time of great demand. They are not necessary but are kept as substitutes to be ‘hired and fired’ when in need. They do not form the permanent work force.

the first time in low paid, low skilled, and repetitive work. The conditions of work too are unsafe and primitive.<sup>18</sup>

The care that female children receive vis-a-vis male children may also be positively influenced by the size of outside employment and earning of women vis-a-vis men. It was also assumed that the son preference and neglect of daughter especially in the north have a bearing on lower earning powers of women. But, at the same time, Sen also takes cognisance of the fact that the low level of outside work and earning may also generally harm women's social status and perceived entitlements.<sup>19</sup>

It is now a common feature that women get paid much less than men, often for performing similar work. Their earnings are low because wages are discriminatory and work is seasonal. They are the lowest segment of the workforce and are afforded hardly any statutory protection. Another reason, for wage differentials and household resources was cited by Naila Kabeer who writes about the study of Bhatti's and Mies research. In Bhatti's study, it was found, that women's work in beedi industry - an outside remuneration - gave her more decision making power and resource control than what was explicit in Mies' study

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<sup>18</sup> Dogra, Bharat, 'India Liberalisation-Burden falls on women' *Asia women workers Newsletter*, Vol.18, January 1999.

<sup>19</sup> Sen., *op.cit.*, p.145.

where women work as home based lace workers which gave her a dependent position.<sup>20</sup>

Empirical data, of wage differential with regard to women, has been provided by a study conducted by Duraisamy and Duraisamy (1998) among scientific personnel. Their work reveals that women earn twenty one per cent less than men in all fields of higher education put together. The other important findings is that women in social science and other fields are in parity with men rather than in scientific and technical field. Moreover, a comparison of male-female earnings in the sector of employment has pointed to the fact that women in the organised private sector earned only two-thirds of their male counterparts, whereas the gap was smaller in public Sectors.<sup>21</sup>

Saradomoni. in her work among agricultural labourers in Kerala and Tamilnadu has brought out some aspects of the evil effects of low wages on women. These women claim that they have no social security and their work and wages are themselves uncertain. But, at the same time, their work is crucial for sustenance<sup>22</sup>. The women have now, opted for family planning and nuclear family since the supportive structures have

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<sup>20</sup> Kabeer, op.cit., p.110.

<sup>21</sup> Duraisamy.M., and P.Duraisamy, "Sex Segregation and Discrimination among Scientific Personnel", Maithreyi Krishnaraj (ed.), *Gender Population and Development* New Delhi, Oxford university press, 1990, pp. 59-185.

<sup>22</sup> Saradomoni, "Women, Reproduction and Work" in Saradomoni(ed.) *Finding the household, conceptual and methodological issues*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1992.

withered away with socio-economic changes involving shifts in occupation.

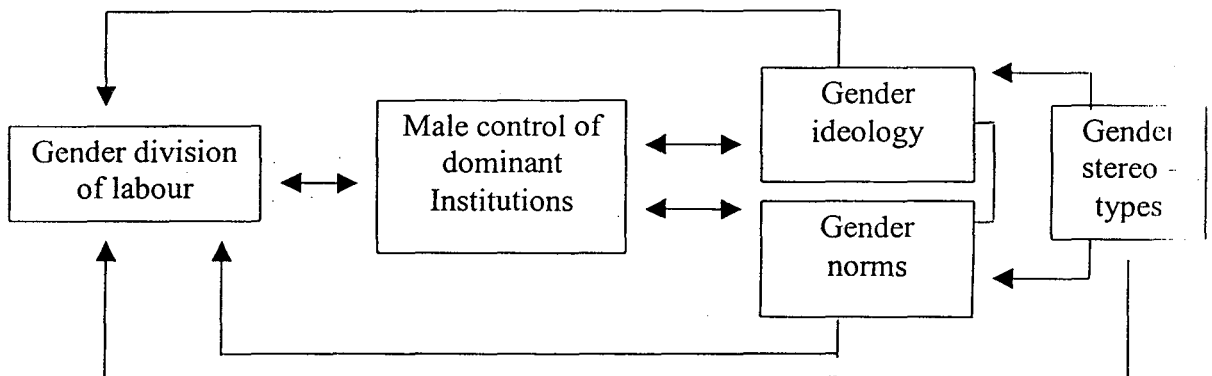
In most societies division of labour is gender specific whereby custom and tradition prescribe the jobs in which women would be employed. Uma Ramaswamy (1996) highlights the reality where in all occupations including agriculture, construction, weaving or village industries; women carry out jobs which are tedious, arduous and low skilled while men corner the more skilled and less onerous tasks. She cites the example of handloom weaving. Women are engaged to carry out the entire range of tasks involved in preparing the yarn for the loom, while men are in charge of the actual weaving. The labour market, even in the organised sector is sharply segmented with lower end jobs being regarded as the proper domain for women<sup>23</sup>. Non-responsible jobs which are an extension of their familial role are only offered to them. Teaching, nursing or ancillary jobs as cooks and domestic servants are easily available to women. When women take up men's jobs such as stenotyping or clerical work the status of the jobs get lowered, and also when women enter male dominated spheres, there is evidence that the status and rewards of such employment also tend to decline. The report of the national committee on the status of women in India also shows that out of 200 operations in the

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<sup>23</sup> Ramaswamy, Uma, 'Women and Development' in A.M. Shah (ed.), *Social Structure and Change*, vol. II, New Delhi, Orient Longman, p. 86.

textile industry, women are employed in no more than four or five. The occupations are categorised as men's or women's on the basis of conventional norms rather than any assessment of changes made possible by development. Thus, gender ideology and gender norms create gender stereotypes and also emphasise the gender division of labour.

The following diagram gives a graphic representation of how division of labour in the economic sector is determined by gender norms and ideology that are inherent in the family:<sup>24</sup>



The world of work should not be separated from the world of family life since women's work life is within this socio-cultural dimension. In fact, there are occasions when the two worlds converge. Kalpana Bardhan, while analysing women's work in relation to family strategies, refers to the fact that the female working poor find themselves holding triple burden of workloads. They are involved in income earning through

<sup>24</sup> In Blumberg, Lesser, (ed.), *Gender, Family and Economy-The Triple Overlap*, New Delhi, Sage Publication, 1991, p.85.

subsistence tasks of production, housework and the labour of daily and generational reproduction.

As a result, one of the enduring consequence of development for women, can be said to be 'the dominant mature feminine role'. Though industrialisation affects the roles of both men and women it enlarges the world outside the home for men. For women, it has meant an involution of the world into the space of the home. Given the changing composition of capitalism, modernisation, urbanisation etc., the sexual division of labour at home is also expected to change.

While women who are formally engaged in domestic duties are forced to work outside their homes, the household arrangement for child care, cooking and other choices do not change. Contrary to Engels' and Marx's contention, the increase in women's involvement in the wage economy in the developing world has not ended her subordination. Rather, it has been accompanied by the transfer of patriarchal attitudes from the household to the factory and the desire to seclude women within the family has encouraged wage differentials, and in many cases women are now expected to carry the double burden of both reproductive and productive tasks. On the other hand, women's expressive role within the family has been emphasised.

'Consumerism' has reinforced the importance of housewife. Housekeeping demands more and more attention. The

development of child psychology and psychoanalysis insist on the importance of mothers rather than fathers, creating a myth of motherhood and making division of labour more rigid. As seen earlier, in the world of education and work outside the home, division between the sexes endure and show signs of becoming more pronounced. The use of 'white collar' occupations has added low-grade clerical and secretarial work to the list of feminine jobs. Thus, female employment far from giving economic independence is only a means by which she maintains herself, her children and family. The occupancy of a new status position by a woman as a housewife, according to Roma Das(1969) is that her extra familial status as a working woman results in enlargement of her status-set. Since each status position has its accompanying role set, this additional status adds another complement of a role set. This gives her less time to fulfil the expectations and demands of her family members. As such she expects a modification in the expectations and demand structures of her family members. When this is not fulfilled, role conflict arises.<sup>25</sup>

Promilla Kapur too states that women face two problems. One is the inner conflict due to dual commitment and concern and the other is the practical difficulty of combining the dual commitment. Even though women's employment reduces the

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<sup>25</sup> Kumar, Vijaya and Chakrapani, 'Women in the Changing Society', in (ed.), *Changing Status and Role of Women in Indian Society*, New Delhi, M..D.publications, 1994, p. 23.

financial strain of the family, most of her in-laws have not accepted the changing life pattern. They are not prepared to share the responsibilities of the household and of looking after the children. These are exclusively considered to be the domain of a wife.

The substitution for the domestic activities again comes from the daughter. Naila Kabeer gives the data provided by Rosenzweig (1986) denoting the existing 'closer substitutability' between the labour of women and children, particularly girls, in domestic chores.<sup>26</sup> Consequently, increase in female wages has led to girl children being withdrawn from school to provide labour in domestic and child care activities.

Ann Oakley also contends that industrialisation has drawn a clear wedge between the domestic and market labour, making the gender responsibilities more conspicuous. She observes, that industrialisation separates men from the daily routine of domestic life. In India, the entire role complexity in family is based on the internal household role hierarchy. It is so but natural that the husband who enjoys superior status in the family is reluctant to do household work, which carries low prestige as well. As Aileen Ross, puts it, "women's tasks in all societies have less prestige than those of men. Women taking over male business or professional roles are moving to a higher

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<sup>26</sup> Kabeer, op.cit., p. 105.



level of job or prestige, whereas men are moving to a lower level of work". It shows that the egalitarian values of modernisation about the sexes in family patterns are yet to be evolved in India.

Even husbands who are unemployed, underemployed or engaged in home based industries devote very little time to household activities. As Kabeer's discussion highlights, men apart from not having any preference for child care activities , they have an aversion to it.<sup>27</sup>

Moreover, in terms of leisure time too, women's time is the key adjusting factor. Her participation in the viable gainful production is accommodated by reduction in their leisure time i.e., her involvement in domestic and childcare activities does not get altered. Maithreyi Krishnaraj writes,<sup>28</sup>

A woman copes with an extra work burden by cutting down on her leisure, sleep and rest. More fundamentally, she might not have any choice at all given the rigid equal division of labour; so that she ends up with-market work + child care + housework + other unpaid work.

Kabeer, citing the work of Sen and Sen(1985), shows that women in trying to maintain a balance between their domestic

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<sup>27</sup> *ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>28</sup> Krishnaraj, Maithreyi, 'A Gender Critique of Economic Theories of Population', in Maithreyi Krishnaraj (ed.), *op.cit.*, p.29.

and wage labour maintain it by prolonging the work hours and cutting short their social activities.<sup>29</sup>

Krishna Chakraborty correctly summarises the position of women within the household: (1) that the change in the position and role of women is still thoroughly ambiguous; (2) the dual responsibilities of home and work are likely to create some difficulties for the incumbents in fulfilling the dual obligations; (3) that the persons performing the dual roles, therefore, are liable to experience a sort of strain and conflict as they are seemingly incompatible.<sup>30</sup>

A woman's decision making power within the family also does not show a change and the power structures within the family remains unaltered. She is not considered as the primary breadwinner of the family, though she may contribute highly to the family income. This could be well explained with Boserup's example, where she points out that women, though living with her dependents was not paid the 'breadwinner wages', while on the other hand, men living without dependents were paid the wages. Women have freedom of decision in matters regarding domestic chores but that too is limited. But, in families where women contribute, the situation may be little different, but it is she who has to make a compromise because of the importance

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<sup>29</sup> Kabeer, op.cit., p.106.

<sup>30</sup> Referred as in Mishra, *Problems and Prospects of Working Women in Urban India*, New Delhi, Mittal Publications, 1994.

attached to her subordinate role. Agarwal (1994) notes an interesting fact in this context; even in communities in which women have traditional property rights, the marriage practices and practices of asset management are such that even these women seldom have any decision making powers in economic activities. They have autonomy of decision making in the household activities and when it comes to the education of children, spending, saving etc., the power of decision making rested in the hands of patriarchy. Though, many studies have described that women are consulted in many households, but they did not contend that they influence decision making. In households where women have decision making powers, they reveal a better nutrition status of children since they give preference to family nutrition patterns rather than private welfare. Examination of the allocation of resources reveal that women are responsible for food expenditures and are more likely to allocate their resources under their control to consumption, with observable nutrition benefits and collective household consumption. On the other hand, the male income was spent on personal forms of consumption on 'adult goods' like alcohol, meat, cigarettes etc. Sen, while referring to this aspect says, "social arrangements regarding who does what, who gets to consume what, and who takes what decision can be seen as responses to this combined problem of co-operation and

conflict”<sup>31</sup> This point has been further reiterated by Rajni Palriwala.

The findings of the various studies outlined above show that the position of women does not change with economic mobility. It has often been noted that how an improvement in the households’ economic position leads to women being withdrawn from economic activities and assigned to take up roles related to the family status and prestige. In the green revolution belt, households have been known to withdraw family labour with a growth in prosperity. This is seen as imposed by men. Mishra, also points out to the loss of women’s autonomy with the introduction of commercialisation of agriculture. He explicitly writes that, though it seems that women’s responsibilities and job opportunities have increased, but latently, women are withdrawn from extra-rural manual agricultural activities with a rise in income. They have only increased their role in the household.

### **Persistent Inequality**

Apart from the inequitable resources allocated to women as a cultural and traditional norm, the state too, within the ambit of development has done little to correct this. The state in the name of development has afflicted damages though not directly, on women. The development process has been male oriented.

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<sup>31</sup> Sen, op.cit., p.129.

The difference in the social and cultural position occupied by the male and female, and the gender prejudice of development, have failed to benefit women. Women are neglected in the planning process, and there has been no reliable standard to measure the effect of development on them, for development itself has failed to challenge the institutionalised basis of male power and privilege.

On the other hand, the tools of development like technology, governmental policies etc., have reinforced women's weaker position and have made her even more vulnerable. She has been subjected to male dominance and is not liberated from the traditional feminine household work. The traditional family norms extend to the wider society where she is seen as 'secondary bread winner' and therefore easily displaced from the market sector. The overall well being of the family and the society dictates the condition of women and makes her an object who responds to the needs of the society. Hence, development as it is assumed, does not change the roles or status of women but merely reinstates them in a dependent position and enhances their traditional female roles.

### ***Technology and status of Women***

Though technology and development are often viewed in conjunction, the benefits of technology have not always been consistently distributed over society as a whole, thus affecting

the development process of different segments of society in a varied manner. Even though, technologies perse are neither gender specific nor have any inherent gender bias, the uneven distribution of assets, resources and knowledge across gender, creates situations where the impact of technologies becomes imbalanced. Foremost is the fear of increased unemployment with new technologies. For women the cost of innovation is often too high, and they find themselves caught in a circular trap. Limited resources and cash generally restrict women's use of technologies that might otherwise increase their productivity and give them access to credit, education and land. Furthermore, the economically marginal position of women makes it very difficult to experiment with their family's welfare. Analysing Parsons' studies, Sandhya Venkateshwaran points out agriculture as the prime example of the displacement of women on account of technological introduction. She cites the study of Chakravarty (1992) where introduction of rice milling left wide spread destitution among women who were involved in the manual dehusking of rice.<sup>32</sup> Fishing is another industry where mechanisation has led to a widespread displacement of women, often forcing them to migrate to distant states where they work under appalling conditions. There are the differences in the impact of technology for different classes of agricultural workers. There were some who benefited with increase in real

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<sup>32</sup> Venkateshwaran, Sandhya, 'Environment, Development and Gender Gap'; New Delhi, Sage Publications, 1995, p.165.

wage rates and larger number of days of employment, due to double cropping, while others were displaced. Women in small cultivator households faced increased work burden by having more farm work in addition to their normal household duties.

The deleterious effect of technology on women have been due to their inability to cope with the new innovations in agriculture and also due to the decline of women's participation in economic activities itself due to the modernisation process. Though large masses of women are engaged in agriculture, they do not have access to new knowledge and demanded the training of women along with men.

Jayati Bannerje also writes about the loss of the meagre source of income to women with the introduction of weedicides and pesticides.<sup>33</sup> Yet there has been no attempt at training and upgrading of skills of these women in order to absorb them in agricultural extension. In dairying activities too, though the production work is predominantly carried out by women, it is men, who by virtue of their membership in dairy co-operatives, have access to training innovations etc.

These assertions test Talcott Parsons' theory on farm women which states that, with industrialisation, women become less responsible for the instrumental role. Sex role specialisation was

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<sup>33</sup> Banerjee, Jayati, 'Implications of Technology for Women in Rural Sector', in Sapru (ed.), Women and Development, New Delhi, Ashish Publishing House, 1989, p.8.

discovered in a majority of the instrumental role activities and is found to follow Parsons' theory.

Palmer (1987) shows that the method of introducing commercial crops and technological improvements in agriculture has the effect of increasing women's work burden and also reduces their ability to secure an equitable share of family and cash income. The change in post-harvest processing may also deprive women of a traditional income earning task.<sup>34</sup>

The informal sector has been the last degree of technological innovations, and it is precisely in this sector that women predominate. Even in the organised sector, women's employment opportunities are limited to less skilled laborious jobs. The labour report found that, in a textile industry, when a new machine was installed, the tendency was to substitute male workers for female workers and to keep women on the older and non-automatic machinery.

Also, rationalisation measures made possible by the new technical equipment often entail the abolition of temporary or part-time job mostly held by women. New technology has transformed financial services and banks have restructured their operations. Today, financial services are linked to world wide networks that demand instant access and response. This has dramatic effects on women's jobs. Women displaced become

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<sup>34</sup> Women Development in the Third World, Routledge London, 1991, p. 51.



dependants on men and enjoy less power in decision making and entitlements of resources, which otherwise they were entitled to with employment.

### ***Population policies and gender bias***

The optimistic conviction that scientific discoveries and technological advancement would overcome the biological differences on which gender inequalities are seen to be based was approached sceptically, where women are seen as objects. In taking the household as the unit of production and consumption, the assumption is that there are no differences between members within the household regarding their capacity to decide as individuals for their own benefit. The utility theory also assumes that the costs and utility of a given set of actions are the same for all members. Population control became the goal of the nation with development strategy due to the lack of availability of resources. Population growth entails hardship in situations where low income and low educational levels increase the burden of dependency and hence household cannot save enough to generate capital.

Projecting population changes over the course of long term economic development, the classical economists treat population as endogenous to development. While economic growth takes place, improvement in living conditions lead to

increase in labour force. This would increase population. But, this increase would be less proportionate because of diminishing returns. On the other hand, new classical economists moved away from this thinking and treated population as exogenous to growth models viewing demographic changes as influencing development.

Marx alone has contested the universalisation of the negative impact of population growth on economic development by the classical economists. Over population, according to him, occurs due to the nature of capitalist development that generates a reserve army of labour, where this surplus is independent of actual population growth.

A perception of development forgets that development is meant for people and that women are also people. There are assumptions relating to the achievement of low fertility level by curtailing the reproductive capacity of women's bodies and not by men taking care to prevent impregnation. This alternative is a secondary issue under patriarchal state agencies.

The measures to reduce population like hormonal drugs, abortion, and sterilisation affects the health of women. The advocates of 'population control policy' treat women as guinea pigs for their experimentation inspite of constant complaints by women affected by it. Maithreyi Krishnaraj notes that, the vocal criticism of women's groups regarding the blatant targeting of

women in family planning programmes, has led to toning down the establishment's previous stance. But the notion of fertility reduction as an end in itself persists.<sup>35</sup> The virtue of self denial inculcated among women aggravates the process. This, accompanied by poor nutrition and hard monotonous work, performed under adverse conditions, creates major health problems.

The rigid pursuance of population policy in controlling the fertility rate has also affected the gender bias, which is increasing in India. The rise in the number of male citizens was caused not only by a rise in the relative mortality of female children after birth, but also by a rise in sex selective abortion and female infanticide. The technology of amniocenteses etc., has been used as sex-selective technology which shows the masculine bias increasing after 1981.

### **Development programmes and the enhancement of traditional feminine roles**

The development policy adopted by the government did not attend to the social structures, which govern the society, and as a result, they have generated many different kinds of inequalities. In essence, the impact of transition to modern economy has meant the exclusion of an increasing number of women from actual participation in the development process.

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<sup>35</sup> Krishnaraj, op.cit., p. 34.

For them, it has meant increasing misery, greater vulnerability and decline of opportunities and status.

Big dams, mega projects and large scale industries bring in devastating changes to peoples ecosystems. The big dams affect villages by way of land submersion, destabilisation, seismic movements, etc. The families pay a heavy price in terms of disruption of their social and community systems and long lasting physical and emotional strains. Sahu and Mishra, describe the consequences of the Angul Talcher Industrial complex in Orissa which has led to a drinking water problem and has affected the health of cattle, leading to additional costs. The displacement caused by the construction activities has affected women greatly. For example, the women displaced by the Sardar Sarovar project, found that they have to engage in wage labour for a living and they contribute a significant amount to family income. But, they perform jobs, which involve a lot of drudgery, long hours of work and unhealthy working conditions. The environmental conditions are more relevant within a gender context because men are employed in other areas and women, who carry out their economic activities, are exposed to the unhygienic and polluted surroundings.

It has been said that as much as eighty percent of India's original terrestrial habitat has been lost. This has affected many families, particularly the ones that earn a living by their

dependence on natural resources. Forest and village commons are sources of livelihood of many rural poor especially women. The health of forests has an impact on the health of soils, availability of ground and surface water etc. A large percentage of rural households depend on water for irrigation, drinking and various domestic tasks. Women are the main gatherers of fuel, fodder and water and their working day is further lengthened with the depletion of and reduced access to forests, water and soil. In some villages in Gujarat even a 4-5 hours search yields little apart from shrubs, weeds and tree roots, which do not provide fuel. In U.P., the growing hardship of young wives' lives with ecological degradation has led to an increased number of suicides among them in recent years.<sup>36</sup>

Brinda Rao's study also points out the consequences of commercialisation of forests in Gujarat. Due to scarcity of fire wood, women have to depend on biomass products like cow dung, weeds and straw for cooking which not only increases the cooking time but also increases the possibility of developing lung diseases, such as asthma from inhaling the toxic fumes.

Vandana Shiva in her book, *Staying Alive* (1988) also writes that women are dependent on nature for 'drawing sustenance for themselves, their families, their societies'. The destruction of

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<sup>36</sup> Agarwal, Bina, 'The Gender and Environment Debate' in Nitya Rao, Luise Rusup and Sudharshan (ed.), *Sites in Change*, New Delhi and U.N. Development Programme, 1996, p. 225.

nature then removes women's main source of 'staying alive'. Drawing upon her experience of working with women's activists in the Chipko movement, she argues that the third world women have both a special kind of dependence and knowledge about nature. This knowledge has been systematically marginalised under the impact of modern science. She attributes the existing forms of destruction of nature and the oppression of women to the history of colonisation and the imposition of western science and a western model of development.

Sanitation, is another major problem caused by deforestation. The women of Kohadiya, in M. P., face an embarrassing experience everyday. They had earlier gone to the forests, but since they did not receive agricultural lands in exchange for the land lost, there was no alternative sector and this made them vulnerable to violence of other kinds like physical and sexual harassment.

In the event of displacement, the law of the land is to determine to take care of the affected persons and entitle them for compensation. But the land acquisition act of 1984 reveals a gender bias by not mentioning, 'what is to be done if the person interested is a woman in case of joint ownership of land and property.' This makes the entire rehabilitation process for women worse and deprives them of their right to entitlement of resources.

The reforms to encourage agro-business have also adversely affected women. Consolidation of landholding is required, to a certain extent, given the high fragmentation of lands. With even government wastelands being offered for agro-business the long-standing demand of the women's movement for land distribution and joint holding of land in the of women becomes more difficult to achieve.

Research studies show that as the ability of women to nurture and provide for the family decreases so does their status and their negotiating power with the family and the community. In many countries, the destitution of women and lowering of their status has resulted from the introduction of cash cropping and agricultural technology. According to a few studies, the introduction of this technology has not improved the status of women. In some areas in Punjab and Haryana, women labourers have been displaced in great numbers with demand for skilled labour.<sup>37</sup>

Aggarwal also reiterates the above point in his study on Punjab. While there has been an improvement in technology used by men in the form of tractors, threshers etc., there has been very little improvement in the apparatus used by women in farming.

In an workshop organised by Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development, at Kuala Lumpur (1998) when it was

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<sup>37</sup> Nadkarni, Vimla, 'Ecological Policy and the Family' in TIS, *Enhancing the Role of the Family as an Agency for Social and Economic Development*, Bombay, 1994, p. 280.

stated that women in Asia suffer the most from globalisation, where the economic crisis has brought massive unemployment and displacement. The adoption of high yielding varieties of rice in states like Andhra Pradesh, Tamilnadu and Orrisa has increased the total labour time of women, more than men.<sup>38</sup> Moreover, women are mostly engaged as family and casual labour, while men have permanent jobs.

The high flow of money has increased the ceremonial expenditure on the occasions of marriage, birth, death etc. As a result, marriage is no more sacred, it is a bargain and the *Kanyadan* concept has attained a different meaning. This has been a reason for the increasing dowry deaths, destitute women etc.

Slavery of women, brought about by globalisation, is clearly seen in commodification of women's bodies through prostitution and trafficking in women. In the uprooted families who have no income for sustenance men work as coolies, women get into prostitution and help in the smuggling of timber from the reserved forests for cash. The migration of men leaves the families in the hands of women, who resort to jobs as housemaids and more often than not, they become prostitutes. Big businessmen have taken the advantage of women without jobs and livelihood raking in profit out of women's bodies. The

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<sup>38</sup> *ibid.*, p. 218.



development of sex tourism in many countries complemented this interest.<sup>39</sup>

Privatisation of health care has further violated and denied women of their access to safe, appropriate, affordable, high quality preventive and curative health care. It has also commodified reproductive health needs. The increase in the cost of medical facilities has made men avail them at the cost of women.

Further, in the current world economic scenario, the inequality in the access to food has created a dangerous political and social situation. The control of food resources affects millions of people and in turn, the community and family. The women, as the provider of food and nutrition, follow restrictions in the belief that men, as providers, should receive priority in nutrition, as they are the primary earners.

The heavy reduction of welfare measures to reduce the budget deficit has adversely affected women. Nata Duvvury has analysed how the tightening of the public distribution system has meant a reduction in the food availability to family, particularly the rural poor. The nutritional impact of such a situation on family especially, child and women can be understood.

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<sup>39</sup> Globalisation, Displacement, Commodification and Modern day Slavery of Women in AWWN, vol.16, 1992, April 1997.

In the case of tribal societies particularly, the process of development, has encroached women's private space. Attracted by the high economic potential of tribal areas, outside men lured tribal women so as to gain access to their lands. However, most of these women ended up merely as objects of economic and sexual exploitation since these men are invariably married who left their wives in the plains. The consequence of this act is that children born out of this relationship are not recognised by the community. Hence, Nongbri summarises that trapped by the gender stereotype of development policies on the one hand, their social and economic backwardness on the other and backed by the gender bias, inherent in the indigenous tribal institution, tribal women are caught in a web of factors, which independently and collectively contribute to and reinforce their subjugation.<sup>40</sup>

The other force is fundamentalism, which is emerging as a reaction to the over-centralisation, marketisation, and encroachment of a dominant ideology of science and secularism from the west, which reinforces control over women and seek cultural identity as distinct from 'modern' culture.

Thus, the structure of patriarchy and male domination in socio-political spheres has caused disability among women in gaining access to the fruits of development. While the nation may be seen as undergoing development, women become more

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<sup>40</sup> Nongbri, op.cit., p. 30.

subjugated to and delinked from the development. What is to be understood here, is that the vulnerability of women is not only related to their sexuality but also to their social and economic backwardness. Hence, equality has to be achieved before any actual development could take place.

## **CHAPTER V**

### **CONCLUSION**

The present study looks at the family in the context of global transformation taking place under the process of development. Family as a basic institution of society cannot be studied in isolation but in its inter-relationship with other institutions. Therefore, it has been a point of reflection over the question of development bringing about a transformation in the family.

Although family studies existed prior to the nineteenth century, they mostly constituted a part of wider societal studies and gained popularity only in the early nineteenth century when eminent sociologists like Parsons and others formulated theories on the functions and the universality of family. These theories were underlined by the developments taking place in the economic institutions and predicted the features that would govern the modern industrialized society. Development as a process was conceived in purely economic terms and humanitarian concerns were ignored. They drew attention to the bifurcation of the world as 'developed' and 'underdeveloped' based on certain 'traditional' features propelling or impelling development. The inter-relationship between the economic,

social and political factors were attended to and that of the emergent culture of the third world was closely examined.

Embedded within the construction of the underdeveloped countries are ideas about women, family and community, that function as points of contrast for development theorists' idealization of a rational forward looking male-dominated public sphere. The conception of linear time played an important role for these theorists and tradition and the feminine were viewed as part of the past. Myrdal points out that the social and economic structure of other countries are different from the West but instead of rethinking the western paradigm, he argues that for development in South Asia, indirect changes in social and institutional structures are necessary as the existing structures hinder economic development. Rostow too contrasts the world of family and household with the modern world of market, technology and science and traditional societies become eligible for take off only when man performs certain specialized functions.

The tendency to think of 'modernity' and 'tradition' as contradictory variables goes back to Tonnies' 'Gemeinschaft and Gessellschaft', Durkheim's 'mechanical and organic solidarity', Comte's 'three stages' etc, where they try to step up a scale of evolution. Parsons' 'pattern variables', Weber's 'religious doctrine of rationality and discipline characterizing the modern

developed world' were the culmination of the evolutionary conception of society.

The functionalist theories of Goode, Parsons etc and the conflict school postulate a grand universal generalization about the evolution of families. They conceive the growth of the family as parallel to the economic organization, therefore they conceptualize the nuclear family as a pattern of the modern world, though they identify the consequences to be entirely different. This conception arises due to the perceived functional incompatibility of the joint family with development.

Parsons identifies traditionalism as a major obstacle to economic development and as a strong pressure-exerting agent to reproduce the existing pattern of economic organization. Developed societies have systems embodying principles of universalism and specificity and occupational roles that free individuals from ties that would interfere with economic production. Therefore the quest for modernity is a battle against the village, family etc. Parsons relies upon the evolutionary model of development. In order to evolve along the scale of development, societies require to emerge from the web of relationships that characterize societies governed by kinship and family ties. By this, the above-mentioned theorists postulate that development is inevitable and societies move from traditional to modern and any society that does not follow this

evolutionary scheme is considered as backward and unadaptable.

The 'conflict model' views family as functional to the capitalists and predicts its death with a change in the economic mode of production. These were macro theories but paid attention mostly to the internal dynamics of the family. For Marx and Engels, the capitalist mode of production was exploitative of women, but they view family relations as part of the private sphere and therefore less central than the public realm. Thus male dominance tends to be viewed as a secondary contradiction that can be addressed only through the transformation of the social relation of production. Hence class relations and other subordinate relations take precedence in these theories.

Development and modernization theorists rely upon evolutionary models of social and political change, which provide an important lens for viewing ideas on development, modernization and gender. This reliance on linear notions of social and political change has come under severe criticism for its reductionism and oversimplification of the development process. In this, they portray development as a struggle for dominance over nature and women. Moreover, in using this model they portray development as the ever-widening ability of men to create and transform their environment and in their linear framework, women are left behind confined to the

household and denied citizenship. As a result, the theories failed to grasp the difference in the accessibility of the fruits of development for the sexes and women, due to their low position and stratification within the family, are only allowed to have a nominal share.

The overall negligence of the study of gender relations in India has been due to the primary preoccupation with the joint family structure, resulting in the focus on family structure and not on power-relations. It is taken for granted that power is vested in the benevolent male authority and the family is considered as being a unique institution because of the effectual nature of resources. It is only in the twentieth century, that some feminist scholars took up the studies of development as affecting the gender role dynamics within the family. For a significant number of families in different parts of the country, developmental projects of various kinds bring their interests in sharp contrast with those of the nation at large. The impact of most developmental projects is assessed in terms of economic benefits accruable to the people in their vicinity and the nation as a whole. This application of the western paradigm has therefore resulted in the neglect of gender relations that are embedded in the family.

In the sociological analysis of marital relations, 'resource theory' is an approach widely used. According to this theory, power is associated with the amount of economic resources controlled by



an individual viz education, occupational income, etc. in the family. Given the gender-based stratification in most societies, these resources are unequally distributed between men and women. With the process of development, this inequality does not decrease, rather gets accentuated as it strengthens the few who are already better placed in the hierarchy. The consequences of development do not hold the same for men and women alike. Women have lost opportunity to earn an income, lost control over their conditions of work and environment and the division between the sexes persists. The economic participation of women is ignored. Planning is left entirely in the hands of the male who does not have any commitment to the development of women. He sees the women as a part of the family and believes that her interests are identical with those of the others in the family. Development theories hence did not ascribe any central position to gender relations. They did not examine the problem latent in different facets and dimensions of change.

Development has not brought about any perceivable change in the status of women. The trickle down effect has not reached the bottom yet. Contrarily, they have accentuated implicitly their low status. The displacement of labour, deforestation, etc. has increased the dependence of women on men and accentuated their traditional feminine role. Development and modernization confined women within their household and

entitled her to lesser familial and societal resources. She is in no better position than her mother and hardly enjoys more rights, resources and income than her foremothers. The neglect of women in the development process further enhanced the existing inequalities and brought about a deterioration in their status within the family and the society. The gender relations in society are determined to a large extent by intra-household allocations and entitlements. The economic policies have so far assumed that the household is characterized by co-operation and altruistic values and has thereby neglected the conflict and bargaining process within the family. The formulation of development policies with this ignorance has further accentuated the inequalities between the sexes. The unequal entitlements to material resources extends to social endowments like education, health, etc. Despite development, women are enrolled in lesser numbers in schools, have less access to medical facilities, etc. The reason behind this is that women are seen as contributing less to the family in terms of monetary value and their roles are perceived primarily in serving the household in spheres that do not hold any economic value. The economics of development does not treat housewives as economically productive.

The only area in which women have been given a leeway is in the sphere of work. Though a woman's employment increases her status within the family, it does not completely liberate her

from the traditional feminine roles. Her work burden increases with an additional role of being economically productive. Though she contributes to the family monetarily, she is not considered to be the primary breadwinner. The decision-making powers rests entirely in the hands of the men. The employment is an extension of family roles, wherein a woman is made to take-up jobs that are traditionally considered to be feminine. Moreover, women provide a 'reserve army of labour' and 'flexibilisation of labour'. Her employment in the occupational sector is determined by economic necessities rather than wage payments.

Women's employment, despite increasing their work burden, drew a clear wedge between the domestic and market labour, making the gender responsibilities more conspicuous. Daughters are retained at home to assist their mothers. Women enjoy less leisure and even their earnings are spent for the well being of the family as a whole. Many feminists draw attention to the increase in nutrition and health standards of families where women are earning members.

Development so far has not signaled any improvement in a woman's access to resources and increase in status and at the same time the instruments of development like technology, policies and programmes have increased the role of women only within the household. New technological and scientific inventions have displaced women from the labour force and

have confined then to the household as dependents on male members. The rights over decision-making and over earned resources have given her some mobility in the familial status and roles. This mobility is further retarded by technological inventions, which results in more and more women being displaced and in being made less responsible for the desired instrumental role.

In the implementation of development policies, women are treated as objects and are not taken into account in the planning and implementation of these policies. Therefore women are being more affected than helped by these policies. Technology has accelerated the fragmentation of the labour process to drudgery and has created unhealthy working conditions. Deforestation has made women more vulnerable and has increased their work burden within the family. Girl children are increasingly withdrawn from school to assist their mothers in the collection of scarce resources. Deforestation has also pushed them into poverty. Since food has become scarce, she is entitled to a lesser share and their economic activities are also reduced since they are deprived of the basic raw materials through which they had earned their living. Sanitation and property rights are some of the other features particularly related to women in the process of development.

The above mentioned features summarize that development was seen as a universal process, paying no attention to the

disharmonies and the distortions implicit in it. They have been inadequate in seeing women as active, acting agents of development. Moreover, the fact that modernization developed in western Europe and America has led to the influence of the western paradigm in studying one's own society which has been largely criticized by feminists and under-development theorists. They stress on the indigenisation of the development process, incorporating the people's basic needs, value, equality, etc. thereby asking for a reassessment of western thought. An alternative paradigm of development is demanded where science and technology need a change of diction and a new thrust so that they address the solution of human problems meaningfully. With this revision, even the social sciences, which depend on the western development model, would focus with value neutrality on development and its consequences for family and family dynamics.

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