Indira Gandhi National Open University
National Centre for Disability Studies

MCFT-001
Human Development and Family Relationships

THE FAMILY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

2

"शिक्षा मानव को बन्धनों से मुक्त करती है और आज के यग में तो यह लोकतंत्र की भावना का आधार भी है। जन्म तथा अन्य कारणों से उत्पन्न जाति एवं वर्गगत विषमताओं को दूर करते हुए मनुष्य को इन सबसे ऊपर उठाती है।"

– इन्दिरा गांधी

"Education is a liberating force , and in our age it is also a democratizing force, cutting across the barriers of caste and class, smoothing out inequalities imposed by birth and other circumstances"

- Indira Gandhi

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Block

2

THE FAMILY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

UNIT 6
Diversity in Family Forms 5

UNIT 7
Family Dynamics: Mapping Family Relationships 29

UNIT 8
Family Theories - I 45

UNIT 9
Family Theories - II 66

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BLOCK 2 THE FAMILY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

The previous Block of this Course clarified basic concepts and theoretical approaches to Human Development. Units under the previous Block dealt with introduction to human development, its biological perspective and various theoretical approaches to human development. In this Block, "The Family: Theoretical Perspectives" you will be introduced to various theoretical approaches to family. You will study different family forms and family dynamics. This Block consists of four Units.

Unit 6 is on *"Diversity in Family Forms"*. The Unit defines family in different ecological contexts especially relevant in India. It clearly differentiates family from household. In the beginning of this Unit, you will be introduced to various traditional forms of family in India, such as nuclear family, family of orientation, family of procreation, system family, lineal family, joint family etc. You will understand the concepts of polygamy, monogamy, endogamy, exogamy, hypergamy, hypogamy and isogamy. The different types of residence like partilocal residence, auneulocal residence, neolocal residence, virilocal residence and uxorilocal residence will also be explained. Besides the traditional family forms, alternate forms of family will also be described; for example, single parent family, woman headed household, childless family, adoptive family, dual earner family, step family and migrant family. In the end of this Unit we will discuss the disintegration of joint families.

Unit 7 is *"Family Dynamics: Mapping Family Relationships"* which mainly deals with family dynamics and various factors that affect family dynamics. The former part of the Unit defines the concept of family dynamics. It explain internal dynamics of Indian families with the help of some examples. As you go through the Unit you will know about the various roles that are expected in family system and also the factors that are determinant to these roles and relationships. This Unit explain the changes that occur in family due to various factors like globalisation, media and technology etc. In the end of this Unit we will study how family dynamics reflects in the behaviour of family members.

Unit 8 is entitled *"Family Theories – I"*. As the name suggests, this Unit starts with the introduction of family and it also differentiates family theories from other associations. The Unit further elaborates the criteria for evaluating family theories. This Unit includes three main theories of family, namely, developmental theory, systems theory and social exchange theory. This Unit will help you in differentiating family theories from other theories. After studying the Unit you will be able to explain the concepts that are associated with the family theories, and apply these theories in day-to-day life.

Unit 9 is *"Family Theories – II"* which is in continuation with the previous Unit. This Unit covers other three major theories of family that are structural functional theory, feminist theory and bio-ecological theory. In structural functional theory we will discuss social systems, the key concepts and empirical application of this theory. Similarly, in feminist theory we will explain the assumptions, concepts and empirical applications of feminist theory. Assumptions, concepts and empirical applications for bio-ecological theory will also be discussed in this Unit.

UNIT 6 DIVERSITY IN FAMILY FORMS

Structure

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Families in Different Ecological Contexts

6.2.1 Family and Household

6.3 Traditional Forms of Family in India

6.3.1 Forms of Family and Marriage

6.3.2 Joint, Extended and Nuclear Families

6.3.3 Inter-caste and Inter-religious Marriages

6.4 The Life Cycle of Household Forms

6.5 Alternate Forms of Family

6.5.1 Single Parent Families

6.5.2 Woman Headed Households

6.5.3 Childless Families

6.5.4 Adoptive Families

6.5.5 Dual Earner Families

6.5.6 Reconstituted / Step Families

6.5.7 Migrant Families

6.6 What is Disintegrating? Joint Family or Joint Household?

6.7 Let Us Sum Up

6.8 Glossary

6.9 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

6.10 Unit End Questions

6.11 Further Readings and References

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Human society is an evolving society. Its structure has changed in response to environmental and economic conditions from a hunter-gatherer society to an agricultural society to an urban society. The structure of the basic social unit of human society, which is the family, evolves in response to the changes which take place in the society.

In this Unit, you will study about the meaning of family and how it is different from a household. Reading about the traditional forms of family in India and the life cycle of household forms will help you get a better picture of families in the Indian context. This Unit further introduces you to various alternate forms of Indian family, some of which already existed and some of which are emerging. You must have heard a lot about how the Indian joint family is breaking into a nuclear family. Is that really true? By the end of this Unit you will get an answer to this question also.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Know the Indian family in different ecological contexts;
- Describe the traditional forms of family in India;

- Explain the family life cycle of household forms;
- Recognise the alternate family forms and identify the characteristics and reasons for their formation; and
- Discover whether the joint family in India is disintegrating or not.

6.2 FAMILIES IN DIFFERENT ECOLOGICAL CONTEXTS

All of us live in families for the most of the time in our lives. What comes to your mind when you read the word 'family'? 'Grihasthi' (Household), 'Kutumb' (Joint/Extended Family), 'Pariwar' (Family) are some of the words that may come to mind. Before understanding the nature of family in India, let us first read some definitions of *'family'*. The family may be defined as 'a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood /adoption; but not necessarily constituting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other in their respective social roles'. The members of the family may comprise husband and wife, mother and father, brother and sister, son and daughter, paternal uncle/aunt, niece/nephew, in-law relationships or any other blood relationships.

Family is universally accepted as the basic unit of society. While there is no universally accepted definition of family, there is a broad consensus about the role of family in society and the functions it should perform, namely procreation, socialisation, providing affection as well as emotional and economic support.

As a biological unit, a family is composed of a man and a woman who have a socially approved sexual relationship and legitimate child or children. As a social unit, a family is defined as a group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption, performing roles based on age, sex and relationship, and socially distinguished as making up a single household or sub-household. The word 'family' has often been used as a synonym of 'household', but in reality both have very different meanings. You might think what is then, the difference between a family and a household?

6.2.1 Family and Household

A *household* is one of the several dimensions of the family. Household is a residential unit, which is distinct from family. A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit. A housing unit can be a house, an apartment, a group of rooms, or a single room. The occupants may be a single family, one person living alone, two or more families living together, or any other group of related or unrelated persons who share living arrangements. These members may not necessarily be related in kinship terms, that is, they may be domestic help or temporary guests.

For examples

The Kumars are a close-knit family. Mr. Kumar lives in an apartment in Bangalore, as he recently got transferred. Mrs. Kumar lives in Ahmedabad in a bungalow with their two school going children. Mr. Kumar visits his wife and children once in a month. They are constantly in touch with each other,

especially when it is something important. They make it a point to be together on important occasions and festivals. The Kumars have two households (residence) but they are still very much one family.

Mr. Suresh Yadav migrated to Delhi from Bihar to earn and support his family members which include his parents, brothers and their wives and children and his own wife. He lives in a slum in Delhi and shares his room with two other migrants from his village. Here too, Mr. Yadav has two housholds but one family.

So now you know that a family is a kinship unit. Even when the members of the family do not share a common household, the unit of family continues to exist as a sociological reality.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following question carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answer with that provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Define the terms 'family' and 'household' and explain the difference between the two in your own words.

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6.3 TRADITIONAL FORMS OF FAMILY IN INDIA

6.3.1 Forms of Family and Marriage

The basic unit of family is *'nuclear'*, which consists of a man, his wife and their children (biological or adopted). Children of nuclear families are unmarried and this type of family is generally financially independent of other families. Nuclear families are based on conjugal relationships. These families are of two types; one is in which a person is a procreator and the other in which he/she is procreated. These are respectively called family of procreation and family of orientation. From the perspective of children, the family is a *family of orientation*. The family plays a major role in their enculturation and socialisation. *Enculturation* is the process by which a person learns the requirements of the culture by which he or she is surrounded, and acquires values and behaviours that are appropriate or necessary in that culture.

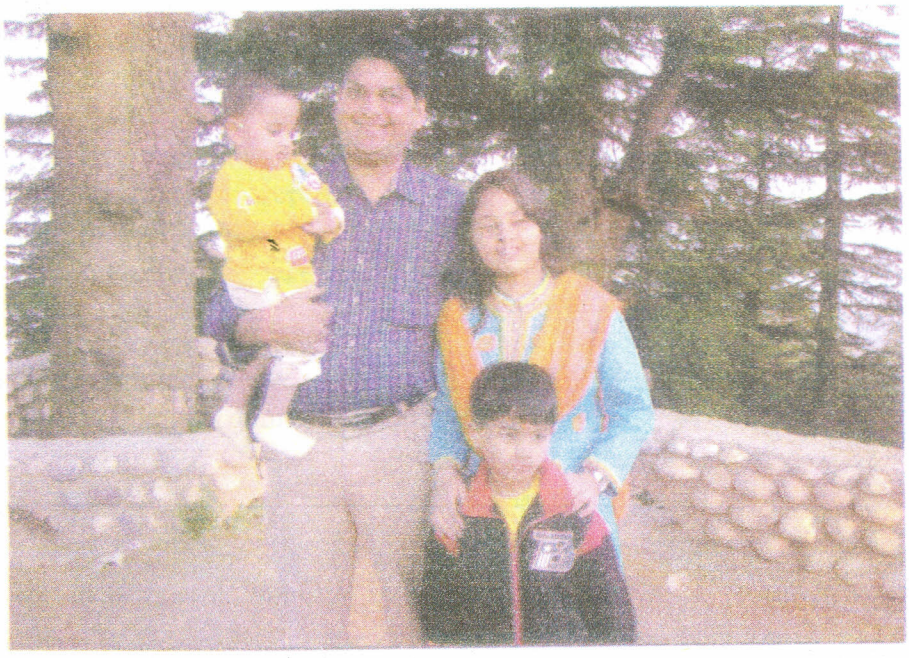

Fig. 6.1: Nuclear family

From the point of view of the parent(s), the family is a *family of procreation*, the goal of which is to produce and socialise children. For units larger than the nuclear family, various terms are used like stem family, joint family and extended family. A *stem family* is a family consisting of the family of procreation of one married child linked with the family of orientation in one common household; for example, when a married son stays with his wife and children in the same house as his parents. When families of procreation of several married siblings are linked to their common family of orientation, they constitute a *lineal family*. It may happen that with the death of their parents such a family may dissolve into a laterally extended family or individual nuclear families. An *extended* or a *joint family* is the one in which three or more generations live together with both vertical and lateral extensions and have a single line of authority.

Fig. 6.2: Extended family

The two terms extended and joint are often used interchangeably. These families are based on consanguineous relationships. There appear to be significant regional differences in the prevalence of joint households. According to Pauline

Kolenda (1968), the joint household is the strongest through a continuous belt across north India, and it is the weakest in south India. A *modified extended family* is a type of family which is nuclear in nature as far as the living arrangement is concerned but joint or extended when we talk about the familial and kinship bonds. It is a typical family which is geographically apart from extended blood relations but together in times of need and special occasions.

Similar to the family types, India has various types of marriage systems. As a social institution, marriage is a part of the family. The institution of marriage regulates the relationship between one or more men to one or more women and provides for the creation of family. The word *monogamy* refers to the marriage of one man with one woman at one time. *Polygamy* includes two systems, namely polygyny and polyandry. A *polygynous* marriage occurs when a man marries two or more women.

Fig. 6.3: Polygyny

This system was prevalent among the kings, royal families, village landlords and 'strong males'. Currently, this practice is prevalent in the Muslim community. A *polyandrous* marriage takes place when a woman marries two or more men (See Fig.6.4).

Fig. 6.4: Polyandry

The earliest reference to the practice is perhaps in the *Mahabharata*, where we find that *Draupadi* was the common wife of the five *Pandava* brothers. It was quite common among Khasis of Assam, Nairs of Kerala, Coorgs of Coorg, Todas and Kotas of Nilgiri and Khasas of Uttar Pradesh (Mullatti, 1992). Polygyny obviously tends to strengthen man's dominion over woman, as compared to either polyandry or monogamy. Most marriages you come across today will be monogamous in nature. Certain rules of marriage like *endogamy* (the rule enjoining marriage within a specified group) and *exogamy* (the rule prohibiting marriage within a specified group) are meticulously followed till today. In the rules for marriage partner selection, it is emphasised that the spouse must be from the same caste, but different clan. Marriage outside the caste is allowed following the principle of hypergamy (*anuloma*) and hypogamy (*pratiloma)*. In the practice of *hypergamy*, the woman is married to a man of higher social status. This is known to exist widely among the Brahmins, Patidars, Marathas, Rajputs, Gujars and Nambudiris. Hypergamy is one of the major causes of increase in the practice of dowry. In the practice of *hypogamy*, the woman is married to a man of lower social status. *Isogamy* refers to a practice where marriage takes place between status equals.

A normal custom in the Indian society is that after marriage, a young man and his wife begin their married life not in an independent household, but with the husband's parents. A *patrilocal* residence means residing with or near the patrilineal relatives of the husband. A matrilocal residence means residing with or near the mother of the wife. *Avunculocal* residence is either with or near the maternal uncle, or with or near the male matrilineal kinsmen of the husband. *Neolocal* residence is a place where the husband and wife reside, which is not determined by the kin ties of either. *Virilocal* means that the couple (husband and wife) resides with the husband's family members after getting married to each other. It is equivalent to patrilocal but specialised to instances where the husband's patrikin are not aggregated in patrilocal or patrilineal kin groups*.

Uxorilocal means that the couple (husband and wife) resides with the wife's family members after getting married to each other. It is the opposite of the term virilocal. It is equivalent to matrilocal but specialised to instances where the wife's matrikin are not aggregated in matrilocal and matrilineal kin groups*.

** The terms virilocal and uxorilocal are better than the terms patrilocal (living with father) and matrilocal (living with mother) because they may mislead: whose father? or whose mother?*

Fig. 6.5: Virilocal family

As far as the authority within the Indian families is concerned, most Indian families are patriarchal in nature. *Patriarchy* is the structuring of society on the basis of family units where fathers have primary responsibility for the welfare of, and hence authority over, their families. The literal meaning of patriarchy is the rule of the father or the *patriarch.* Originally, it was used to describe a specific type of 'male dominated family'. A large household of the patriarch would include women (wife and daughters), junior men (bothers and sons), domestic servants or any other relatives staying with the family.

Matriarchy is a term, which is applied to a form of society, in which the leading role is played by the female, especially the mother. A woman in a matriarchal society would be in a dominant position and control the state power, religious institutions, economic production, trade etc. *Patrilineal* descent implies that the descent is reckoned exclusively through male links and *matrilineal* descent is when the descent is reckoned exclusively through female link.

Fig. 6.6: Matrilineal family

Therefore, children taking on last names of their father, or sons inheriting their fathers' property imply a patrilineal descent, while matrilineal descent is when children take on their mothers' last name or when daughters inherit property from mothers. It is important to distinguish between the terms matriarchal, matrilineal and matrilocal. There might be matrilocal and matrilineal societies which may not necessarily be matriarchal. The Nair community in Kerala in South India is a prime example of matrilocal and matrilineal family. The community being warriors by profession, were bound to lose male members at youth, leading to a situation where the females managed the family. A traditional Nair family is called a *Tarawad* or *Marumakkathayam* family. After an official pre-puberty marriage, each woman received a series of visiting husbands in her room in the *taravad* at night. Her children were all legitimate members of the *Taravad*. A traditional Nair *Tarawad* consists of a mother and her children living together with their mother's eldest surviving brother or the eldest surviving maternal uncle, who is called *Karnavan*. The *Karnavan* exercises full powers over the affairs of the family. Until recently, the main significance of this system was that the heirs to the property were the women in the family and the men were only allowed to enjoy the benefits during their

lifetime. The naming system of the Nair community had the prefix of their mother's 'family name'. The *Marumakkathayam* system of Kerala was a legal right which determined inheritance through the female line. In the recent years though, this system is weakening and disappearing under the pressure of patriarchal ideology.

Another example is that of the *Khasi* tribe of Meghalaya. Sons have no right to the ancestral property except in rare case of there being no female issue in the family. A woman during her life-time may give her *self-acquired* property to either her son or her daughter but if she dies without giving any indication about its disposal, it goes to her youngest daughter. If a woman dies unmarried, her self-acquired property goes to her mother or sister. A *Khasi* husband goes to live in his wife's house. *Khasis*, many of whom have become Christian, have the highest literacy rate in India, and Khasi women maintain notable authority in the family and community.

6.3.2 Joint, Extended and Nuclear Families

You have read about the various types of families, which include nuclear, stem, extended and joint families. Rural households tend to be larger on an average than urban households (5.59 to 5.33 members respectively) (Shah, 1991) and hence, joint households are more numerous in rural than in urban areas. Higher castes in the rural communities have predominantly joint families whereas the lower castes have more nuclear families. The joint family is predominant among the agricultural caste, who may be landowners. As in most primarily agricultural societies, few individuals can hope to achieve economic security without being part of a cooperating group of kinsmen. The joint family is also common in cities, where kinship ties can be crucial to obtaining scarce jobs or financial assistance. Business families tend to retain joint family arrangements.

In an extended family, several generations of one family live together sharing home and extended family activities. At times, members of the larger family come and stay with their relatives. Also relatives may live near each other and help each other in distress.

The joint family is defined as a group of people who generally live under one roof, eat food cooked at one hearth, hold property in common, participate in common family worship and related to each other as other particular type of kindred.

6.3.3 Inter-caste and Inter-religious Marriages

Today, many inter-caste marriages take place. Inter-caste, inter-regional and inter-religious marriages have become an important element in the making of a new class, which may be called *cosmopolitan* (Shah, 1998). In the recent years, the attitude towards inter-caste marriages and inter-religious marriages (more for the former) is gradually changing due to changes in the family system, occupational mobility, increasing economic independence of women, increase in educational levels, urbanisation, industrialisation and globalisation (Ahuja,1993). In the initial years, everyday adjustment issues related to language, food habits, religious beliefs, customs and practices may play out more markedly in inter-caste marriages. Nevertheless, there is greater accommodation of inter-caste rather than inter-religious marriages.

Families in India are thus classified along several dimensions. Look at the table below:

Marriage	• Monogamous • Polygamous – Polygynous – Polyandrous
Location	• Patrilocal / Virilocal • Matrilocal / Uxorilocal • Avunculocal • Neolocal
Authority	• Patriarchy • Matriarchy
Descent and Inheritance	• Patrilineal • Matrilineal
Kin Composition	• Nuclear • Joint • Extended

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Fill in the blanks:

1) .....refers to the marriage of one man with one woman at one time.

2) .....residence is a place where the husband and wife reside, which is not determined by the kin ties of either.

3) .....is a term, which is applied to a form of society, in which the leading role is played by the woman and especially by the mother.

4) .....descent implies that the descent is reckoned exclusively through male links.

5) ..... is the practice in which the woman is married to a man of higher social status, whereas the practice of .....is one where the woman is married to a man of lower social status.

6.4 THE LIFE CYCLE OF HOUSEHOLD FORMS

Contrary to the Western practice where the newly married couple sets up an independent household of their own (neolocal), in India many young couples begin their married life not in independent households but with the husband's parents (patrilocal). All households undergo a developmental cycle. Let us

take the example of a nuclear household consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried children. With the marriage of the first son, this would develop into a joint household of parents, the married son and his wife, and unmarried children. If there are more sons, the household will expand further with the marriage of each son. In the course of time, the household will be divided into nuclear households. Thus across different sections of the society, both nuclear and joint households exist at any given point in time.

6.5 ALTERNATE FORMS OF FAMILY

Alternate forms of family like single parent families, woman headed families, childless families, adoptive families, dual earner families, step families and migrant families have always been in existence in all societies. The fact is that family patterns are found to vary on a continuum, from traditional to non-traditional family patterns. Yet, for a long time research on family was focused mainly on the traditional stable family pattern comprising married cohabiting adults and their children. Family sociologists were generally preoccupied with defining and describing the traditional forms of family, which are considered the dominant form in most societies (Bharat, 1994).

Can you think of some reasons as to why research and study on alternate family patterns was neglected? Well, one reason for this neglect may be that although the variations in family patterns existed in society, they were fewer in number and hence less visible. Another reason was the bias towards other variant family forms like woman headed households and their treatment as incomplete, exceptional and non-traditional patterns of living. This bias resulted from the weak position of women in society and high value attached to wholeness and stability in marriage and family living.

Fortunately, the situation is changing and the non-traditional family patterns are becoming visible throughout the world and are accepted as alternative family patterns (Bharat, 1994).

Let us together understand the alternate forms of family. While you are reading about them, you should make an attempt to think of such families around you to better understand the concept.

6.5.1 Single Parent Families

Single parent families are those families in which the children reside with one parent, who shoulders the major responsibility of their upbringing. A single parent is a parent who cares for one or more children without the assistance of another parent in the home. Single parenthood may occur for a variety of reasons. It could be opted by the parent (as in divorce, adoption, artificial insemination, surrogate motherhood, or extramarital / unwed pregnancy, migration of one of the parents) or be the result of unforeseeable occurrence (such as death or abandonment by one parent/desertion, long term imprisonment or prolonged hospitalisation of one of the parents). Single parent families can be single father or single mother families, permanent or temporary and involve physical absence of a parent.

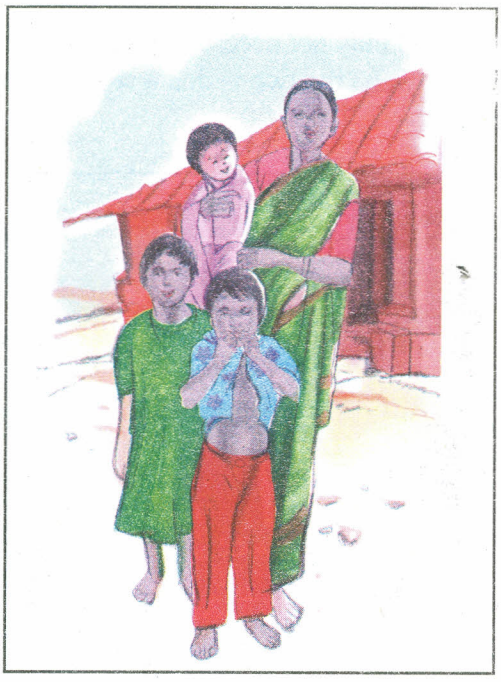

Fig. 6.7: Single parent family

Single parents are more vulnerable to stressful life events and every day strains and have fewer resources for coping with stress. In most cases, the single parent has to also play the role of the missing parent. It is important for the single parent to undergo a process of role distribution to adjust adequately to the existing situation. Maintaining contacts with the non-custodial parent is a major issue with the single parent in the case of divorce or separation.

Women who are uneducated and have not entered the productive labour force before becoming a single parent face more financial problems compared to women who may have their own income. Single fathers on the other hand realise that being a full time parent requires a surprising amount of time and skills and they might have to alter their work schedules, curtail job responsibilities and adjust to decrease in income. This does not turn out to be very difficult for men who continue to live with their family of orientation after separation, divorce or death of the spouse.

Single parenting is healthy where it is opted rather than when forced upon. Single parenting may be a stage of life rather than a lifelong family form. There is a possibility that individuals remarry and form a step family. There are more women single parents compared to men. If single parenting is a result of separation and divorce, children are more likely to stay with the mother.

6.5.2 Woman Headed Households

As single parent families are mainly headed by women, they are also referred to as *women headed households*. It is important to understand the difference between the two terms, that is, single parent families and woman headed households. You already know that single parent families imply the absence of either parent due to the reasons mentioned above, but a woman headed household on the other hand generally refers to those families where women are heads of the families by virtue of their main earner status. The woman's role as the economic provider regardless of the presence or absence of the male at home is central to the definition of a woman headed household. A

woman headed household may not necessarily be a single parent family. Another important difference between the two is that a woman headed household may or may not have children.

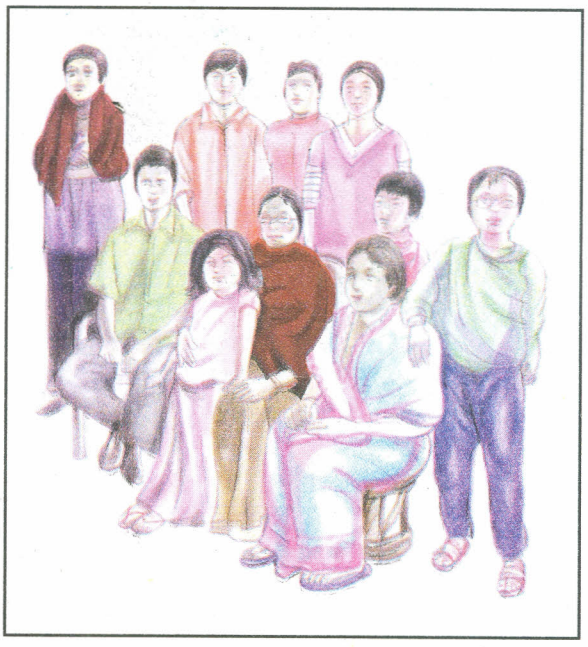

Fig. 6.8: Woman headed family

6.5.3 Childless Families

Childlessness is a term that refers to a person, couple or family that does not have any children. Childlessness may be the result of:

1) **Medical condition:** Infertility or other health problems that would prevent them from having children.

2) **A deliberate choice:** Some people are childless by choice. They do not see the absence of having a child as lacking in any way.

3) **Circumstances:** Some people are childless by circumstance, meaning that they have not made a conscious choice to never have children, nor is there any medical condition preventing them from having children. They may be childless while pursuing a career or are simply delaying child-rearing until they are financially stable. They may also want children but are single or partnered with somebody who is ambivalent or against having children.

Whether the family is childless out of deliberate choice, circumstance or infertility, it is always associated with stigma. Children are primarily considered a social obligation and a support system for old age. The Indian society views childless families as incomplete and inferior. The burden of stigma rests with the entire family, but more with the woman. Sometimes, being childless undermines any other merits or achievements that a woman might have. If the couple is childless due to a medical problem with the husband, it is still the wife who is blamed in most cases. Women face a lot of pressure to produce a biological child, and undergo all kinds of treatments to bear a child. They may also opt for adoption, surrogacy or in-vitro fertilisation.

6.5.4 Adoptive Families

Procreation is the natural process by which a family of parents and children is created. Such a family is called a *biological family*. This is the predominant type of family found in society. However, a family may also come into existence by a socio-legal process. In adoptive families, childless couples adopt a child or children from known or unknown backgrounds. *Adoption* is the legal act of permanently placing a child with a parent or parents other than the "biological" mother or father. An adoption order has the effect of severing the parental responsibilities and rights of the birth parent(s) and transferring those responsibilities and rights to the adoptive parent(s). After the finalisation of an adoption, there is no legal difference between adopted children and those born to the parents.

Fig. 6.9: Adoptive family

Adopted children usually become family members after the couples have tried unsuccessfully for an extended period of time to bear their own children. Another reason could be where a child is found abandoned and its family cannot be traced. Often people adopt out of compassion, sometimes motivated by religious or philosophical conviction. Others may choose to adopt instead of creating a new life, to avoid contributing to perceived overpopulation. Sometimes, people choose to adopt if they are single (never married/divorced/separated/widowed).

Many children are older at the time of their adoption, while some are newborn. When children are adopted at a young age, it is easier for them to accept the culture of the family in which they are reared. Very young children will not even be aware of their adoptive status, till the time when their parents or someone else discloses this to the child. When children are adopted at an older age, they are mostly aware of their adoption. It is essential to disclose the adoption status to children who are unaware of it in a positive manner. Children who may grow up thinking that they are the biological children of their parents may be shattered to learn the fact that they are not. At times, it may happen that childless couples have their own child a few years after the adoption. At this juncture, it is important that parents are not biased towards the adopted child and that they do not provide unjust or differential treatment to the adopted child.

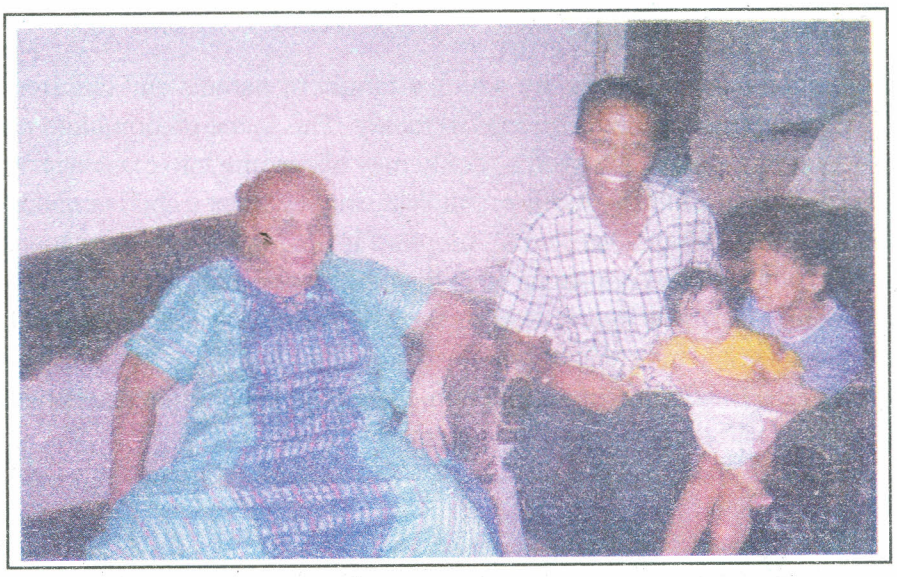

Fig. 6.10: Adoptive family

Adopting child/children in India is not an easy matter. In most cases, it is the last resort when couples are unable to have their own children. Sometimes, children of one's sibling or a close relative are adopted. There are many myths associated with adoption such as the adopted children will never be really yours and you can never love them as much as your own children. Mature adults can and do love their adopted children quite as much as any they might bear. Loving or not loving an adopted child is more a state of mind which needs to be cultivated.

6.5.5 Dual Earner Families

In dual-earner families, both, wife and husband pursue uninterrupted life-long careers while establishing and developing a family life-style that often includes children (Gilbert, 1985). Careers typically require a high degree of personal commitment and often provide individuals with a sense of progressive achievement by offering the chance to obtain promotions or other accomplishments.

The term "dual career" is restricted to a small proportion in which both, the wife and husband have professional or managerial positions. In today's society, economic conditions, couple preferences and family needs have created many dual earner families. According to Hood (1986), three types of dual-earner families have emerged. These are:

1) **Main-secondary earners:** The family relies on the second income for improving the quality of life. The possibility always exists that the wife can or will quit work in the future.

2) **Co-earners:** The two incomes and expenses are pooled and the wife cannot quit work because her income is needed to sustain the desired standard of living.

3) **Ambivalent co-earners:** There is an acceptance of dependence on the wife's income; the ideas of who "is" and "should be" responsible for providing family needs are ambivalent.

A number of critical factors promote the formation of dual earner families. These factors include desire of the families to achieve higher levels of living, women wanting to work outside the home for self fulfillment and financial independence, technological advances that freed women from constraints of household work and desire of families for security in the event of husband's low paid job or loss of job.

Indian families still dwell on the concept of separate worlds of work and family for men and women, that is, men are associated with productive labour while women are associated with reproductive labour. Ideally, members of the dual earner families are expected to share household chores and responsibilities in a relatively egalitarian manner, but in most cases the concept of traditional divisions of labour compel a woman to play multiple roles which involve managing home as well as employment.

In dual earner families, stress is caused by multiple or conflicting work, marital and parenting roles. Playing multiple roles can result in work overload, family problems and problems at work. The dual earner families are many times faced with the question of whose career is a priority. Most people including women believe that the husband's job is more important and that he should be the main financial provider. The attitude of the husband and other family members toward the employed woman is very crucial. Traditional stereotypic gender attitudes are likely to augment the burden on the woman.

6.5.6 Reconstituted / Step Families

A step family is a family, which is formed through remarriage after divorce or widowhood. In step families, both, the husband and the wife or at least one of them has children from previous marriage. Step families have been given many names like binuclear, integrated, complicated, merged, reconstituted, blended or combined.

Step families have a complex structure. There are many different combinations of roles and relationships, making step families quite different from nuclear families but also from each other. Step families are composed of two or more previously separate systems. Relationship boundaries may be porous. Children will spend a great deal of time with each biological parent. Due to children transitioning between two households, the boundaries are often unclear and permeable. This may create uncertainty in affiliation and togetherness, and become a source of stress.

Step family is born out of loss. The loss may be plural that is, loss of family, friends, home, work, school, neighbourhood, dreams etc. At times, grief is a constant companion for all family members in the first few years. Memories of the past hurt and disappointments do not fade away quickly and are easily reactivated during some events; children are particularly impacted by loss over which they have little control.

Successful family integration takes time. The stepfamily is in transition and adjustment takes more time compared to other family forms. The first few years may be turbulent and stressful as the new family seeks to break down barriers between individuals and biological groups. In most cases, there is a biological parent in another household or in the memory of the child. Children

have strong emotional ties to each of their biological parents, even if one of them is no more. This is unfortunate since it calls for a major adjustment difficulty for most children and their parents as well. Loyalty conflicts are very common in step families. Children often feel that the relationship with their custodial parent is threatened by a step parent's efforts to join the family. Integrating the various subgroups and other family members that are grandparents, in-laws, other relatives, step and biological parents and children is the key task for an individual. Step family cohesion is seldom similar to any other family form, especially in the initial years.

Negative cultural connotation, social disapproval, taboos and cultural myths often cast a negative shadow on step families.

6.5.7 Migrant Families

Migration denotes any movement by individuals or families from one location to another, sometimes over long distances or in large groups. Migration can have various forms such as cyclic migration, periodic migration or permanent migration. Migration can be within the country or across countries. The reasons for migration include: poor job, few opportunities, lack of medical care, natural disasters, political fear, not being able to practice one's religion, poor housing facilities, enjoyment, education, better job opportunities, security and family links. In most cases, it is the husband who migrates and the family (wife, parents and children) prefers to stay back for various reasons (children studying in schools, lack of housing facilities where the husband is migrating, financial crisis etc). The process of migration is influenced by social, cultural and economic factors and its outcomes can be vastly different for men and women, for different groups and different locations. The different type of migrations are as follows:

1) **Cyclic migration:** Migration that begins and eventually terminates at the initial place of origin. The daily journey to work in a different city or town or weekly visit to a place for a particular purpose can be termed as cyclic migration. Seasonal migration is a form of cyclic migration wherein an individual migrates to a certain place during a particular season for work or business or any other purpose and returns back to the place of original residence.

2) **Periodic migration:** A temporary stay away from one's normal place of residence for a substantial period of time. Examples may include persons in military service, students staying in hostels for the purpose of study, migrant labourers etc. A periodic migration may last up to duration from one year to five years or more.

3) **Permanent migration:** A permanent change in one's residence from one place to another. Change of residence can be to a different city, state or country. In case of permanent migration the individual who moves to a different place may not return back to the place of origin.

Migration has both negative and positive consequences for migrants and their families. The positive consequences of migration are mostly economic in nature. Migration is accompanied by a social crisis, which mostly affects the family staying back. There may be marital conflicts and breakdown of marital relations

due to prolonged separation and lack of communication. Incidents of separation may increase. Intense loneliness, anxiety and pressures of child-rearing and domestic chores are factors which contribute to emotional stress that affects the entire family. There may also be incidences of extramarital affairs and over-indulgence in alcohol. For the family in which all family members migrate together, there is a different set of adjustments to be made. Children have to adjust themselves in new schools and make new friends. Individuals have to rebuild their social network. Other family members who have no choice but to migrate might face limited opportunities at the place of destination. For example, the woman may be compelled to give up a well paying, stable job to move with the husband. There is a possibility that she might not find a similar job at the place where she has migrated.

The case profile given below may help you to understand the scenario better.

Rajiv lived with his wife Geeta and children in a small town. Rajiv was a very strict father and did not allow his children to do anything without his permission. Geeta spent the whole day cooking meals and taking care of family members with no time for herself, which she never realised. She was happy and content with her schedule of the day. One day Rajiv got a new job in a metro city with almost double the salary than what he was getting at present. Rajiv decided to move with his family. But both his children were in the prime of their careers and chose to stay back. His wife also chose to stay with the children as she had a large network of friends which she did not want to lose at this age. Rajiv lived away for almost four years. In the initial years it was a difficult time for all four of them as it was a close knit family. Eventually, all started living a life of their own. The children did what they liked. Geeta now had all the time of her own. Having the newspaper to herself while having her morning tea was a delightful experience for her. It was not that they did not miss each other. One day, after four years Rajiv decides to come back with family. The reunion made everyone happy initially, but later they realised that they had all learned to live without each other. It was very difficult for the children to ask for permission for petty matters once again. On her part, Geeta did not want to let go of her leisure time which she had just started enjoying. Rajiv started feeling that he is unwanted.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List three different types of dual-earner families.

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2) What are the possible reasons of migration?

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3) Which three factors result in childlessness?

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6.6 WHAT IS DISINTEGRATING? JOINT FAMILY OR JOINT HOUSEHOLD?

In the contemporary context, an oft-repeated comment is that "The joint family is disintegrating". However, it is not the joint family but the joint household that may be disintegrating. After reading the definitions of family and household in the earlier part of this unit you must be clear that a joint family need not be a joint household and co-residence is not a necessary condition for making a joint family. You also know that a household is a residential unit which is distinct from family. Even when all the members of the genealogical unit do not share the same hearth and residence they may still be bound by a number of activities and ties and hence may constitute a joint family. Joint family is a multi-functional group and is defined from various dimensions different specialists. If you look at the various definitions of joint family below then you will realise that all Indian families are 'joint' in one way or the other.

According to Iravati Karve (1999), joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat the food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common, who participate in common family worship and who are related to each other as some particular type of kindred. According to I.P. Desai (2005), we cannot place emphasis on common kitchen and residence as dimensions of "jointness". It is important for two families having kinship relationship that are living separately, to function under one authority in order to constitute a joint family. According to Gore (1968), a joint family consists of a man and his wife, their adult sons, their wives and children and younger children of the parental couple. Joint family as a social system has particular roles, relationships, authority structure, division of labour, bonds of duties and responsibilities apart from the rules regarding common hearth, residence, property ownership and performance of rites and rituals.

It is important to understand that one definition of joint family may vary from another, which makes it difficult to decide who and what makes a joint family. Also, it is essential to note the difference between a joint family and a joint household. Families are breaking up in smaller household units but the jointness is still retained in most cases. The structure may be changing, but the family remains joint in the functions of the members towards each other. Yet, most Indians still believe that it is desirable to live in a joint family and whenever they separate, they try to justify their conduct as genuine. Any family separation might bring with it guilt, fault and blame. A relatively well-institutionalised point of family division is reached when the old parental couple dies. At this stage, the partition is permissible.

However, under the present circumstances, it is difficult for joint households to perpetuate. There are both, physical and psychological limitations to the continuation of the joint family. The joint family may structurally break up due to the following reasons.

- Growth in family size leads to per capita deterioration of the family's economic condition which may make it necessary for some members to seek work outside family occupation.
- If the employment opportunities are plenty outside the family, then there will be a greater tendency of the family to fall apart.
- When quarrels and tensions overpower the economic factor, there might be bitterness and disturbance in family peace.
- After the death of the father when the joint property is not large, the family may break up purely due to economic reasons.
- When children get married, the couple may choose to live in a different household to maintain peace and harmony and for seeking freedom and independence.

It is important to note that at times, the family does not disintegrate totally. There are different levels in the process, for example, the family members may no longer eat together or they may build walls inside the compound of the house or partition the ancestral property.

Considering the above factors it is clear that functional jointness rather than structural jointness is a better factor which decides the degree of jointness in Indian families. Desai(1955) has developed certain indices to measure the functional jointness of families, irrespective of their residence or living arrangement, stating that

- Co-residence and commensality are neither adequate nor reliable criteria for judging the type of family.
- The joint family sentiment does not vanish with the residential separation.
- The jointness of separated units consists in the rights and obligations of the members of different units towards one another and in feeling of oneness.

Example: *Nine members of a joint family lived together in a two storey house. The family comprised the father, his two sons their wives and children. After the death of the father, the two sons started living separately on different floors with their families. Their house had a common entrance for both the families. Although they lived apart, they were still very much a part of each other's lives in terms of celebrating different festivals and engaging in joint activities (e.g., celebrating birthdays) and during the time of need. The elder brother provided financial help to the younger brother and the older children continued to help the younger siblings in studies. Rites and rituals were performed by both the families together. The children of the younger brother spent most of the time watching television at the elder brother's house. Family members still consulted each other in important decisions like change of job, admission, children's marriage and other issues.*

Now what will you call such a family? Will you still say that a family which was once joint turned into a nuclear one after the death of the father? Or will you say that both the families are still as joint as before?

The situation is complex and cannot be characterised in absolute terms. There is an increasing trend of young people setting up their own households. More and more individuals are beginning to desire independence and show resistance to conform to the "rules and regulations" prescribed by the parent generation. Women's emancipation leading to higher educational and career aspirations is yet another factor that is affecting the family or household composition. As a result there is an interesting trend of families living in separate households and yet maintaining the family ties through regular visits, asking and offering support in times of need and involvement in significant life events such as marriage or death. In other words, the Indian family tends to function as a unit even though it consists of residentially separate households. The bonds of joint family are deeply entrenched in the normative Indian value structure and every effort is made to maintain connections. On the other hand, there are some significant negative implications of the changing structures such as lack of care for the aged parents, conflicts related to property or inheritance, problems of suicide and crimes during adolescence.

An alternate structure that has evolved is that of a *modified extended family;* such a family type does not demand geographical proximity or occupational involvement and does not have a hierarchical authority structure. This new family form encourages frequent visits, financial assistance, aid and support in childcare and household chores; and involvement and participation in life-cycle events such as births, marriages, deaths, and festival celebrations. The familial and kinship bonds are thus maintained and sustained. Even in the more modern and nuclear families in contemporary India, many functional extensions of the traditional joint family have been retained and the nuclear family is strongly embedded in the extended kinship matrix. In spite of the numerous changes and adaptations to a pseudo-Western culture and a move toward the nuclear family among the middle and upper classes, the modified extended family is preferred and is likely to continue to prevail in modern India.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

State whether the following statements are true or false:

1) Due to the various definitions of joint family in India, all the families appear joint in one way or the other.

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2) In the present circumstances it is difficult for joint households to sustain.

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3) The modified extended family can also be considered as an alternate form of family.

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6.7 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we studied that although the definition and meaning of family keeps changing, the family continues to play its various roles like procreation, socialisation, providing affection, emotional and economic support. Household is simply one dimension of family and refers only to a residential unit. Persons staying together in one residential unit need not be necessarily family members. The traditional forms of family are classified along several dimensions like marriage, location of residence, kin composition, descent and inheritance and authority. Alternate forms of family like single parent families, women headed families childless families, adoptive families, dual earner families, step families, migrant families and modified extended families have always been in existence in all societies and also in India. 'Joint families in India are disintegrating' is a myth. The fact is that only joint households are breaking up into nuclear ones. Functionally most families are joint in nature till today.

6.8 GLOSSARY

Clan : A set of persons tracing a unilinear descent matrilineal or patrilineal.

Conjugal : A group consisting of a man, a woman and their children.

Disintegrate : Split, break, fragment

Egalitarian : Equal

Hearth : Fireside, fireplace

Kin/Kinship : A terminology used in reference to relatives.

Lineal/Lineage : A unilinear kin group consisting of persons who can trace descent from a common ancestor through a determinate number of generations.

6.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) As a reproductive or biological unit a family is composed of a man and a woman having socially approved sexual relationship and whatever offspring they might have. As a social unit, a family is defined as a group of persons of both sexes, related by marriage, blood or adoption, performing roles based on age, sex and relationship, and socially distinguished as making up a single household or sub-household.

   A household is one of the several dimensions of the family. Household is a residential unit which is distinct from family. A household includes all the persons who occupy a housing unit. These members may not necessarily be related in kinship terms, for example, they may be servants or temporary guests. The word *family* has often been used as a synonym of *household* but in reality both have very different meanings.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Monogamy
2) Neolocal
3) Matriarchy
4) Patrilineal
5) Hypergamy, Hypogamy

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) The three types of dual earner families are:
   1) Main-secondary earners,
   2) Co-earners, and
   3) Ambivalent co-earners.
2) The reasons for migration may include: poor job, few opportunities, lack of medical care, natural disasters, political fear, not being able to practice one's religion, poor housing facilities, enjoyment, education, better job opportunities, security and family links.
3) Childlessness may be a result of three factors:
   1) Deliberate choice,
   2) Circumstances like career building, financial unstability etc., and
   3) Infertility or other health complications.

Check Your Progress Excerise 4

1) True

2) True

3) True

6.10 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Discuss the various traditional forms of family in India and give relevant examples for each of the forms.

2) List all the alternate forms of family which you read in this Unit and discuss any two in detail.

3) Do you think that the joint family in India is disintegrating? Give reasons to support your answer.

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UNIT 7 FAMILY DYNAMICS: MAPPING FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

Structure

7.1 Introduction

7.2 Concept of Family Dynamics

- 7.2.1 Indian Families and Internal Dynamics
- 7.2.2 Factors that Influence Dynamics of the Family

7.3 Role Expectations and Demands

- 7.3.1 Nature of Roles and Relationships in the Indian Context
- 7.3.2 Determinants of Roles and Relationships
- 7.3.3 Traditional and Modern Gender Roles
- 7.3.4 Traditional/Conventional and Contemporary Roles
- 7.3.5 Variations in Family Structures and Role Distribution

7.4 Influence of Globalisation, Media, Technology and Migration on Family Dynamics

- 7.4.1 Changes in the Structure of Families
- 7.4.2 Changes in Roles within the Family Setting
- 7.4.3 Role Confusion, Role Conflict and Role Stress

7.5 Family Dynamics: Reflection on Behaviours

7.6 Let Us Sum Up

7.7 Glossary

7.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

7.9 Unit End Questions

7.10 Further Readings and References

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit we studied about the various family forms that exist in the contemporary Indian context. In this Unit we shall understand the various roles shared by the members in a family and familial relationships. The need to understand family and the interacting variables is important for analysing individual behaviours within the context of the family as family is primary institution that shapes individuals.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Define family dynamics;
- Explain interaction between various roles and relationships within the family and its effect on individual behaviours;
- Describe macro level changes and their impact on family dynamics; and
- Discuss changing gender roles in the contemporary context and its implications for family dynamics.

7.2 CONCEPT OF FAMILY DYNAMICS

Let us look at a comprehensive understanding of the terminology 'family dynamics', and then move ahead to look at the factors that affect it.

Family dynamics are the patterns of relating to the members in a family, determined by the daily interactions between them. These in turn are a reflection of the larger volatile culture and the socio-political scenario, that the family is a part of. Thus, family dynamics may also refer to the ever changing needs of the members within a family, which change with time and are influenced by macro level changes. Remember that even in the same culture and similar context, each family system and its dynamics are unique, although there are some common patterns.

Similarly across cultures too, distinct differences exist in the dynamics within the family setting. In Sweden, for example, the government provides financial assistance, thus people do not look upon the family for financial support and are also less likely to marry than members of other societies and half of all Swedish children are born to unmarried parents (Macionis, 2005). Quite unlike the Indian society. The dynamics would thus differ. Similarly in Argentina, research by Binstock (2008) shows that over a period of time the highly nucleated urban families of Buenos Aires during the mid nineties were turning into different family forms, such as extended, composite (that is, nuclear with one or more additional members) and also multiple families living in the same household. Along with this, it also saw single adults heading the households; more number of single women, with men moving out for work and war, thus effecting the size of the household as well. The gender roles too alongside witnessed changes.

Thus to understand families and the internal dynamics of a family, one needs to understand the nuances of culture and the larger socio-political influences. Let us now look at the Indian families and understand what impacts the family dynamics.

7.2.1 Indian Families and Internal Dynamics

The Indian society is hierarchical and patriarchal in nature. People are thus born into castes, religions, clans and not only families. The impact of the macro system consisting of the religious communities, political systems, caste rules cannot be undermined in understanding the patterns of interaction that guide behaviours of individuals within a family. Let us now understand the various factors that influence the dynamics within a family from the following vignettes:

Purvi, a girl born in an Indian Gujarati family, a 16 year old was socialised from the beginning to be cordial, soft spoken, submissive, efficient with household chores and other such behaviours to be accepted by the society which values feminine behaviours from girls (which is true for most of the communities in India). Her mother at the same time was quite protective about her and this made the mother very strict with her. Their relationship became strained. Purvi constantly felt pressured to stick to the normative behaviours, curbing her desires and somewhere she could feel herself drifting away from her mother.

Kalluwa, a 17 year old tribal (Kunbis) youth recently got married and decided to have his own household next to his parents'. He and his wife work on the fields throughout the day and when they return, his wife cooks for them and they have their dinner together. He shares all his happiness and worries with his wife by bringing gifts for her; and feels much closer to her even though they have been together for a small time.

Ila, a mother of a 10 year old boy, is a professional working with a multinational company. She separated from her husband two years back. She feels that even though her husband is ready to support her, her son is her own responsibility. However, she is unable to give him enough time. She is now worried about the child as she feels that after the divorce he has become more introvert. She on the other hand is unable to give him enough time. She feels that he does not even talk to her much and stays more in his own room with his computer.

These descriptions are about three different types of families. In the first example gender role expectations and how they effect the daughter-mother relationship are focused upon. The factors playing a predominant role in this example are age and gender. The second example is of a tribal family, wherein the trend for the married couple is to settle in a separate household immediately after marriage. The factors determining roles are the culture and traditional practices, rather than gender. One can observe the differences in terms of the determining factors that would dictate the roles that would be ascribed to individuals within a family. These would differ across families as well as across cultures, caste and class groups. The third example is of a single parent household. This is a different type of family which is on the rise since the past few decades; as a result of social changes. All three examples give an idea of how the structure of the family along with the family ideologies would influence the dynamics of relationships between different members of the same family usually translated through role expectations.

The interdependence between family members defines the nature of relationships they share. They are bound together by this interdependence. It exists on both emotional as well as physical levels. The basic component of their relationship, apart from the members involved is also the role they play. These determine roles within the family and are also important to understand the family interactions and relationships. The equations that each member shares with the other depend on these factors. Also, the intricate balance between role behaviour and societal and individual expectations needs to be understood so to learn about the roles of family members in families and societies.

7.2.2 Factors that Influence Dynamics of the Family

Relationships within the family are guided by family values, culture and ethnicity, beliefs about gender roles, parenting practices, power or status of family members, nature of attachments in the family, nature of the parents' relationship, having a particularly soft or strict parent. At the same time, at a certain stage in life especially the younger years which are more impressionable, one may have a fixed idea about *normalcy*. This is an image created by the macro culture through different mediums. In the Indian context familial practices are a major source of social learning for the members. Since childhood itself the family values and ideologies become a part of routine living for its members,

thus effecting interrelationships. The same or more or less similar practices, imbibed in individual behaviours, are evident in later years as well.

For example, in most of the Indian families the practice of paying obeisance to adults, especially during festivals is a ritual. This depicts a relationship of respect and obedience governing further interactions between those two members. These interactions will be based on status held by each member in the family, whatever the situation.

The type of family one lives in, parental behaviours, freedom of expression, events which have affected family members, all these play an important role in determining family dynamics.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Define family dynamics.

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2) List down the factors that influence family dynamics.

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7.3 ROLE EXPECTATIONS AND DEMANDS

In this section we will study about the nature of roles and responsibilities of a family member in an Indian family. Further we will find out the factors that determine these roles and relationship between family members. We will study the traditional gender roles and how they are changing in modern societies. In the end of this section, we will discuss the variation in family structures and distribution of roles in the family.

7.3.1 Nature of Roles and Relationships in the Indian Context

There are several roles that a person plays through out his or her life. Each role has a specific set of demands that a person needs to fulfil to be part of a family. A person is expected to play multiple roles, of that of a parent, child, spouse/companion, caregiver, sibling, and so on. The list is endless. Each role

is equally demanding and accords a status to the individual. The social learning theory postulates the likelihood of increase in behaviours that may lead to positive consequences rather than behaviours likely to entail negative consequences. It proposes that it is essentially the rewards that shape behaviours. The role that the person will play is prescribed since childhood years along with vivid descriptions of the dire consequences on inability to fulfil the same; and at the same time a reward of approval on fulfilling the same.

Fig. 7.1: Roles of individual change according to the stage of family.

Roles are mutually exclusive, only some may be complementary. When people play so many different roles at the same time and most of these are equally demanding, they may need to compromise on certain roles. A conflict may even arise from these multiple roles as it may entail problems of being unable to fulfil a role due to demands from another equally important role, such as not being able to attend the child's school annual function as the mother-in-law is unwell. This is true for women as well as for men, and especially women working outside the home, as house keeping is their traditional role, still continued irrespective of their employment status. This does not in any way signify that women who may not be employed outside the home may have more time at their leisure. In fact household work takes up most of their time. Also women's work is at times invisible, even though they may be working on fields, usually as labourers, or are engaged in similar occupations their work is not counted as productive.

In a family setting, unlike the external institutions, work division is not based on capabilities, but other determinants such as age and gender. Thus, the fulfilment of certain roles would require negotiations. Also when roles are underrated and not appreciated, it would in the long run lead to dissatisfaction and frustration.

7.3.2 Determinants of Roles and Relationships

Roles are ascribed predominantly on the basis of age, stage of life and gender. There is a distinct difference in the roles played by men and women at each stage and these are learned through early socialisation. Men are trained to

become the provider, a role which has been traditionally expressed through economics. Success in this role increases his status in the community, while failure creates frustration, humiliation and stress. Primary role of women has always been centred around children. Women too as men do, experience a sense of failure on being unable to fulfil the ascribed roles.

There are women who at times are unable to meet specific family demands owing to the multiple roles expected of them in the family setting. They are the ones' responsible for not only the caregiving part where children are concerned, even though that itself entails a lot of tasks beginning from cooking, cleaning to getting them ready and ensuring that their routines are not disturbed. They are also involved in their children's education, extracurricular activities, and at the same time value transmission also becomes their shared role with the husband, who may be busy pursuing his role as a provider. Also when a woman is earning, her job responsibility also is important. This in turn would affect her other roles and may even influence her relationships. Managing the household chores and fulfilling responsibilities towards the various family members place multiple demands on the woman.

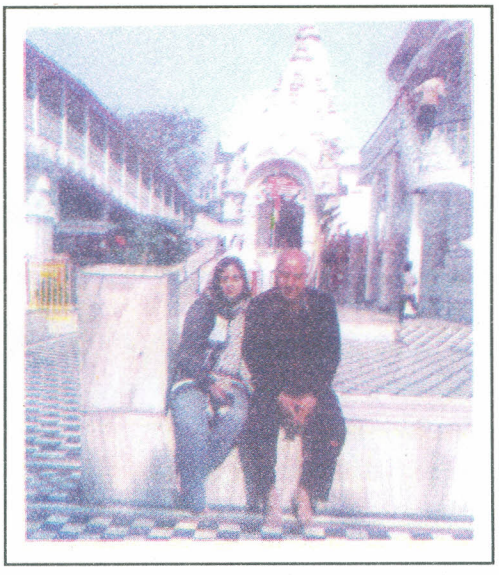

Fig. 7.2: Everyone has multiple roles and responsibilities

Marriage too changes relationships within the family. Gough (1993) describes the kinship system of the Hindu castes in Tanjore village in South India. The parent-son relationship changes after the son's marriage. Father may give away a part of his land for management to his son and they avoid each other, especially where their marital lives are concerned. On the other hand, the son comes closer to his mother again, constantly consulting her about his wife and children.

In the current context, with education and Westernised life styles the determinants too have changed somewhat. However, gender continues to play an important role in shaping relationships.

7.3.3 Traditional and Modern Gender Roles

Within the family, men's role is considered of paramount importance and perceived to have greater benefits, irrespective of the pressures involved. This is because of patriarchal structure of the Indian society, which accords greater powers to men on fulfilment of their social roles.

Manoj, a four year old boy in a village ICDS anganwadi, comes from a joint agrarian family. During pretend play he reflects his family values wherein he plays the patriarch, deciding tasks for others. The teacher too approves this play reinforcing traditional stereotypical roles.

The feminist theory puts forth arguments that gender relations are central to all social life. In order to understand the family units and the patterns of shared roles and relationships, one must understand women's experiences in families.

Orientation to gender and gender roles begins early in life. Most children begin to identify their gender and imbibe socially approved behaviours; as evident in the above description. Traditionally, gender roles have emphasised expressive roles for women associated with child bearing and rearing; and instrumental roles for men associated with physical strength. Though women have always worked as providers, directly adding to the family income through production of goods or as housekeepers also taking care of children and others, their contribution has never been formally counted. Also, women working outside the home engaged in informal sectors, are almost invisible for the economy. In the current context, even though a change in gender role identity is evident, most societies still instil and encourage traditional roles.

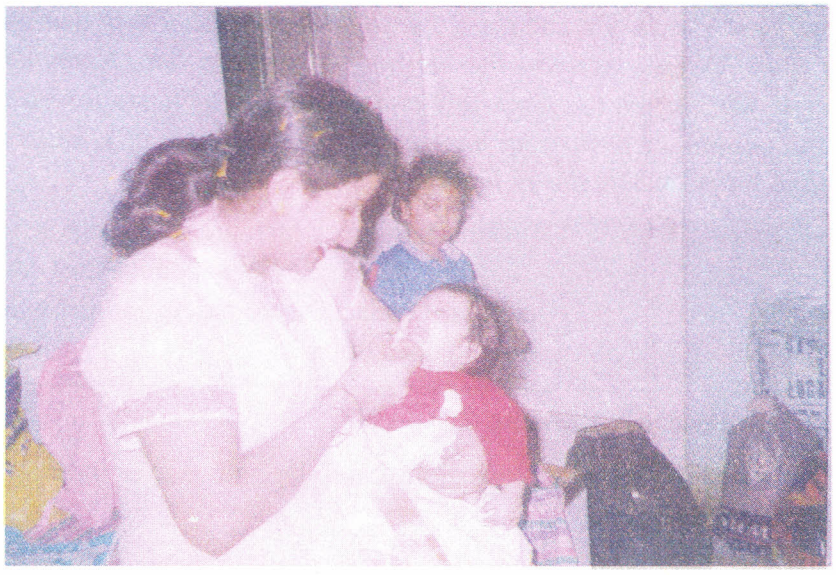

Fig. 7.3: Traditionally, the woman plays the role of a homemaker and caregiver.

It may at times seem that with changes at the societal level, changes would be obvious in women's and men's roles. However, as mentioned earlier, one observes that due to migration leading to smaller family units, along with introduction of newer technology, new roles have been added to the traditional ones rather than the traditional roles getting altered in any basic way. In the case of women who take up employment outside the house, for instance, one finds that new roles get added to the traditional household related roles and responsiblities of the woman. Some changes, at least in some sections of the society, are beginning to be evident though. Men's roles have been observed to have undergone dramatic transformations and they may no longer be sole decision makers in the family. They too are involved in childcare and household work. This may not be true for most families in India, yet this new family form is evolving in the urban context.

7.3.4 Traditional/Conventional and Contemporary Roles

In today's society, the social changes, economic conditions and family needs have created many dual earner families, especially in the middle class context. Additionally, women's higher education has led to the emergence of dual career families. The load of work is often more on women, and in varied spheres such as the office, home and related institutions; increasing the pressure on her. The work demands and added responsibilities may lead to stress and tension in relationships as well. This may happen when one partner is highly involved in her or his career and does not fulfil the parallel family responsibilities or feels that she or he is unable to do so.

7.3.5 Variations in Family Structures and Role Distribution

It is usually observed that joint families are more traditional and thus the roles are more or less prescribed strictly on the basis of age and gender. Also, as there are more number of persons around to share the responsibilities attached to a role, there may be less opportunities to take up cross gender roles. Whereas in nuclear families, because of lesser number of individuals, the members may be required to perform roles on the basis of need rather than age and gender.

Kanubhai, a 55 year old man, shifted to a different urban locality 15 years ago separating from his joint family, because of his job demands. His wife is an asthma patient, who frequently has asthmatic attacks. Their two children leave for their colleges early in the morning and return late. Kanubhai who had never in his earlier life done any house work, is at times forced by the family's circumstances to take up his wife's traditional role of a housekeeper and manage things when she is unwell.

This is becoming true for most of the families which are in transition. A man who has been socialised in a specific manner, has to change his complete personality due to his circumstances, or else the complete family would be disrupted, probably straining their relationships.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) List down the factors that determine roles and responsibility in the family.

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2) Write short notes on:

i) Conventional and contemporary roles.

.....

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ii) Variation in family structure and role distribution.

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7.4 INFLUENCE OF GLOBALISATION, MEDIA, TECHNOLOGY AND MIGRATION ON FAMILY DYNAMICS

Globalisation, which is a resultant of technology and media, has influenced all spheres of individual lives across the world. The process has led to dilution of cultural boundaries leading to acculturation of families. With increasing economic exchanges and international migration, it has also led to multiculturalism and individual access to cultural diversity.

7.4.1 Changes in the Structure of Families

Changes in the social institution called the "family" are related to major changes in society such as urbanisation, industrialisation, technological advancements and globalisation. Along with this, increased access to education for women and increased women participation in the labour force has led to modification in the ideas concerning "appropriate" social role behaviours. Rural areas too have not remained aloof of the change. These areas are within easy access of the urban utilities and are influenced by urban development. The space crunch and deforestation has influenced the forest dwelling communities and tribes as well. Media too has managed to reach out to remote areas through multitude of sources. The different forms of media, fulfilling needs of various age groups, has managed to create lasting impact on individual mind and led to social changes. Media has affected all domains of family living. It affects the amount of time spent together, especially emotional time. This is especially important in the contemporary competitive context, where stress has become an integral part of routine life. Media has restricted these interactions between members thus creating a need for external institutions that would take up these roles. Along with media, the structural and functional changes in the society have also influenced relationships.

As seen in the previous Unit, the structure of the family is also changing as societies change from agrarian-based economies to industrial and post-industrial economies. In the contemporary Indian context you will find different types of families such as nuclear or extended households, single parent families; and such different types will influence family interactions, work distribution and ways of relating to each member as well. This would have an impact on roles of individuals within the family. Smaller families with dual career couples would demand differential role division.

The nuclear units have also created a demand for alternate care institutions. This would mean transference or sharing of several roles. Earlier the family was considered as the primary unit of socialisation. However, with the changing family trends this role has been divided. Similarly parents also have an additional role of cultural transmission which was predominantly played by grandparents. Even though individual competence to handle various roles may not be undermined, time constraint is always the issue. On the other hand cohabitation is also increasingly becoming an accepted life style. For some it may mean a prelude to marriage, yet the very nature of the relationship would impact role division. Most of the couples preferring cohabitation enter it to avoid the traditional marriage contract and the traditional role aspirations attached to it.

The society and the education system do not in fact prepare persons to understand and adapt to these changes. Thus, there is a need to built support institutes and counselling centres that would address family frictions. The conflicts may be a resultant of intergenerational differences and disagreements or even changing husband-wife relationships and expectations from marriage.

7.4.2 Changes in Roles within the Family Setting

Neeta, a 35 year old woman, is working in a government provident fund department. She has to report to her office at 10:00 a.m. She has two sons, seven and ten years old. As they live in a nuclear household, she expects her husband to get up early with her and help in getting the children ready for school; which is traditionally a feminine role! Her husband also works with a government office. After the children leave for school at 7:00 in the morning, she begins cooking for their lunch while her husband does the clearing. When they return in the evening around 6:30 p.m., both share the kitchen work for dinner preparation, while teaching the children.

Nitin, a 24 year old man, is working in a cement factory. He had to migrate to the city with his wife and two year old daughter, three years ago in search of employment. His wife works as a maid servant in one of the affluent houses. She is usually home by 4:00 p.m. and takes her daughter along when her husband has the morning shift, and when he is at home, he takes care of the daughter; which of course demands a lot of time and energy.

Social change demands a change in the functioning of the family system, which in turn leads to a change in the social roles. People have more or less started accepting these changes. However there are times when it may lead to conflicts especially within the self, because it contradicts one's gender role orientation. The process of socialisation in most families still teaches stereotypical roles, expectations, and reinforce such behaviours, whereas the other institutions of socialisation are fast changing to keep pace with westernisation and modernisation; an impact of globalisation! This may lead to role confusion and stress.

7.4.3 Role Confusion, Role Conflict and Role Stress

Everyday life is a complex combination of several roles. Role set is the term used to identify a number of roles attached to a single status. For example, the status motherhood involves varied roles such as caregiver, disciplinarian, educator, and similar additional roles. These roles are not mutually exclusive and thus there would be situations demanding responsibilities that ask for simultaneous functioning on more than one role. This may lead to role confusion.

Role confusion arises when the person needs to decide between two equally important roles that need simultaneous performance. *Role conflict* usually arises in situations where in performance of a role would mean the fear of disrupting another role. *Role strain* refers to tension among the roles connected to a single status. It happens within the same role set.

Shalini, was a graduate from a business school. She got married at the age of 24 years to a well qualified man. After a year of their marriage, Shalini craved for a child, but was unable to conceive. She talked to her husband and they decided to consult a gynaecologist. She was the one who underwent treatment for nearly two years. She could not accept the idea of her husband needing to consult the doctor, even on the insistence of the gynaecologist to ask her husband to do so. Ultimately it was diagnosed that the husband had a problem. Yet, she could not face others, felt incomplete and started avoiding social gatherings.

We are so rigidly ingrained in set ideologies of our roles that the inability to perform certain tasks that may accord an additional role and a different status leads to stress. The above description talks of a context wherein the socialisation of an individual supersedes the reality. Shalini was unable to accept the fact that there was no problem with her and kept feeling incomplete as reproduction is considered solely a woman's responsibility in the Indian context. With external influences such as higher education one may inbuild varying ideas about changing gender roles. However, at times it may not coincide with one's family values leading to role conflicts. For example, a parent could be a disciplinarian for the child and may have to attend a party along with the child where recreational games demand immature behaviours. Conflict between behaving as a disciplinarian and shedding inhibitions to enjoy the party would lead to confusion.

Role conflicts may be minimised by performing roles linked to one status at one time and place. Performing roles attached to a single status may also at times be strenuous, yet trying to maintain a balance between these roles and demarcating statuses and the responsibilities attached to each, would lead to lesser intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Fill in the blanks:

i) Earlier the family was considered as the ..... of socialisation.

ii) Social change demands a change in the ..... of the family system, which in turn leads to a change in the social roles.

iii) Role ..... may be minimised by ..... linked to one status at one time and place.

2) Write a short note on changing structure of family.

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7.5 FAMILY DYNAMICS: REFLECTION ON BEHAVIOURS

A family's attitude towards a person has an important influence on his or her self-identity and self-worth. A person's behaviour may at times be in response to the ascribed characteristics by the family and the family dynamics. Each role demands certain responsibilities and regardless of cultural background, the pressure of assuming multiple roles is often challenging. Along with this there are several other dynamics in the family that may lead to personality problems. However, one needs to understand that it is ultimately individual perceptions that matter. As no two families are alike, none of the individuals too are the same. Even in the same family they may have different perspectives of the same thing. Yet, each family member's perspective is valid in its own right. Thus, here we need to look at two important pointers to understand individual behaviours; one is the family context with focus on internal dynamics and the other is the person's interpretation of the family relationships and communication. Individual behaviour may focus on activities that may be self disrupting. Also, several actions on part of the individual may create situations of conflicts within the family, which the person as well as the family may be unable to handle. Many a times, with increasing societal and work place demands, these experiences need organised help in the form of counselling or family therapy.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) State, whether the following statements are 'True' or 'False'.

i) A family's attitude towards its members has no influence on their self-identity and self-worth. .....

ii) Each role demands certain responsibilities regardless of cultural background. .....

iii) Individual behaviours include the focus on activities that may be disrupting for the individual and the family. .....

7.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit we have tried to understand the concept of family dynamics, the Indian society and interplay of the contextual factors in determining family dynamics. Further, we looked at the various roles characterising the Indian family system and the related interactions. Throughout the Unit, the effort was to develop an understanding of how the relationship shared by the family members and interpretation of the same by individual members would effect behaviours. This leads us to prioritise focus on the contextual influence, internal as well as external, in counselling and family therapy.

7.7 GLOSSARY

Role : Pattern of behaviour that is expected of a person who has a certain function in a group.

Status : Established social position in a society or institution.

Socialisation : Process through which personalities and self-concepts are formed, values and attitudes are transmitted, and the culture of one generation is passed to the next.

Stereotype : Mental representation of members of a group. It is a general opinion about the members and their behaviours accepted across the specific cultural context.

Gender : Socially constructed term that discriminates between sexes. It associates feminine behaviours with women and masculine with men, and does not accept digression.

Gender roles : Prescribed behaviours of women and men in a given culture.

Role confusion : Situation where an individual has trouble determining which role he or she should play.

Role conflict : Situation where fulfilling a certain role has a conflict with fulfilling another role.

Modernisation : Various trends in social relationships and changes in values due to economic development, technological growth, accessibility to educational and other facilities.

7.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Family dynamics are the patterns of relating to the members in a family, determined by the daily interactions between them. These in turn are a reflection of the larger volatile culture and the socio-political scenario that the family is a part of. Thus, family dynamics may also refer to the ever changing needs of the members within a family, which change with time and are influenced by macro level changes.

2) The factors that influence family dynamics include the following:

   i) Family values,

   ii) Culture and ethnicity,

   iii) Beliefs about gender roles,

   iv) Parenting practices,

v) Power or status of family members,

vi) Nature of attachments in the family, and

vii) Nature of the parents' relationship.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) The factors that determine roles and responsibility are:

   i) Age,

   ii) Stage of life, and

   iii) Gender.

2) i) Conventional and contemporary roles: In today's society, the social changes, economic conditions and family needs have created many dual earner families, especially in the middle class context. Additionally, women's higher education has led to the emergence of dual career families. The load of work is often more on women, and in varied spheres such as the office, home and related institutions; increasing the pressure on her. The work demands and added responsibilities may lead to stress and tension in relationships as well. This may happen when one partner is highly involved in her or his career and does not fulfil the parallel family responsibilities or feels that she or he is unable to do so.

   ii) Variation in family structure and role distribution: It is usually observed that joint families are more traditional and thus the roles are more or less prescribed strictly on the basis of age and gender. Also, as there are more number of persons around to share the responsibilities attached to a role, there may be less opportunities to take up cross gender roles. Whereas in nuclear families, because of lesser number of individuals, the members may be required to perform roles on the basis of need rather than age and gender.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) Fill in the blanks:

   i) primary unit

   ii) functioning

   iii) conflicts; performing roles

2) The structure of the family is changing as societies change from agrarian-based economies to industrial and post-industrial economies. In the contemporary Indian context one can find different types of families such as nuclear or extended households, single parent families; and such different types will influence family interactions, work distribution and ways of relating to each member as well. This would have an impact on roles of individuals within the family. Smaller families with dual career couples would demand differential role division.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

1) True or false statements

   i) False

   ii) True

   iii) True

7.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Explain the concept of family dynamics by using appropriate examples from the Indian context.

2) Which are the major determinants of roles in an Indian family?

3) What is the impact of technology, media and globalisation on the dynamics of a family in India?

4) Explain the terms role confusion, role conflict and role stress as experienced by family members in role fulfilment within the family.

5) What is the impact of the family interactions and relationship between members on individual behaviours?

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UNIT 8 FAMILY THEORIES - I

Structure

8.1 Introduction

8.2 Family Theories *Versus* Other Theories

- 8.2.1 How a Family Differs from Other Associations
- 8.2.2 Criteria for Evaluation of Family Theories

8.3 Developmental Theory

- 8.3.1 Introduction
- 8.3.2 Assumptions
- 8.3.3 Concepts
- 8.3.4 Empirical Applications

8.4 Systems Theory

- 8.4.1 Introduction
- 8.4.2 Assumptions
- 8.4.3 Concepts
- 8.4.4 Variants of Systems Theory
- 8.4.5 Empirical Applications

8.5 Social Exchange Theory

- 8.5.1 Introduction
- 8.5.2 Assumptions
- 8.5.3 Concepts
- 8.5.4 Variants of Social Exchange Theory
- 8.5.5 Empirical Applications

8.6 Let Us Sum Up

8.7 Glossary

8.8 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

8.9 Unit End Questions

8.10 Further Readings and References

8.1 INTRODUCTION

Let us start with the simple question, "What is family"? A common answer that pops up in our mind is the grandparents, the mother, the father and the children. In India, family is known as '*ghristhi*' (household), '*pariwar*' (family) and '*kutumb*' (extended or joint family). Earlier form of family in India, generally identified as 'traditional', mostly comprises of parents and their biological children and further their children, and some relatives staying together. Now a days, these type of families are becoming less common and others are emerging at fast pace. Today's family may be wed or unwed, single parent, blended, with homosexual parents etc.

Researchers from different fields are studying family in relation to different fields like anthropology, sociology, psychology, demography, economics and many more. Therefore, it is very difficult to have a single definition of family, as it has become a relative term when studied in different contexts.

According to Burgess and Locke (1945), "The family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption, constituting a single household, interacting and communicating with each other in their respective roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister; and creating and maintaining common culture".

Spafford *et al.* (1998) defined family as, "Two or more persons (to include at least one person in whose name the housing unit is owned based and rented and residing together within) usually family members who are related by birth, adoption, or marriage. However, non-related persons may also be considered part of so called extended family when residing together or sometimes even when they are not".

In India, study of family started as early as in ancient period, written about in Sanskrit by upper class males (*Brahmins*). Then emerged the studies based on ancient Hindu texts. The main focus of these early studies was to highlight the ancient socio-cultural institutions and to explain the nature of Hindu marriage, law of inheritance, position of women, kinship and family relationship.

As time progressed, researches on families started focussing on fieldwork, statistical techniques and empirical data. *Demographical studies* came into existence to study and analyse data at large scale, which further assisted in comprehending size and composition of households, and the factors which accounted for the differences in rural and urban settings. *Historical studies* focussed on the records available from the past, which revealed that Indian families preferred to live in large and complex households termed as *joint families* (three or four generations of close kin, patrilineal or sometimes matrilineal, living together). Gradually, the joint family underwent some structural changes though it continued to remain the same functionally. Even though the family members were not sharing common residence, but they were attached by emotional bonds and shared obligations. Then emerged the concept of *extended family* [small family consisting of husband, wife and children with or without some close relations like parent(s), brother(s), sister(s)]. Unlike historical studies, *anthropological studies* based on qualitative data through observation and interviews, relied heavily on present as compared to past. These included the study of families from specific villages, tribes, religious communities, and urban centres. Due to small sample size, these studies could not be generalised. Hence, they were unable to explain the cause of nuclear family resulting from joint family possibly from urbanisation and industrialisation.

Then *comparative analysis* came into existence, which included study of families belonging to different societies from different parts of India. It explained the adaptive changes in the family but still other structural changes and deviant families need to be researched. It includes families of divorced, widowed or unwed, patterns of alcoholics and homosexuals, role of women in the family, family life processes, cause for tensions and ruptures in the family, quality of family life etc.

To develop a theory about families there must be at least one family concept in the theory. Each theory in family science has its own importance. The main objectives of family theory are:

- To understand how families work.
- To figure out problems or issues in families.
- To find possible solutions to these issues.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Differentiate family theories with other theories;
- Define different family theories;
- Explain the concepts associated with the family theories; and
- Highlight the empirical applications of family theories.

8.2 FAMILY THEORIES *VERSUS* OTHER THEORIES

You understood the functions of theory in Unit 3 of this course. As we are going to study family theories in this Unit, let us first understand the difference among family theories and other theories.

8.2.1 How a Family Differs from Other Associations

1) Families last for a considerably longer period of time than do most other social groups. For example: our parents remain parents even after we become adults and parents ourselves.

2) Families are intergenerational, that means we may have grandparents or even great grandparents. That is, through the act of giving birth, families include people who are related as parents and children.

3) Families contain both biological and affinal (for example legal, common law) relationships between members.

4) The biological aspect of families links them to larger kinship organisations.

5) Families have: (Copeland & White, 1991, pp.5).

   i) *Shared history:* The history stretches back for generations and involves ethnic or religious values.

   ii) *Shared future:* Laboratory study is different from family study in the way that families are always conscious about anonymity and confidentiality about what they say. This can alter the results in data. There is a special responsibility of researcher to attend to the effect of the study on the family.

   iii) *Shared biology:* There is a built-in power hierarchy in families that is less obvious or non-existent in other groups.

8.2.2 Criteria for Evaluation of Family Theories

The purpose of presenting this section is to make you as a researcher aware about the criteria that help to develop a critical capacity about family theory.

Criteria for evaluating family theories (Klein, 1994) are as follows:

Internal consistency: A family theory does not contain logically contradictory assertions.

Clarity or explicitness: Family theories are defined and explicated wherever necessary.

Explanatory Power: Family theory explains well what it intends to explain.

Coherence: Family theories are integrated and interconnected.

Understanding: Family theory provides a comprehensible sense to examine the whole phenomenon.

Empirical fit: Large portions of the tests of family theory have been confirmatory or at least have not been interpreted as disconfirming.

Testability: It is possible for family theory to be empirically supported or refuted.

Heuristic value: Family theory can generate considerable research and intellectual curiosity.

Groundedness: Family theory has been built up from detailed information about events and processes observable in the world.

Contextualisation: Family theory considers social and historical contexts.

Interpretive and sensitive: Family theory reflects the experiences practised, and felt by the social units to which it is applied.

Predictive power: Family theory can successfully predict phenomena that have occurred since its formulation.

Practical utility: Family theory is useful for teaching, therapy, political action, or a combination of these.

Our focus here is on major themes and examples of how family theory works in day-to-day life. We will consider here six different but related theories about families. However, we will discuss three theories in this Unit and the other three theories in next Unit.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Distinguish between family theories and other associations.

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2) Enumerate the criteria for evaluation of family theories.

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8.3 DEVELOPMENTAL THEORY

Rohan and Jiya are expecting their first child in their late thirties. When they discussed this with their friends and elder family members, everyone suggested that Rohan should plan an investment for the child. Riya was also advised to research some article related to baby care that will help her to take care of baby. Riya said "In our society the role of mother will remain the same as that of a nurturer in spite of her working outside the home".

8.3.1 Introduction

The above example indicates that it is the family stage that is important, and not the chronological age of the family members. According to developmental theory, family development is viewed as a dynamic process from beginning until death. It views family as a semi-closed system having the dependence-independence situation on other social systems. The role of each family member and his or her position is emphasised. Any change in the member his or her position in the family affects the other's role and position, since the members are so interrelated and interact in a unit called as 'family'. This approach recognises the changes, which take place in the family from time to time, stagewise and adjustments, which the members have to make with each other. Each stage has its specific prerequisites and developmental tasks that need to be accomplished. The importance of this concept is that family members face these developmental tasks at different stages of their human development.

Developmental theory contains three complementary theoretical approaches which are interrelated (refer to Fig. 8.1).

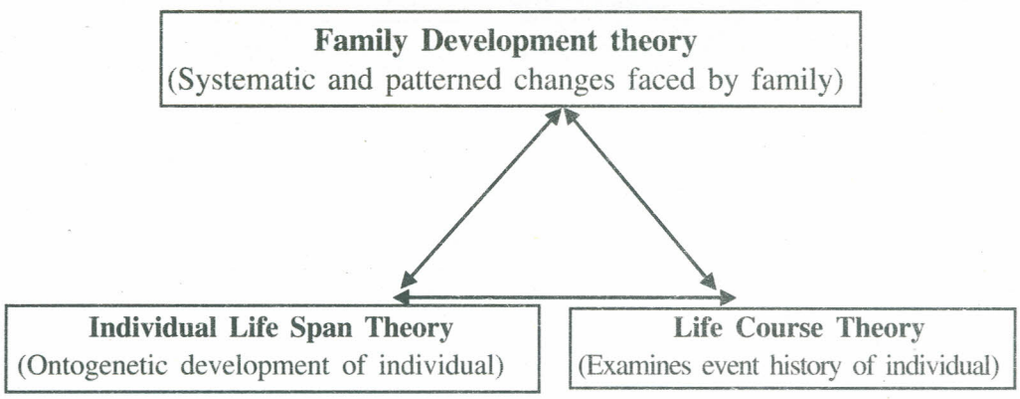

Fig. 8.1: Three complementary theories of developmental theory

1) **Individual life span theory:** It emphasises individual ontogenetic development but within the context of social norms and historical period.

2) **Family development theory:** It focusses on systematic and patterned changes faced by the family.

3) **Life course theory:** It focusses on the individual and increasingly uses the family context to examine the event history of individual life course; for example, divorce, fertility etc.

All the three theories above are interacting with each other throughout the life course because they have common ground as discussed below:

- All are concerned with family factors affecting ontogenetic development of the individual.

- All these three theories focus on time and its role in individual or group change.
- All of these three theories incorporate individual and family change within a larger framework of birth cohort, historical period, and individual age factors.

8.3.2 Assumptions

There are some assumptions, which form foundation for this theory that family stages are more important than individual life stages:

1) **Developmental processes are unavoidable and important in understanding families:** According to this assumption individual family members, the interaction between family members, the structure of the family, and the norms composing expectations about family roles, all these change with the passage of time. For instance, role of women varies with different family life stages; it may be caregiver, but if she is single then it is that of a provider. The changing roles and expectations for different stages of family are viewed as essential to an understanding of the family.

2) **Family group is affected by all the levels of analysis including social norms:** The norms represent the level of analysis of the family as a social institution. For example, the norms about techniques of child discipline are related to social class as well as to the codification of the larger system (legal). We can see in the example given below how each level can affect the level of child abuse. If it is restricted by law or in family, then child abuse will not happen at a lower level (See Fig. 8.2).

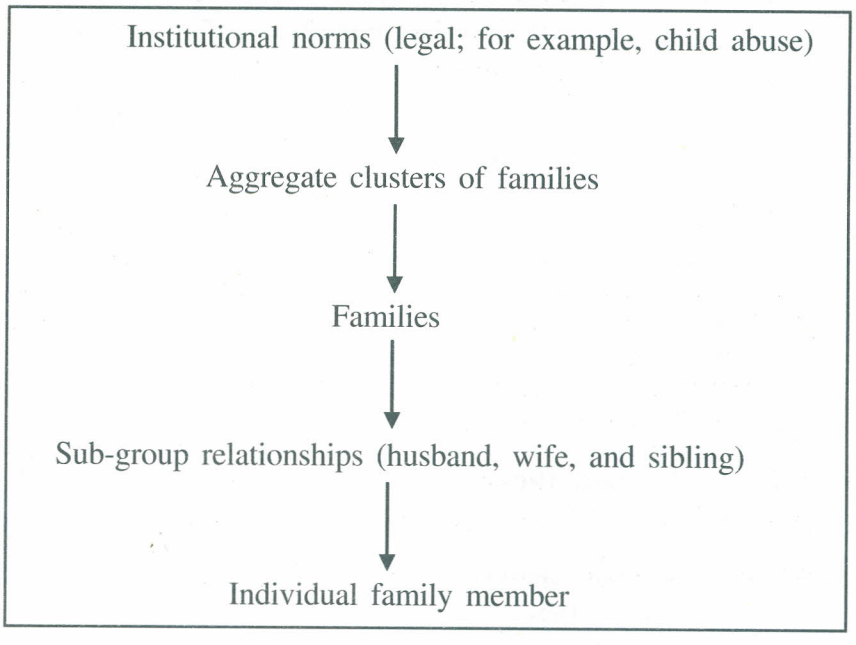

Fig. 8.2: Different levels of analysis of the family

3) **Time is multi-dimensional:** Time is measured by clock that means measuring time is an attempt to make sure that there is an equal interval of time between each event on the clock. However, when we spend happier or dull time it is not strictly controlled by our wristwatch; that means, it is not an equal interval of time but we use family experiences as a separate way to divide the time.

Social norms are tied more closely to the social process dimension of time than to the calendar or wristwatch. For example, "Our daughter was born, just after your father died". So marker events (birth, wedding, death etc.) are used for analysis. So, again here we are not focusing on the actual time; rather on the events happening in the family life.

8.3.3 Concepts

There are some crucial concepts which we have to understand to get insight into this theory. These are as following:

Position: In kinship, position is defined by gender, marriage or blood relations, and generational relations. For example, husband-wife, father-mother, son-daughter, brother-sister, sister-in-law (*bhabhi*) - brother.

Norms: Norms are social rules that govern group and individual behaviour. Norms may be age and stage graded. For instance, you do not apply same rules to a toddler that you do to a teenager.

Family Roles: Family roles are the norms attached to one of the kinship position. For example, role of mother entails the norm of nurturance of the young but it is quite different from that for a mother of adolescent children. Positions are defined structurally, but content of a role (the norms) may change from society to society or culture to culture.

Family stages: Family stage is an interval of time in which the structure and interactions of role relationships in the family are noticeably and qualitatively distinct from other periods of time (Aldous, 1996). For example, marriage of a child doesn't mean end of parental responsibility but a change based on the spatial and interactional organisation of members.

Transition: Transition is the shift from one family stage to another. For instance, a married couple may stay married or divorced, or they might have a child.

Developmental tasks: Each stage is supposed to have some tasks, and the successful achievement of these tasks is thought to lead to happiness and success with later tasks (Havighurst, 1948). Developmental tasks are defined as "growth responsibilities that arise at a certain stage in the life of a family, the successful achievement of which leads to satisfaction and success with later tasks, while its failure leads to unhappiness in the family, disapproval by society and difficulty with later family developmental tasks".

Variations: Variations indicate the strength of norms in a social system. For example, according to laws in India, a girl may marry after 18 years of age, but a boy must attain the age of 21 years before he may do so.

Deviations: Deviation is viewed as source of social change. Now-a-days, delays in the marriages are because of the quality of work and education in the society.

Development: Development is the process, which occurs in an organism or a living structure over an extension of time. Just as an individual family member grows, develops, matures and ages while undergoing the successive changes and readjustments from conception to senescence, similarly the family has a sequence from formation through expansion and contraction to dissolution.

8.3.4 Empirical Applications

There exists a myriad of applications of developmental theories, but here we emphasise on only two:

1) **Family stress:** Reuben Hill (1971) was responsible for this theoretical concept. According to him, both family and individual experience symptoms of stress. Although individuals perceive and react to stress, it may be the resources of the family that explain the successful management of stress. Further, the level of stress caused by an event depends on a number of factors. For example, an unwed teenager's pregnancy will not be viewed positively, whereas a married family member's pregnancy would be. Therefore, the same event causes different levels of family stress. Often events follow one another and lead to stress; this can be explained with the following example: Moving to a new house, prolonged illness of a family member, and then death. Hill (1949) developed a model to cope with stress that is 'ABCX model'. Later Patterson (2002) combined the 'resiliency and stress model with the family adjustment and adaptation model'.

2) **Transition to parenthood:** Hill and Rodgers (1964) argued that a particular transition from one family stage to another might be stressful. As a result, families suffer decline in marital roles. It may include parental preparation, and the timing of work related events. Father's involvement in caregiving may reduce marital stress.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Differentiate between the following terms in two or three lines:

1) Individual lifespan theory and life course theory.

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2) Variation and deviation.

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3) Position and role.

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8.4 SYSTEMS THEORY

Today is Shivani's fourth birthday after marriage. Jay came from office and both went for a candle light dinner. But Shivani is not in a good mood today. On being asked what is wrong with her, she informs him that she was expecting a surprise trip for her birthday. She had even given him clues by showing how fares of flight have decreased, the weather was so nice etc., but he never understood. Jay says that he remembered how she used to get excited at the mere thought of candle light dinner. "Yeah! I like that but if you plan some surprises that will add more spice to our monotonous life" was Shivani's argument.

8.4.1 Introduction

As we have seen in the above example, both spouses become linked in a system in which one person's behaviour becomes the other person's information. In return, this person's information provides the beliefs and basis on which future actions are taken. Those actions are evidence to the fact that the other spouse does not understand him or her and has not received the more subtle messages. The study of marital and family interaction has been an important component in the recent development of systems theory, also known as system theory, in social sciences.

A system is simply some part of the world singled out for attention whose parts interact. According to White and Klein (2008, p. 158), "A system is a unit that can be distinguished from and that affects the environment". The foundation for systems theory comes from two perspectives, one is the *organic* or *evolutionary* perspective (Spencer, 1980) which views universe as a continual process that forms and dissipates structures. Universal principles are applied to all domains of study like biology, psychology and sociology. Second influence comes from science of information and *automata*. Telegraph, telephone, voice over internet– all these modes of communication use digital codes to transfer information. Also known as *communication theory,* later it was applied to living systems. One of the dominant view of living system is family which is driven by organising process.

8.4.2 Assumptions

Here we will focus on the assumptions of systems theory that will give us more clarity regarding how this theory works:

1) **All parts of the system are interconnected:** Change in one part of the system influences all other parts of the system. For instance, the arrival of guests in the family influences the environment of the family.

2) **System can be understood only as a whole:** A system is much more than sum of its parts. Behaviour settings are learned holistically in families. For example, mistakes cannot be attributed to one person; rather a system analyst would be able to investigate how the mistake occurred in a sub-system.

3) **A system's behaviour affects its environment, and in turn the environment affects the system:** It explains that cause and effect do not work in isolation. This can be understood from Fig. 8.3.

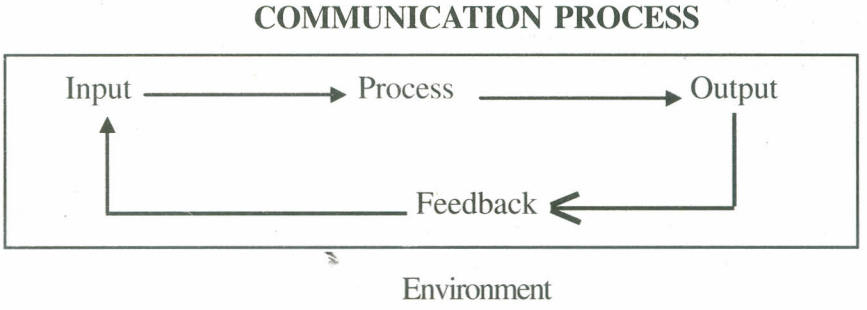

Fig.8.3: Environment, communication process, and behaviour

4) **"Systems" are heuristic, not real things:** Systems theory is not a reality but a way of knowing. Constructivist perspective is the "view that knowledge must not be taken to be a picture of objective reality but rather as particular way of organising experience" (Ernst von Glasersfeld, 1987). An individual's behaviour in a family context can indicate how a person will behave in any social setting. Family system is an emotional unit of intimate relationship that is persistent. This approach helps in understanding how a family functions.

Principles of systemic approach:

i) *Interdependence*: Family members are dependent on each other.

ii) *Sub-systems*: In a family there are various sub-systems functioning. For example, in a family mother and daughter are sharing a closed relationship and father is not involved in it.

iii) *Circularity or circular chain reaction*: In a family, each member influences every other member of the family.

iv) *Equifinity system*: If one subsystem does not work, the family tries different types of subsystems.

v) *Communication*: In a family, it is very important to have communication.

vi) *Family rules*: Regardless of the freedom in the family, it is very important to have some rules and norms.

vii) *Homeostasis*: Some stability is needed in the family; subsystems should be created in such a manner that there should be homeostasis.

viii) *Morphogenesis*: It is important to adapt.

8.4.3 Concepts

There are many concepts of systems theory:

1) **System:** A system is a unit that can be distinguished from and that affects its environment. In the other words, it is separable from the environment and has an effect on its environment. For example, a family is a system in itself but it may or may not affect, or get affected by its community (environment for family) which is also a system in itself. This is decided by the permeability of boundaries.

2) **Boundaries:** All systems have some form of boundaries. A boundary is a border between the system and its environment that affects the flow of

information and energy between the environment and system. For example, in physical boundaries, families live in the household on plots of land, with fences, doors, windows, walls, and so forth yet they differ in their openness to outsiders and their ability to maintain privacy. In case of symbolic boundary, knowledge about what goes on within the family varies. Degree of permeability decides the nature of the system; whether it is close or open.

i) *Close system*: In this, the system has no give and take from the environment as in the mathematics.

ii) *Open system*: In this, the system interacts with the environment which is decided by degree of permeability.

3) **Subsystem:** It is a part of a system that is analysed separately to its exchanges with the system and other subsystems. For example, family system contains sibling subsystem, marital subsystem, and parent-child subsystem.

4) **Rules of transformation:** All systems have internal rules of transformation. It represents a relationship between two elements of a system (*quid pro quo* rule for marital system). For example, if the husband is good to his wife, his wife is good in return. One of the major functions of this concept is to transform the inputs to the system from the environment into outputs from the system.

5) **Feedback:** It refers to the circular loop that brings some of the system's output back to the system as input. It can be negative or positive to attain the goal. For example, a poor grade obtained by a child in an exam is feedback for the child to work harder next time to achieve good grades in the next exam which becomes a goal. Thus feedback may help to bring variety in the system to achieve goals

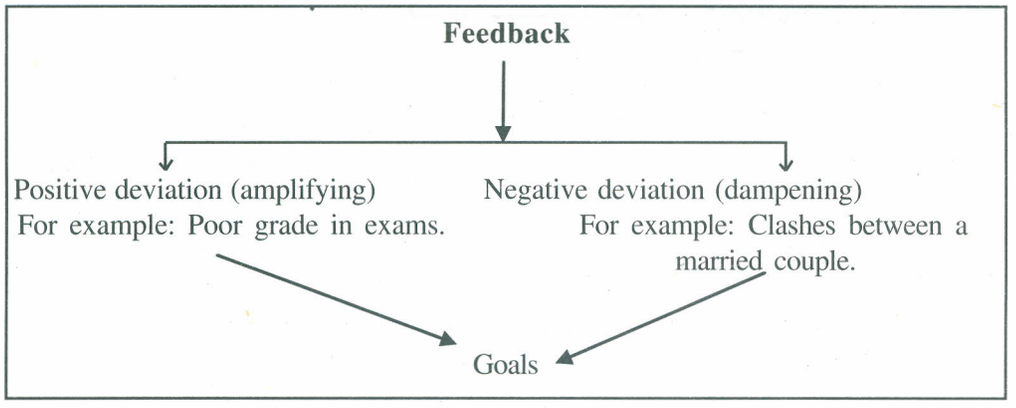

Fig.8.4: Types of Feedback

6) **Variety:** All systems have a degree of variety. It refers to the resources the system has to meet new environmental demands or adapt to changes. For instance, a family with rigid rules may lack the flexibility to adapt to changes such as dealing with a daughter who wants to marry a person from another religion; as a result, the family system may rupture because it is unable to adapt to this change. When the system adapts to change, then the state of equilibrium is attained.

7) **Equilibrium:** It refers to a balance of inputs and outputs. A family system can also be described as homeostatic, when it dynamically maintains equilibrium by feedback and control. For example, Rohan wanted insurance for his child but from his monthly salary it was not possible. So he decided to save some money every month systematically, so that he could invest the same as premium for the policy, thus balancing income and expenditure.

8) **System Levels:** System has levels as explained below.

First order system: There is no method of control or error correction. For example, poor grade in exams.

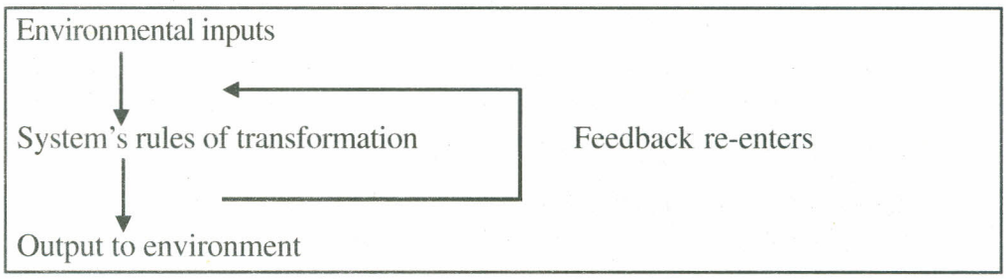

Fig. 8.5: First order system

Second order system: There is control within the system. For example, parents control the behaviour of their children.

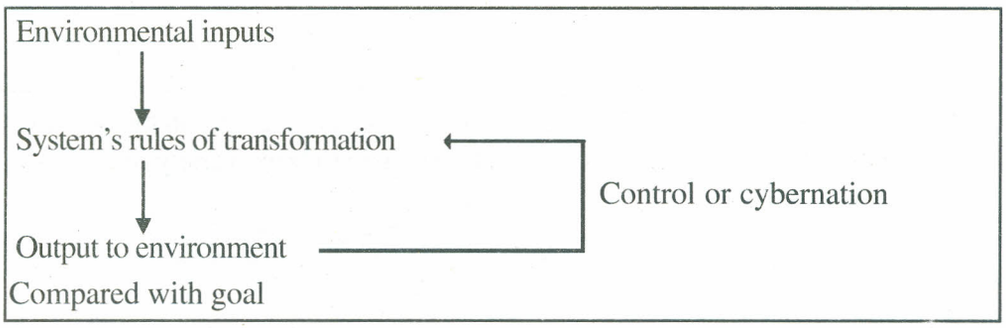

Fig. 8.6: Second order systems

9) **Cybernation:** The activities and processes used to evaluate input, throughput and output in order to make corrections as seen in the example just discussed.

Here we will discuss an example, which will describe the system theory in process.

Rakesh and Riya have a four year old daughter (system) who is in the process of developmentally "eating on her own". This has led to the family rule of eating together on one's own (Rules of transformation). Riya instructs her daughter to finish her meal properly, but the child throws tantrums, not wanting to eat on her own. So Riya tries to manage this behaviour by scolding and threatening to lock her inside the room (Negative feedback). But the tantrums continue until Riya realises that by continuing to "follow the rule", she is escalating the conflict. Now she takes an alternative approach and starts building a positive environment (Positive feedback), by making comments about the food that it is so tasty and how it becomes tastier when you finish on your own and how every one will get some surprise after finishing their meal properly (variety and minimal cybernation). This way her daughter tries to finish her meal with the help of alternative approach of Riya.

This example illustrates several important concepts in system theory, such as variety, goals, and control. This example shows that if Riya lacked the requisite variety to change behaviours in mid stream, she would have been trapped in her daughter's positive feedback loop of not eating on her own.

8.4.4 Variants of Systems Theory

Family systems theory covers three dominant variants which are most related to family theories. First, *general systems approach* to family that includes all the concepts of systems theory. Second, *communication theory* which focusses on the communication process. Third, *family process theory*, which deals with modifying and extending systems to attain equilibrium in the family system.

1) **General systems theory:** Broderick and Smith (1979) introduced the ways in which systems thinking might be applied to the study of the family. They suggested an introductory analysis of family system as a four-level system explained below. Change at highest level is responsible for change at lower-level systems.

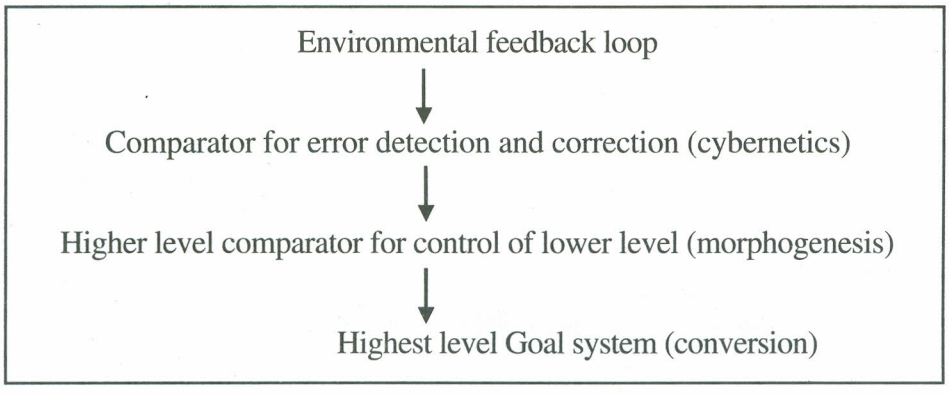

Fig. 8.7: Family system as four level system

2) **Communication theory:** This theory originated with the work of Shannon and Weaver (1949) titled *"Mathematical Theory of Communication"*. Bateson and his colleagues applied this work in family studies. The field of communications uses a basic sender-receiver model of communication. Generally, researchers analyse only verbal and written messages but in a family, there are more subtle messages that need to be studied. For example, if the husband is not in a mood to go out for dinner then he will not understand the non-verbal communication of his wife.

3) **Family process theory:** This theory views the family as a goal-seeking system. Within the family, social and spatial relationships exist within and between the family and environment. Relations among family members must be managed so that individuals are protected from each other's demands and individuals are linked to each other. The relations between the family and its environment are composed of transactions that bridge and link the family to external systems while maintaining the boundaries of the family system. A family therapist generally uses this theory. For instance, if a person in a family becomes alcoholic then a therapist must look for the causative factors and treat accordingly.

8.4.5 Empirical Applications

Marital and family communications: System theory has proven to be a major conceptual framework used in the study of marital interaction and family communication. This theory developed with the notion to test the contingencies between spousal verbal and non-verbal messages over time using a series of contingent probabilities. The emotional effect carried in the non-verbal messages are a better discriminator of distressed and non-distressed couples than more traditional verbal measures such as spousal argument. This model categorises families on the dimension of communication frequency and behaviour conformity.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Describe the following from your own experiences in 2-3 lines.

1) System

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2) Variety

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3) Cybernation

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8.5 SOCIAL EXCHANGE THEORY

Ruchi was working when she got married, holding a good position in college. She had to leave her job because her in-laws wanted her to be home. It was frustrating for her to accommodate. But she decided to go with the decision of her in-laws thinking of the future and believing that spending time together will build a bond of trust and understanding with her spouse and thereby strengthen their relationship.

8.5.1 Introduction

This theory is based on the essence of utilitarianism which suggests that individuals rationally weigh the rewards and costs associated with behavioural choices. As we saw in the above example, in the expectation of the future reward, Ruchi left her job (present cost). Individuals choose those activities

that maximise their rewards. *Utilitarianism* is a philosophical perspective that has heavily influenced exchange theories in social sciences. The central focus of the exchange theory is on motivation. *Motivation* is what induces a person to act. Therefore, we can understand a person's action by understanding the individual's interests or values.

This theory explains the existence and endurance of a social group such as family (group of individuals). Individuals come together in groups to maximise their rewards. If the costs of membership exceed its rewards, then membership in a group is no longer a rational choice. Thus, the family group is conceptualised as a source of rewards for the individual members.

The most popular exchange theory given by Ivan Nye (1979), heavily relied on social psychology based on utilitarianism. One uses comparison level (CL) for making a rational choice. For example, in case of a divorce, the wife will compare (CL) her profit ratio for her marriage with what she perceives other wives she knows are receiving in their marriages. The second level of comparison (CL+) would be to compare her profit as a wife with the profit she perceives in other possible, unmarried positions, such as divorced and remarried wives. Therefore, a situation with more profit will be more acceptable.

8.5.2 Assumptions

This theory focusses on the following assumptions:

1) **Individual is real:** In exchange theory, family is considered as collection of individuals or also referred to as methodological individualism. It implies that group phenomenon, social structure, and the normative culture are constructed by the actions of individuals. The main aspect of this theory is that it emphasises on the individual.

2) **Prediction and understanding come about by understanding the individual actor's motivation:** Within the given constraints, choices are based on individual motivation rather than external sources. For example, a girl may choose her life partner, but with constraints of selecting one from her own caste.

3) **Actors are motivated by their self-interest:** It is a basic assumption, which implies that individuals seek things and relationships which they regard as beneficial for themselves.

4) **Actors are rational:** Being rational means the ability to calculate the ratio of costs to rewards. Youngsters are treated differently from adults, as they cannot think rationally.

8.5.3 Concepts

We will now take a look at some basic concepts of this theory:

1) **Reward and cost:** A reward is perceived as beneficial to an actor's interests and cost is the negative dimension of rewards.

2) **Profit or maximising utility:** Profit or maximising utility is defined as the ratio of rewards to costs for any decision.

3) **Comparison level (CL) and comparison level for alternatives (CL+):** Comparison Level (CL) means what others in your position have and how well you are doing relative to them. Comparison level for alternatives (CL+) refers to the alternative choices in your position and how well you are doing relative to others outside of your position. For example, a husband compares his profit ratio for marriage with other husbands (CL). But when he compares himself with other alternatives like divorcee, remarried and unmarried, he calculates the profit ratio with respect to the alternatives (CL+).

4) **Rationality:** Rationality is what a person considers rewarding and costly. It also gives relative weightage to each reward and cost. For example, your family plans a trip in summer vacation. Now everybody will chalk out the maximum profit ratio. Like going individually or with family. If it is decided that spending time together is most important then comes the next step of deciding whether to go by flight or hire a taxi. Finally, the choice is made based on maximum profit.

5) **Exchanges and equity:** It is seen that inequities in a marriage are tolerated at a certain point because of the expectation of future rewards from that relation. Equity can be defined as "fairness" or "justice". In a certain culture, sacrificing for the family is of normative value for women and thus, even though it shows inequality, it is viewed as fair or equitable.

   Husband and wife can be imagined in a fair exchange situation, but when the situation becomes unfair, we may expect separation.

6) **Human capital and social capital:** Human capital refers to the knowledge, skills, and techniques acquired by the individual. Social capital refers to the network of relationship with others. Let us take an example. There are two families with equal financial status, but the family with value of more trust will be able to achieve more in groups rather than the other family.

7) **Generalisable sources of rewards:** Generalisable sources of rewards are necessary if exchange theory is to be applied to families or other groups. This concept is understood best with the statement, why young people delay marriages. It is because they want to achieve the socially approved status.

8.5.4 Variants of Social Exchange Theory

There are major two variants of this theory:

1) **Micro exchange theories:** It assumes that individual is the active unit of analysis. For example, mate selection. Individual exchange theories usually involve simply adding up all the individual motivation and therefore only one motive is to be analysed.

2) **Macro exchange theories:** In this, the active unit of analysis is the social group or institution. It studies the exchanges between the groups and the resulting social solidarity.

8.5.5 Empirical Applications

Here we will apply exchange theory in two areas of research to study the family:

1) **Divorce:** This theory proves to be the most promising to explain the cause. We discussed earlier that there are two comparison levels that can be applied to better understand the reason for divorce. For instance, firstly, if a spouse compares profit relative to other marriages and feels deprived, that will lead to low satisfaction and cause for separation. But many remain associated just only because of the cost associated with divorce. Secondly, if a spouse compares profit with other possibilities and finds them satisfying, then it may be the reason of separation to escape from responsibilities.

2) **Gender differences and social behaviour:** According to Nye's investigation, sex is more profitable for males as compared to females, as females are over burdened with the outcome of unwanted pregnancy and sexual frustration. Nye says that rewards for women can be increased by providing money or giving status and security in the society.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Fill in the blanks:

1) .....is the ratio of rewards to costs for any decision.

2) In ....., individual is the active unit of analysis.

3) ..... refers to the knowledge, skills, and techniques acquired by the individual.

8.6 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have learnt about the different family theories. To begin with developmental theory explains the patterns of family formation and dissolution. We conjoined three approaches that is life span development, family development and life course analysis. Concepts of this theory provide us the deep insight of the family as a system. This theory also helps us to understand the concept of stress which can be resolved by the family itself.

Systems theory has proven to be the most useful approach for a scientific study of the family mainly in two areas. One of these areas is family therapy and other is marital and family communications and interaction. Communication theory is properly a form of system theory, because it incorporates many of the basic concepts such as feedback and variety.

The simple interpretation of social exchange framework is 'Mutual help' for the peaceful survival. Second aspect is that life is too complex to lead all alone. Therefore, there is nothing wrong in having social and moral binding of giving rewards and reciprocating the same. In Indian joint families principles are still respected. In fact stronger relation ties automatically take care of the psychosocial and economic investments by the family members on an individual member.

8.7 GLOSSARY

Equifinity System : If one subsystem doesn't work, the family tries other different types of subsystems.

Family : Denotes a group of people affiliated by consanguinity, affinity, and co-residence.

Neofunctionalism : Integrating individuals in the hope of achieving spillover effects to further the process of integration.

Nuclear family : The part of the family that consists of parents and their children.

Utilitarianism : Maximisation of utility as a moral criterion for the organisation of society.

8.8 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

1) Family and other associations:

- Families last for a considerably longer period of time than do most other social groups.
- Families are intergenerational whereas other associations do not show this feature.
- Families have shared history, shared future, and shared biology where as other associations may have share history and shared future but they lack shared biology.

2) Criteria for evaluating family theories are:

Internal consistency: A theory does not contain logically contradictory assertions.

Clarity or explicitness: They are defined and explicated wherever necessary.

Explanatory Power: It explains well what it intends to explain.

Coherence: They are integrated and interconnected.

Understanding: It provides a comprehensible sense to examine the whole phenomenon.

Empirical fit: Large portions of the tests of a theory have been confirmatory or at least have not been interpreted as disconfirming.

Testability: It is possible for a theory to be empirically supported or refuted.

Heuristic value: It can generate considerable research and intellectual curiosity.

Groundedness: It has been built up from detailed information about events and processes observable in the world.

Contextualisation: It considers social and historical contexts.

Interpretive and sensitive: It reflects the experiences practised, and felt by the social units to which it is applied.

Predictive power: It can successfully predict phenomena that have occurred since its formulation.

Practical utility: It is useful for teaching, therapy, political action, or a combination of these.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

1) Individual lifespan theory emphasises on ontogenetic development in the context of social norms and historical period where as life course theory focusses on the individual in the family context to examine the event history of individual life course.

2) Variation denotes strength of norms in social system whereas deviation is viewed as source of social change.

3) In kinship, position is defined by gender, birth order, marriage or blood relations, and generational relations whereas role refers to norms attached to one of the kinship positions.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

1) System: A couple's interaction can be a system that can be distinguished from other systems. Their interaction has an effect on the family environment.

2) Variety: Lack of variety in the family inhibited the parents of Jayant to adapt to the situation; his parent wants that their daughter-in-law to wear saree only.

3) Cybernation: Palak had thrown tantrums when she did not get a camera, but after speaking to her mother, she came to know that she is not at the right age where she could handle such a thing.

Check Your Progress Exercise 4

Fill in the blanks:

1) *Profit*

2) *Micro exchange theories*

3) *Human capital*

8.9 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) Explain the major difference between family theories and other theories.

2) How do you apply the developmental theory in day-to-day life?

3) Critically analyse the systems theory.

4) Explain the concepts of Social Exchange Theory.

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UNIT 9 FAMILY THEORIES - II

Structure

9.1 Introduction

9.2 Structural Functional Theory

- 9.2.1 Introduction
- 9.2.2 Concepts
- 9.2.3 Variants of Structural Functional Theory
- 9.2.4 Empirical Applications

9.3 Feminist Theory

- 9.3.1 Introduction
- 9.3.2 Assumptions
- 9.3.3 Concepts
- 9.3.4 Variants of Feminist Theory
- 9.3.5 Empirical Applications

9.4 Bio-Ecological Theory

- 9.4.1 Introduction
- 9.4.2 Assumptions
- 9.4.3 Concepts
- 9.4.4 Variants of Bio-Ecological Theory
- 9.4.5 Empirical Applications

9.5 Let Us Sum Up

9.6 Glossary

9.7 Answers to Check Your Progress Exercises

9.8 Unit End Questions

9.9 Further Readings and References

9.1 INTRODUCTION

In the previous Unit we examined the term 'family', clarified how the study of family came into existence and looked at the major difference between family and other associations. We also discussed the three important theories of family that are developmental theory, systems theory and social exchange theory. Now, in continuation to these three family theories we will study three more family theories in this Unit. We will explain the structural functional theory by Talcott Parsons. The second theory which we are going to discuss is the feminist theory by Gordon. In this theory we will study the changing status of women in India over a period of time that is during the Vedic age, Brahmans Age, Sutra and Epic age up to the period after Independence. Further, out of various variants of feminist theory we will discuss four variants in brief that are, liberal feminism, socialist feminism, cultural/anthropological feminism and multicultural feminism. In the later part of the Unit, we will study the bio-ecological theory by Urie Bronfenbrenner. The basic assumptions and key concepts of these theories will be described and the applications of these theories in our daily life will also be discussed.

Objectives

After studying this Unit, you will be able to:

- Define different family theories;
- Explain the concepts associated with the family theories; and
- Highlight the empirical applications of family theories.

9.2 STRUCTURAL FUNCTIONAL THEORY

Today Tanisha is to resume her job – her daughter Sania is three years old. Sania has spent her three years watching Tanisha as a sole care taker of her. Now it's very difficult for Sania to imagine her single day without her mother. Sania has a myriad of questions for Tanisha like "Why are you going to office? Who will take care of me? Who will cook for me"? etc. Tanisha gently replied, "Dear I have arranged a maid for you, she will take care of you".

8.2.1 Introduction

There emerge many themes from the above conversation that point toward the structural functional theory. Family is like a social organisation, and all such organisations function best when there is a hierarchical organisational structure. The concept of functionalism evolved from biology and was followed by social and cultural anthropologists who in turn explained why and how cultural tradition exists in various social systems. The major contribution to this theory was given by Talcott Parsons (1937) as 'Action theory'. Let us understand it in a diagrammatic way. The diagram (Fig. 9.1) explains the social systems of our social world.

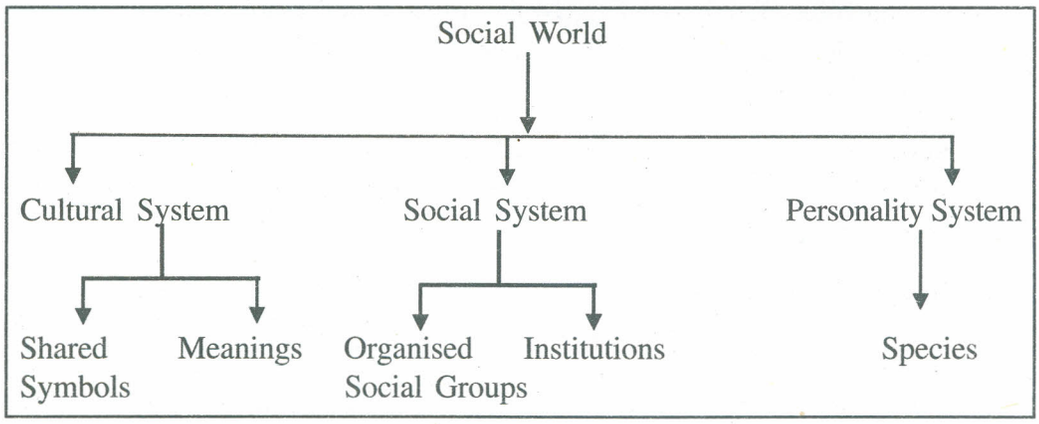

Fig. 9.1: Social systems

According to this diagram, the *cultural system* which is comprised of shared symbols and meanings, *social system* which includes organised social groups like parent teacher associations etc. and institutions like schools, colleges etc, and *personality system* which includes the individual, together form the social world. All these subsystems function for adaptation of the system to maintain equilibrium. They function in the sequence of adaptation, goal attainment, integration, and latency (maintenance of morals and motivation). Parsons contribution was viewing the institution as a family. A child can be socialised into society only if society is organised in expected role structures and adults receive stability from such role structure. Now-a-days, we observe that industrialisation and urbanisation erode the extended kinship in the family.

Still Parsons believed that the family is a strong and stable institution capable of performing these basic functions (See Fig. 9.2).

(Task Orientation)

Power	Instrumental	Expressive
Superior	Instrumental Superior Father (Husband)	Expressive Superior Mother (Wife)
Inferior	Instrumental Inferiors Son (Brother)	Expressive Inferiors Daughter (Sister)

Fig. 9.2: Basic role and structure of nuclear family

9.2.2 Concepts

Following concepts will give us more clarity about this theory.

1) **Action:** The behaviour is motivated and intended by the actor. So roots of this theory are in purposeful actions.

2) **Function:** A social group, individual actor, or institutional actor can act to satisfy a need. For example, a family satisfies the basic needs of members like food, shelter, etc. If a family loses its function, then as a social organisation it weakens. For example, loss of job of a provider in the family may be responsible for family breakdown.

3) **Structure:** At a simple level, the structure of a group (or social system) might be viewed as the individual physical members of the group. The principle structure of the family is defined by the structure and complementariness of the social roles played by family members (for example, father, mother, son, daughter, etc.)

4) **System:** The big difference in structure and system is that system is treated as whole. It is larger and more encompassing as it includes the institutional norms that regulate behaviours in the entire subsystem.

5) **Norms:** Norms are responsible for social control and order on one hand and stable and expected interactions for individual actors on the other hand. It signifies two sides of the same coin because the normative order presents the individual with stable relationship. Therefore, we can say that norms are the social rules that regulate our behaviour with each other as well as cultural objects. For instance, our society has prohibited physical relations before marriage.

6) **Values:** Values are the expression of culture, interacting with the individuals. Thus, the individual is socialised to value certain ideas, attitudes, and things which in turn, become the motive to follow the norms and perform the roles in the social system. For example, touching feet of elders.

7) **Society:** A social system that survives its original members, replaces them through biological reproduction, and is relatively self-sufficient.

8) **Instrumental:** This concept is primarily concerned with relations of the group to the external situations, including adaptations to external situations

and establishment of satisfactory goal relations for the system *vis-à-vis* the situation. In the nuclear family, the husband-father as breadwinner tends to specialise in the instrumental activities of the family.

9) **Expressive:** Expressiveness is concerned primarily with integration or solidarity of the group, the internal relations of members to each other and the emotional stress or tension produced by performance of their roles in the group. While the husband/father is away at work, the wife/mother might stay at home and is responsible for the emotional satisfaction of the family and symbolising the integrative focus of the home.

9.2.3 Variants of Structural Functional Theory

There are two variants of this theory:

1) **Convergence theory:** Conjugal roles are tied to the modernisation. For instance, now-a-days, smaller families are increasingly common due to children being an economic liability, and as health increases longevity. Due to this, the conjugal unit becomes increasingly important and the family declines in importance.

2) **Neofunctionalism:** This concept was given by Swenson (2004, p. 58). He propounded the following:

   - The basic functions of family are the socialisation of children and the stabilisation of adult personalities.
   - Parental role and parental task co-ordination are necessary for the child's secure attachment and socialisation.
   - Family becomes dysfunctional when poor parenting produces poor socialisation.
   - Theory construction must include family structures (single parent family, step family, intact family, nuclear family, etc.) as well as the internal relationships in the family.
   - Family is constructed of cultural values and morality that have significant influences on family relationship.
   - Role of morals and values in the family is much more direct.

9.2.4 Empirical Applications

1) **Family structure and child outcomes:** This theory posits that intact nuclear families have requisite role structures to provide the most stable and nurturing environment for children. Structure alone cannot make any difference but events and processes that led to the structure, such as divorce or parental death are also responsible for child outcomes.

2) **Role differentiation and division of labour:** Division of labour produces joint dependency. Joint dependency stabilises marriage and family. For example, the functional need of family may be fulfilled in several ways. One way is for the male to undertake a greater role in domestic labour. Another way is for the woman's wage to allow her to replace her lost domestic labour by purchasing substitute child care and domestic services.

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Match the following:

• Action theory	* Species
• Neofunctionalism	* Talcott Parsons
• Social system	* Institutions
• Personality system	* Swenson

9.3 FEMINIST THEORY

Prachi was shopping at the grocery store, when suddenly she saw Poonam bargaining for something. Prachi exclaimed, "What a pleasant surprise, Poonam!". Poonam replied, "Really, I myself did not expect you here". As they started moving out of the grocery store, Poonam invited Prachi to her house which was not too far from the grocery store. Both were meeting each other after almost eight years. "So what are you doing now-a-days and what about kids," Prachi asked. "I am working with a software firm at an executive post and I have two year old son". "So, what about you", Poonam asked. "Wow! That's great how you manage all this. I mean I couldn't take up a job because of my daughter. I and my husband do not prefer to keep my daughter in the care of others". Prachi informed. Poonam replied, "I have hired a caregiver from a private company to take care of my son". Like this, they went on talking on many other issues.

9.3.1 Introduction

As we can see in the above example, there are three women portraying different perspectives of feminism – Poonam emphasising on work roles, Prachi following the cultural role and the caregiver is representing the nurturer's role. The purpose of this section is to identify what unites diverse positions of women into feminist framework and then to highlight the variation within this framework. This theory is not different from others but it is evaluative and ideological, that is, the role of such a theory is not simply to establish explanation but to use theory as a tool in changing the world. This theory originated from social movement. Over time, feminism has focussed its attention on many different, although related areas. For example, till the nineteenth century, feminists focussed on equal rights and in twentieth century they focussed on the diverse roles of women in the society and areas related to it.

Let us have a look at the trajectory of women status in India through ancient times.

In the *Vedic age* (2500 to 1500 B.C.), women had the freedom to choose their life partner – sometimes love marriages also happened. Widow marriages were allowed within the family, but they could not inherit the property.

In the *Brahmans age* (1500 to 500 B.C.), higher status girls were allowed to get education and freedom in selection of partner also. Divorce was permitted by the wife but not frequently.

In the *Sutras* and *Epic age* (500 B.C. to 500A.D.), the status of women declined and early marriages started. Abandoning of education for females and living up to the expectations of husband came into force.

In the *Smritis age* (500 A.D. to 1800 A.D.), position of the women worsened in the society. *Sati pratha* started to prove loyalty towards husband. Women were not at all involved in the decision making.

Prior to independence, in British rule, status of women was given importance. Women actively participated in reform movements with reformers like Mahatma Gandhi, Swami Dayanand Saraswati, the Indian National Congress etc. Organisations started being headed by women like Sarojini Naidu. Women started working outside home.

After independence, status of women has been rising significantly due to various Acts developed favouring feminism. Women started adopting various roles in the society from provider to nurturer.

Gordon (1979) defines feminist theory as "an analysis of women's subordination for the purpose of figuring out how to change it" (p.107).

9.3.2 Assumptions

The assumptions of the feminist theory are stated below:

1) **Women's experience is central:** Women's experience is real and provides the foundation for knowledge. For example, what women think, feel, understand from what men feel, think, or do specially in dealing with violence, children etc.

2) **Feminist theory has many voices:** Feminists have different arguments over the status of women in the society. Some regard it as essential to give same respect and status to women and others consider feminist thinking as relative to the patriarchy.

3) **Feminist theory is emancipatory:** It means this theory liberates women from patriarchal oppression, because patriarchy is responsible for inequality in the lives of women.

9.3.3 Concepts

The following concepts will give us more clarity about this theory:

1) **Gender and sex:** Sex refers to the biologically determined component and gender is cultural and learned component. There are three types of gender.

   Individual gender or gender identity: It focusses on the ways by which we acquire our personal construct of gender like what is masculine and feminine?

   Structural gender or gender as a social status: This is a class or category that is part of hierarchical organisation. For example, women are second class citizens.

   Cultural gender: It focusses on the symbols attached to social gender and their construction.

2) **Family and household:** Families are defined neither by membership nor by the fact of co-residence, but by the prevailing ideology that suggests that a certain division of labour is normal. For example, certain work is "woman's work", because of some inherent maternal ability.

3) **Public and private:** We can understand this concept with the following example, Exploitation of women and children occurs more in less regulated environment in private sphere because here men could escape public sanction for beating, violence, and even rape because it was in the private sphere of the family.

4) **Sexism:** Someone who believes that trait such as sex is genetically determined and then makes harmful attributions about all individuals with the trait would be labelled as "sexist" and behaviour guided by such beliefs would be "sexism". For example, "girls cannot play football" or "all women are peace loving" is a potential distinction based on class inclusion and would be an example of sexism.

9.3.4 Variants of Feminist Theory

There are many variants of feminist's theory. Here we will discuss only four:

1) **Liberal feminism:** The major thrust of this perspective is on achieving gender equality. Thus, most effort in liberal feminism has been directed at equality of opportunity and the removal of barriers that would work against such equality. For example, researches done on the division of labour. When both spouses are working, then the woman's working hours are more as compared to the man's.

2) **Socialist feminism:** According to this theory, male patriarchy as well as female socialisation in the family have encouraged the social partitioning of labour as to justify not only social inequality but inequality of opportunity. There are four central points which are responsible for this inequality.

   First, due to child bearing and child rearing functions women are forced to be sedentary.

   Second, infants are dependent mostly on mothers for their survival and take a long time to become independent.

   Third, bonding between the mother-child dyad has influenced the psychology of people, resulting in considering women as nurturer.

   Fourth, due to basic reproductive classification, women are different from men. They are more expressive than instrumental.

3) **Cultural/anthropological feminism:** The norms, values and roles are culturally determined and socially transmitted. These feminists are not sure whether the biological or socialist feminist is responsible for origin of female culture. It is a complex weave of culture and genes that interact to create the femaleness that cultural feminists treat as central. For instance, nurturance (related to nature) and expressiveness (related to culture) relate with femaleness.

4) **Multicultural feminism:** Women have multiple entities, and these multiple entities are suppressed somewhere in their personality to fulfill the role of 'women'. These multiple entities must be studied as they are responsible for everyday experiences they live.

9.3.5 Empirical Applications

1) **Gendered Division of Labour:** The most obvious application for feminist theory has been in the area of division of labour between husbands and wives. One of the researches shows that wives spend almost double the time that husbands spend on household chores and child care. Ehrenreich (2000) speculates that housework is moving from the private sphere to the public in what she calls the "capitalisation" of housework. She explains that more dual earner families are hiring maid services to do the previously contested housework.

2) **Measuring diversity in feminism:** Researchers have identified scale to measure diversity of feminist attitude, like conservative feminism, liberal feminism, radical feminism, socialist feminism, cultural feminism, and women of colour feminism.

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

1) Give empirical applications of the feminist theory.

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9.4 BIO-ECOLOGICAL THEORY

Reena and Rahul are both working and their work timings are similar. So Rahul has to help Reena in the household tasks. But Rahul's mother does not like this. Whenever she visits their home, she orders Rahul around "Don't do household tasks as they are not meant for you". But Rahul refuses and insists, "Reena is so tired and I must help her as she also stays out the whole day". Here Rahul adapts to the situation so as to facilitate their lives.

9.4.1 Introduction

In 2005, Urie Bronfenbrenner, one of the ecological developmentalists, pioneered the above theory. We have read this theory in Unit 5 also. Here we will examine it from the family theories perspective. This theory has its roots in Biology. Biologist Ernst Haeckel coined the term 'Ecology'. The basic approach of this theory is *adaptation.*

9.4.2 Assumptions

This theory has focussed on following assumptions:

1) **Individuals and groups are both biological and social in nature:** According to this theory, the environment is both spatial and bio-physical; that is development of the human being depends on the nature-nurture interactions, through the gradual process of adaptation. Human beings are dependent on their environment for sustenance (air, water, food, etc.). Human being can survive only in environments in which their biological needs are met. Human beings are social and thus are dependent on other human beings.

2) **Time is both, a major constraint as well as a resource in family life cycle of the individual:** As life is finite, time becomes an important resource to understand social organisation and individual behaviour.

3) **Human interactions are spatially organised and can be understood on several levels:** There are two levels; that are individual and population. For example, a person's death due to prolonged illness may be a negative outcome at an individual level but positive at the population level.

9.4.3 Concepts

The main concepts of bio-ecological theory are:

1) **Ecosystem:** It is the subset of the larger environment but contains the elements of wholeness and the interdependency of those parts.

2) **Ecological levels:** According to Bronfenbrenner, the family ecosystem has five level of analysis:

   1) Microsystem
   2) Mesosystem
   3) Exosystem
   4) Macrosystem and
   5) Chronosystem.

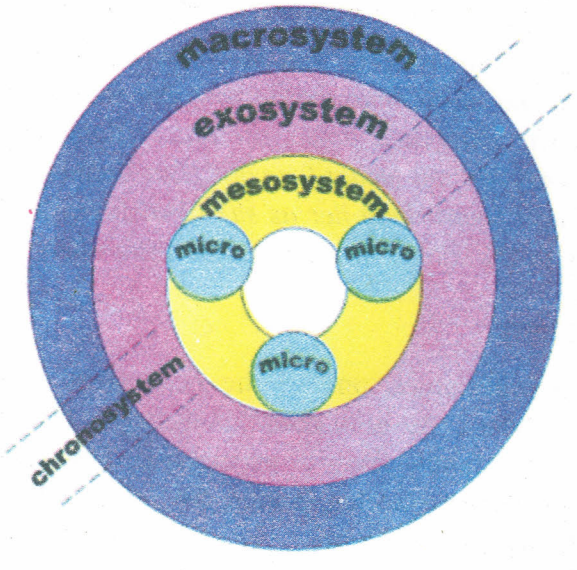

Fig. 9.3: Bronfenbrenner's ecological model of child development

These we will discuss in detail later in this chapter.

3) **Niche:** Every ecosystem contains appropriate function for the maintenance or adaptation of units in the environment. For instance, role of father as provider.

4) **Adaptive range:** An organism that occupies a niche in an ecosystem can be categorised as having an adaptive range. For example, a 3-year-old will not be able to understand language with complex words because of his developmental stage.

5) **Mutualism, commensalism, and corporate relations:** A"Symbiotic" relationship refers to the family living together and human relationships. Some of the major forms of this concept are – *mutualism* (relationships where the two organisms share a common host and mutually benefit one another), *commensalism* (different organisms share a common host or niche but maintain independence), and *corporate relations* (individuals compete for the same niche).

6) **Ontogenetic development:** The biological part of developmental change is referred to as ontogenetic development. As in ecological theory, it is illustrated that development is always influenced by the relationship between organism and its immediate environment.

7) **Natural selection and adaptation:** Natural selection is the concept about the outcome of adaptation. For example, in a family there is a rule that prayer should be done prior to eating a meal. If members adapted to this norm then they are "selected", that is allowed to finish the meal. And if they are poor adapters then they are "not selected" that is not provided with the meal.

9.4.4 Variants of Bio-Ecological Theory

This theory has the following variants:

1) **Family demography and ecology:** Peterson (1969) defined demography as "the systematic analysis of population phenomena" (p.1). For example, study of fertility rate, marriage rate etc.

2) **Human developmental ecology:** As discussed earlier, Bronfenbrenner has given five levels of analysis. This theory can be applied through out the life course. He argues that the child always develops in the context of family-type of relationships. Development is the outcome of nature and nurture interaction. For example, toilet training before 18 months of age will frustrate both the child and the parent. He gave the following five levels of family ecosystem:

   i) *Microsystem:* Microsystem is the innermost level, that refers to the activities and interaction patterns in the child's immediate surrounding. For example, an attentive child seeks positive response from parents as compared to a destructive child. In a microsystem, presence of third parties influence the interaction between two individuals; for example, marital conflict may be responsible for the parent's aggressive behaviour towards the child.

   ii) *Mesosystem:* Mesosystem refers to connection between two or more microsystems, for example, home, school, day care centre etc.

iii) *Exosystem:* Exosystem refers to the social settings that do not contain children but affect their experiences in immediate settings, for instance friends, neighbours, extended families, community health services, workplace of parents etc.

iv) *Macrosystem:* Macrosystem is not a specific context but instead refers to the values, laws, and customs of a particular culture.

v) *Chronosystem:* Chronosystem incorporates time as the developmental history of the individual (events and experiences) and its effect on the development of the child.

3) **Sociobiology:** Sociobiology refers to the biological explanation for social behaviour. It emphasises on the concept of inclusive fitness, or kin selection.

4) **Human ecology, family and consumer sciences:** Human ecology studies the ecological theory for family decision making, that is family as a system interacting with its environment. It also highlights home economics as a form of human ecology. Only through intelligent consumption and management of household resources can our society combat the waste and the pollution of unchecked capitalism.

9.4.5 Empirical Applications

1) **Effect of daycare on young children:** This is the most important application of ecological theory on family. Variables like mother-child attachment, non-compliance among children, etc., can be studied taking this theory into consideration.

2) **Child maltreatment:** The presence of informal support networks (other than parent-child dyad) in the community militates against child maltreatment. This could be a challenging area for the researchers.

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

Note: a) Read the following questions carefully and answer in the space provided below.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this Unit.

Arrange the following in a sequence and give an example at each level.

- Macrosystem
- Mesosystem
- Chronosystem
- Microsystem
- Exosystem

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9.5 LET US SUM UP

In this Unit, we have learnt about the different family theories. To begin with the structural functional theory illustrates the relationship between the structure of the family and the ability of the family to serve the functions of society (reproduction and socialising young). Despite criticisms, this approach continues to stimulate scholars and practitioners.

Feminist theory highlights the role of women in the society, factors affecting the division of labour in feminist framework, and how liberalisation is replacing traditional role of women with modernisation.

Bio-ecological theory has great scope and breadth. It mainly covers the profit in relations at the individual and group level. Bio-ecological theory is at its youthful stage taking into account diverse theories. It emphasises on both biological and social aspects of human beings.

9.6 GLOSSARY

Ecological System Theory : Bronfenbrenner's approach, which views the child as developing within a complex system of relationships affected by multiple levels of environment, from immediate setting of family and school to broad cultural values and programmes.

Feminism : A discourse that involves various movements, theories and philosophies that are concerned with the issue of gender difference, which advocate equality for women, and campaign for women rights and interests.

Psychodynamics : Systematised study and theory of the psychological forces that underlie human behaviour, emphasising the interplay between unconscious and conscious motivation and the functional.

Socialisation : The process of learning one's culture and how to live within it.

Social Systems Perspective : View of the family as a complex set of interacting relationships influenced by the larger social context.

9.7 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress Exercise 1

- Action theory — Talcott Parsons
- Neofunctionalism — Swenson
- Social system — Institutions
- Personality system — Species

Check Your Progress Exercise 2

i) Gendered division of labour

ii) Measuring diversity in feminism

Check Your Progress Exercise 3

- Microsystem: Home
- Mesosystem: Connection between home and daycare
- Exosystem: Work place of parents
- Macrosystem: Laws
- Chronosystem: Effect of time or events on development of child.

9.8 UNIT END QUESTIONS

1) What do you understand by the term social systems? Explain with an example.

2) Analyse the feminist theory critically.

3) The ecosystems of bio-ecological theory are interdependent. Explain with the help of examples.

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MCFT-001
Human Development and Family Relationships

BLOCK 1 HUMAN DEVELOPMENT: THEORETICAL APPROACHES

UNIT 1 Introduction to Human Development

UNIT 2 Biological Perspectives

UNIT 3 Psychoanalytic Theories

UNIT 4 Cognitive, Learning and Intelligence Theories

UNIT 5 Humanistic, Ethological and Contextual Theories

BLOCK 2 THE FAMILY: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

UNIT 6 Diversity in Family Forms

UNIT 7 Family Dynamics: Mapping Family Relationships

UNIT 8 Family Theories - I

UNIT 9 Family Theories - II

BLOCK 3 FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES - I

UNIT 10 Family Life Cycle

UNIT 11 Marriage and the Beginning Family

UNIT 12 Child Bearing Families

UNIT 13 Families with Preschool Children

BLOCK 4 FAMILY LIFE CYCLE STAGES - II

UNIT 14 Families with Elementary and Middle School Children

UNIT 15 Families with Teenagers

UNIT 16 Launching and Contracting Families

UNIT 17 Families with Middle-aged Parents and Aging Family Members

BLOCK 5 MANUAL FOR SUPERVISED PRACTICUM (MCFTL-001)

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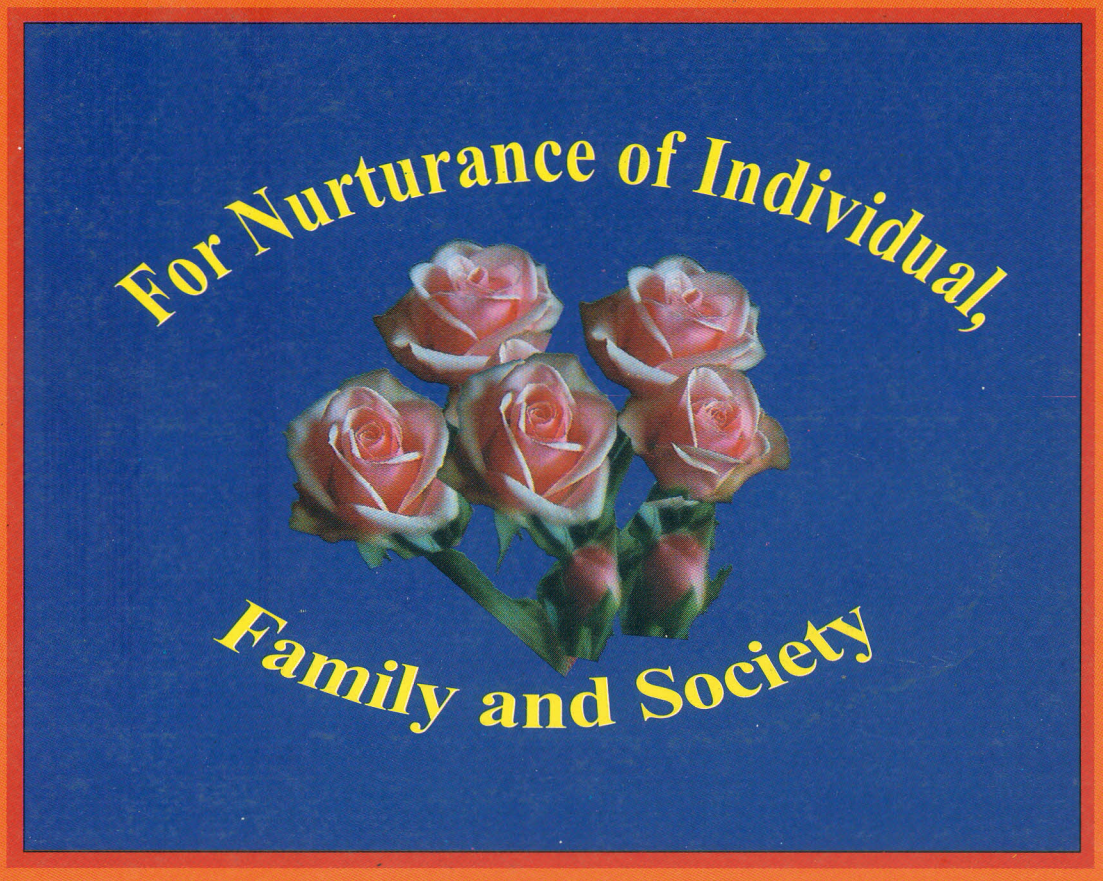

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