

Changing Pattern of Family in India

Changes in the family are mainly concerned with the changes in structure and interaction level in the family. Is the joint family structure being nuclearised? Many studies in India have proved that joint families in India are not disappearing. This is evident from various empirical studies conducted by various scholars in different parts of the country.

Structural Changes :

I. P. Desai studied urban families in Mahuva in Gujarat and found that :

Nuclearity is increasing and jointness is decreasing;

Spirit of individualism is not growing, as about half of the households are joint with other households; and

The radius of kinship relations within the circle of jointness is becoming smaller. The joint relations are mostly confined to parents-children, siblings, and uncles, nephews, i.e., lineal relationships are found between father, son and grandson, and the collateral relationship is found between a man and his brothers and uncles.

K. M. Kapadia studied rural and urban families in Gujarat's Navasari town and its 15 surrounding villages and concluded that:

In the rural community, the proportion of joint families is almost the same as that of the nuclear families. Viewed in terms of castes, in villages, higher castes have predominantly joint families while lower castes show a greater incidence of nuclear family.

In the urban community, there are more joint families than nuclear families. In the 'impact' villages (i.e., villages within the radius of 7 to 8 km from a town), the family pattern closely resembles the rural pattern and has no correspondence with the urban pattern.

Taking all areas (rural, urban and impact) together, it may be held that joint family structure is not being nuclearised. The difference in the rural and the urban family pattern is the result of modification of the caste pattern by economic factors.

Allen Ross studied Hindu families in Bangalore in Karnataka and concluded that

The trend of family nuclear family units. The small joint family is now the most typical form of family life;

A growing number of people now spend at least part of their lives in single family units;

Living in several types of family during life-time seems so widespread that we can talk of a cycle of family types as being the normal sequence for city-dwellers;

Distant relatives are less important to the present generation than they were to their parents and grandparents;

The city-dweller's son has become more spatially separated from all relatives.

A.M.Shah studied families in one village in Gujarat Classifying families as simple (consisting of whole or part of the parental family) and complex (consisting of two or more parental families), he found that one-third families were complex and two-third were simple, indicating the breakdown of joint family system in rural India.

M. S. Gore studied families in an urban area (Delhi), rural and fringe areas of Rohtak and Hisar districts in Haryana; found that two types of families :

One, husband, wife and sons-dominated children, and

Two, husband, wife, unmarried and married sons.

Sachchidananda studied families in 30 villages in Shahabad district in Bihar and found that :

One-fourth families were nuclear and three-fourth were joint, indicating predominance of traditional families.

There were more nuclear families in upper castes than in middle and lower castes.

Nuclearity tends to rise with the level of education.

Kolenda used data from 26 studies conducted between the 1950s and 1970s and found that

The majority of the families are nuclear.

There are regional differences in the proportions of joint families. There are higher proportions of joint families in the Gangetic plain than in Central India or Eastern India (including West Bengal).

The joint family is more characteristic of upper and landowning castes than of lower and landless castes.

Caste is more closely related to the size and the proportion of joint families.

Ram Ahuja studied families in 1976 in an urban area and in 1988 in rural areas during his two research projects. Both studies pointed out that though the number of nuclear families is growing yet it does not indicate the disappearance of joint family system.