

1. Details of Module and its structure

Module Detail	
Subject Name	Sociology
Course Name	Sociology 03 (Class XII, Semester - 1)
Module Name/Title	Family, kinship and marriage – Part 3
Module Id	lesy_10303
Pre-requisites	Sociology, concepts, social institutions, social change
Objectives	After going through this lesson, the learners will be able to understand the following: <ol style="list-style-type: none">1. Family & its types2. Functions of the family3. Kinship4. Marriage
Keywords	Indian society, Social change, Social institutions, Processes of social change, Family, Marriage and kinship

2. Development Team

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Family And Kinship

Family is the basic unit of social organisation, and one can not imagine society and social organisation without the presence of this basic unit of society, i.e. family. Family is universally present. G.P Murdock defines the family as a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. According to Burgess and Lock, family is a group of individuals united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption constituting a single household interacting with each other in their respective social role of husband and wife, mother and father, brother and sister creating a common culture.

Each one of us is born into a family, and we spend almost our entire life living with family. There is a strong sense of attachment with the family and we are very emotional about our family. Sometimes we feel very good about our parents, grandparents, siblings, uncles, aunts and cousins, whereas at others we don't. On the one hand, at times we may resent their interference, and yet we miss their overbearing ways when we are away from them. The family is a space of great warmth and care. It has also been a site of bitter conflicts, injustice and violence. Female infanticide, violent conflicts between brothers over property and ugly legal disputes are as much part of family and kinship as are stories of compassion, sacrifice and care.

Family – Changing structure & changing functions

As a student of sociology we are interested in knowing more about family. Sociologists are interested in understanding, nature, structure and functions of family. The structure of the family can be studied both as a social institution in itself and also in its relationship to other social institutions of society. In itself a family can be defined as nuclear or extended. It can be male-headed or female-headed. The line of descent can be matrilineal or patrilineal. This internal structure of the family is usually related to other structures of society, namely political, economic, cultural etc. Thus the migration of men from the villages of the Himalayan region can lead to an unusual proportion of women-headed families in the village. Or the work schedules of young parents in the software industry in India may lead to increasing number of grandparents moving in as care-givers to young grandchildren. The composition of the family and its structure thereby changes. And these changes can be understood in relation to other changes in society. The family (the private sphere) is linked to the economic, political, cultural, and educational (the public) spheres.

The family is an integral part of our lives. We take it for granted. We also assume that other people's families must be like our own. As we saw however, families have different structures and these structures change. Sometimes these changes occur accidentally, as when a war takes place or people migrate in search of work. Sometimes these changes are purposely brought about, as when young people decide to choose their spouses instead of letting elders decide. Thus in modern times these structures are changing due to various internal and external reasons, such as migration to other areas in search of job opportunities, for education, conflict over property, issues of adjustments etc.

BOX 3.2

The present study...deals with a Muslim biradri (community) called the Multani Lohars. ... Karkhanedar is a vernacular term used for a person engaged in the business of manufacturing of which he is generally the owner...The karkhanas under study operate in domestic conditions and, therefore, have certain pervasive effects on the life of the karkhanedars who work in them. ...The following case illustrates this.

Mahmood, aged forty years, was living with his two younger brothers, one of whom was married. He had three children and was the head of the complex household. ...All the three brothers were employed in various karkhanas and factories as skilled workers. Mahmood successfully fabricated replica of a motor part the import of which had been banned. This greatly encouraged him to start his own karkhana...Later it was decided that two karkhanas should be set up to manufacture the motor part. One was to be owned by the two elder brothers, and the other by the youngest, provided he set up a separate household. Rasheed set up an independent household, consisting of his wife and unmarried children. Therefore, one complex household, comprising three married brothers, gave birth to a simple household as a result of new entrepreneurial opportunities.

Excerpted from S.M. Akram Rizvi, 'Kinship and Industry among the Muslim Karkhanedars in Delhi', in Imtiaz Ahmad, ed. Family, Kinship and Marriage among Muslims in India, New Delhi, Manohar, 1976, pp. 27-48.

As the structure of family is undergoing transformation one can also notice changes in cultural ideas, norms and values as well. These changes are however not so easy to bring about. We have enough evidence from history and in contemporary times also that often change in family and marriage norms are resisted, at times even violently.

Functions of family

Family plays a significant and indispensable role in a person's life. Let us briefly discuss what are the main functions of family:

Family is universal in nature

As a primary and basic social unit it is limited in size

Main and primary agency of socialisation

Offers emotional strength and social rootedness/identity

Stabilisation of adult personality

Transmission/perpetuation and maintenance of culture

Social regulation.

Types/ forms of family

The classification of families as nuclear and joint family is done on the basis of size or structure of family which involves one or more generations as well.

Apart from size and structure there are many other parameters on the basis of which we can classify or categorise types of families. Let us look at some of these parameters.

Family on the basis of nature of residence:

This means that the type of family is defined according to the place where they set up their household or reside. These are:

- Family of patrilocal residence
- Family of matrilocal residence

On the basis of ancestry or descent family, can be classified into two main types

- Matrilineal family
- Patrilineal family

On the basis of marriage, family has been classified into three major types:

- Polygamous or polygynous family
- Polyandrous family
- Monogamous family

Nuclear And Extended Family

The family has many dimensions to it. In India however discussions on the family have often revolved around the nuclear and extended family.

A nuclear family consists of only one set of parents and their children. An extended family (commonly known as the 'joint family') can take different forms, but has more than one couple, and often more than two generations, living together. This could be a set of brothers with their individual families, or an elderly couple with their sons and grandsons and their respective families. The extended family often is seen as symptomatic of India. Yet this is by no means the dominant form now or earlier. It was confined to certain sections and certain regions of the community. Indeed the term 'joint family' itself is not a native category. As I.P. Desai observes, "The expression 'joint family' is not the translation of any Indian word like that. It is interesting to note that the words used for joint family in most of the Indian languages are the equivalents of translations of the English word 'joint family'." (Desai 1964:40)

The Diverse Forms of The Family

Studies have shown how diverse family forms are found in different societies. With regard to the rule of *residence*, some societies are *matrilocal* in their marriage and family customs while others are *patrilocal*. In the first case, the newly married couple stays with the woman's parents, whereas in the second case the couple lives with the man's parents. With regard to the rules of inheritance, *matrilineal* societies pass on property from mother to daughter while *patrilineal* societies do so from father to son. A *patriarchal* family structure exists where the men exercise authority and dominance, and *matriarchy* where the women play a similarly dominant role. However, matriarchy – unlike patriarchy – has been a theoretical rather than an empirical concept. There is no historical or anthropological evidence of matriarchy – i.e., societies where women exercise dominance. However, there do exist *matrilineal* societies, i.e., societies where women inherit property from their mothers but do not exercise control over it, nor are they the decision makers in public affairs.

The account of Khasi matriliney in Box 3.3 clarifies the distinction between matriliney and matriarchy. It shows the structural tensions created by matrilinear system which affect both men and women in Khasi society today.



Khasi matrilineal family

BOX 3.3

The Meghalaya Succession Act (passed by an all-male Meghalaya legislative assembly) received the President's assent in 1986. The Succession Act applies specifically to the Khasi and Jaintia tribes of Meghalaya and confers on 'any Khasi and Jaintia of sound mind not being a minor, the right to dispose of his self- acquired property by will'. The practice of making out a will does not exist in Khasi custom. Khasi custom prescribes the devolution of ancestral property in the female line.

There is a feeling, specially among the educated Khasi, that their rules of kinship and inheritance are biased in favour of women and are too restrictive. The Succession Act is therefore seen as an attempt at removing such restrictions and at correcting the perceived female bias in the Khasi tradition. To assess whether the popular perception of female bias in the Khasi tradition is indeed valid, it is necessary to view the Khasi matrilineal system in the context of the prevalent gender relations and definitions of gender roles.

Several scholars have highlighted the inherent contradictions in matrilineal systems. One such contradiction arises from the separation of the line of descent and inheritance on the one hand and the structure of authority and control on the other. The former, which links the mother to the daughter, comes in conflict with the latter, which links the mother's brother to the sister's son. [In other words, a woman inherits property from her mother and passes it on to her daughter, while a man controls his sister's property and passes on control to his sister's son. Thus, inheritance passes from mother to daughter whereas control passes from (maternal) uncle to nephew.]

Khasi matriliney generates intense role conflict for men. They are torn between their responsibilities to their natal house on the one hand, and to their wife and children on the other. In a way, the strain generated by such role conflict affects Khasi women more intensely. A

woman can never be fully assured that her husband does not find his sister's house a more congenial place than her own. Similarly a sister will be apprehensive about her brother's commitment to her welfare because the wife with whom he lives can always pull him away from his responsibilities to his natal house. The women are more adversely affected than men by the role conflict generated in the Khasi matrilineal system not only because men wield power and women are deprived of it, but also because the system is more lenient to men when there is a transgression of rules. Women possess only token authority in Khasi society; it is men who are the defacto power holders. The system is indeed weighted in favour of male matri-kin rather than male patri-kin. [In other words, despite matriliney, men are the power holders in Khasi society; the only difference is that a man's relatives on his mother's side matter more than his relatives on his father's side.]

(Source: Adapted from Tiplut Nongbri, 'Gender and the Khasi Family Structure' in Uberoi 1994.)

Kinship

A relation between two or more persons that is based on common ancestry (descent) or marriage (affinity). **Kinship** is a family relationship. **Kinship** is the web of social relationships that form an important part of the lives of most humans in most societies. It is the state of being related to the people in your family. Kinship is one of the basic social institutions like family. Just like family Kinship is universal and in most societies plays a significant role in the socialization of individuals and the maintenance of group solidarity. Kins are the people who are related to each other either by bond of blood, or marriage. Relation by the bond of blood is called consanguineous kinship such as parents and their children and between children of same parents. Kinship relation which are formed due to marriage is called as affinal kinship. New relations among families of both the individuals are created when marriage takes place.

Kinship has important role to play in society. The people related to each other through blood or through marriage create special groups, such as family, joint family, extended family, clans etc.

The relationship between the kins is governed by set of kinship rules that prescribe particular behaviour among relatives. The rules define norms of proper, decent or acceptable behaviour. By prescribing appropriate and acceptable norms of behaviour kinship acts as a regulator of social life.

Marriage

Marriage is an essential and all inclusive social organization of society. It is fundamental pillar on which exists the humanity. Family as a social institution continues to exist because of marriage. The continuity of family and then society is based on birth of next generation. Marriage as a social institution provides social and customary sanction to the process of reproduction among adults in a society. Thus Marriage is a social-cultural institution, as it is a gateway to enter into family life.

Family and marriage are complementary to each other. The structure, function and purpose of both these institutions may vary from society to society, but they are present in all the societies.

Through out the history societies have been practising different types of marriages. Depending upon the cultural dispositions marriages have been of different types across the world. some of the main forms/types of marriages are

Polygyny: In this type of marriage one man marries more than one women at a given time. These women may be sisters or not. When the wives are sisters it is called as sororal polygyny.

Polyandry: In this type of marriage one women marries more than one man at a given point of time. Polygyny is more prevalent and common as compared to polyandry. Just like the sororal polygyny, the opposite is called as maternal polyandry, when the woman marries number of men who are brothers, or when several brothers share same wife. This practice is prevalent among the Todas.

Monogamy is yet another form of marriage, in which one man marries one woman. With few exceptions this is the most common and acceptable form of marriage. Particularly in modern urban societies, monogamy is the norm.

It would also be interesting and relevant to discuss rules of marriage in this context. No society across the world gives freedom to any individual to choose their partners. The selection or choice of partner/spouse is bound by certain rules. What are these rule that determine choice of mate?

1. Endogamy: endogamy is the custom of marrying only within the limits of a local community, clan, or tribe. **Endogamy** is also called in-marriage and is the custom of marrying within one's cultural group or clan. ... Historically, **endogamy** has been associated with aristocracy, religious groups, ethnic groups, and social classes. Caste is an endogamous group. The caste-system of India is based on an order of (mostly) endogamous groups. In endogamous groups marriage outside one's group is not encouraged, accepted or appreciated. It is also forbidden, with penalties ranging from mild disapproval by the society, to exile, disowning, or even death of individuals who dare to marry outside. Individuals within a particular caste community marry within their caste group only. Endogamy encourages group affiliation and social bonding between the members of a group. Despite the fact that majority of people tend to marry within their group or observe endogamy, some groups practice endogamy very strictly. The conformism is inherent part of moral traditions, values, belief system emanating from their religious beliefs. They do not compromise upon the system and may go to any extent to preserve their tradition.

2. Exogamy is the custom of marrying outside a community, clan, or tribe. Unlike endogamy, Cultural **exogamy** is marrying outside a specific cultural group. **Exogamy**, also called out-marriage, custom enjoining marriage outside one's own group. **Exogamy** is usually associated with kinship and is at times associated with ethnicity, religion, and/or class.

It is a rule of marriage that prohibits marriage within the group. Marriage between blood relatives is forbidden. There are various forms of exogamy. Although caste is endogamous but hindus observe/practice gotra exogamy, which means that marriage among hindus is arranged outside one's own gotra. Village exogamy again is a type in which an individual marries outside his village.

Along with endogamy and exogamy, there are situations when individuals marry outside their caste groups. How do we classify these marriages.

These are hypergamy and hypogamy.

Hypergamy: It is the marriage of a woman with a man who belongs to higher Varna or superior caste or family.

Hypogamy: It is the marriage of high caste man with a woman who belongs to low caste.

In this chapter we discussed about three basic institutions of society, namely family, kinship and marriage. All these institutions are related to one another. They determine the nature and structure of society at the same time they are determined by nature and structure of society. They are essence of life of any given human society at any point of time. Although the form, function and significance of these institutions vary but these institutions have existed throughout the history in almost all the societies. Over the years one may notice changes coming about in the structure, functioning and significance of these institutions, yet they continue to be fundamental institutions defining nature of human societies.