

INTRODUCTION TO “FAMILY AS A SOCIAL UNIT”

By:- Dr.Seema Bhasin

1.1 STRUCTURE:

- 1.2 Objectives
- 1.3 Introduction to family
- 1.4 Defining Family
- 1.5 General characteristics of the family.
- 1.6 Strategic Importance of family in the socialization.
- 1.7 Meaning of Family environment.

1.2 OBJECTIVES:

When you have completed this unit, you will be able to:-

- 1. Understand the institution of family
- 2. Will know various forms of family
- 3. Various roles , authorities and relationships within the family ,
- 4. Thus at the end of the unit , you shall be well versed with the different aspects of family

1.3 INTRODUCTION TO FAMILY

Family as a social unit is present in all cultures. Although the organization of the family can vary greatly, there are certain general principles concerning its composition, descent patterns, residence patterns, authority patterns. The family is by and large the most important group in the society. Historically, it has been transformed from a more or a less self contained unity into a definite and limited organization of minimum size, consisting primarily of the original contracting parties.

Family is the first and the most important social environment to which a child is exposed. It is an outstanding primary group, because it is in the family the child develops its basic attitude. Further, amongst the groups that influence the lives of the individuals in the society no one affects them so intimately and continuously as does the family. From the time of conception up to the moment of death the family has a constant impact. Family is the first group in which we find ourselves. It provides for the most enduring relationship in one form or the other.

The family as a social institution has always been the core element for the development of the individual as well as for the society and the state. All societies large and small, primitive and civilized, ancient and modern have some form of family or the other. No one knows, or can know, how or when the family began. It is safe to surmise that family in some form will always be with us. With regards to the future as the mind can imagine, the family will continue to be a central and indeed a nuclear component of society. The changes in the family values, therefore, are given much attention all over the world.

1.4 MEANING AND DEFINATIONS:

The word “Family” has been taken over from Latin word “Familus” which means a servant .Originally family consisted of a man and a woman with a child or children and servants. The meaning of family can be explained better by the following definitions.

In common English parlance the word 'family' is used in several different senses:

- i) “Household”, is the body of persons who live in one house or under one head including parents, children, servants etc.
- ii) The group consisting of parents and their children, whether living together or not.
- iii) In wider sense, all those who are nearly related by 'blood and affinity “
- iv) Those descended or claiming descent from a common ancestor house, kindred, or lineage.

M.F Nimkoff: says that “family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife, with or without child or of a man or a woman alone, with children ”.

Eliot and Merrill: Family is “The biological social unit composed of husband, wife and children “.

Maciver: Family is a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children ”.

Burgess and Locke : “ Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage , blood, or adoption constituting a single household inter communicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife , father and mother , son and daughter , brother and sister, creating a common culture”.

1.5 GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY

- i) A mating Relationship.: A family comes into existence when a man and a woman establish mating relation between them.
- ii) Selection of Mates: Wife or husband are selected by parents or by the elders of the family, or the choice may be left to the wishes of the individuals concerned. Various rules govern the selection.
- iii) A system of Nomenclature. : Every family is known or recognized by a distinctive name.
- iv) A way of tracing the descent .: Every family has its own mode of tracing the descent. Descent refers to the social recognition of biological relationship between individuals. Descent may be traced through male line (Matrilineal descent) or through both the lines (bi-lateral Descent).

1.6 STATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE FAMILY SYSTEM IN SOCIALIZATION

The family system influences the education system in many ways. It plays a very important role in the socialization of the new generation.

The institution has its own characteristics that enhance the importance in socialization.

- i) The family gets the child first. At this stage it is blank and plastic and can be moulded by the family as it wishes.
- ii) The family is a factor that is more persistent in the life of the child right from its birth and its association with the child is much longer than that of its playmates, friends, and teachers.
- iii) The family is a primary group. Its members have a strong group “we feeling”. It accepts the members as whole persons and they are irrespective of their good and bad qualities. The relations between the members are informal,

personal, face to-face, spontaneous, intimate, sympathetic and emotional.

- iv) The child is completely dependent on the family for the satisfaction of all its material, security and affectional needs. No other institution is like this.
- v) The family provides both kinds of relationships the authoritarian as well as equalitarian which the child needs at this stage. The former are provided by the parents and the latter by the other siblings. This makes family a better institution for socialization.
- vi) The father or the mother in the family provides the initial identification of the child. The community in which the family lives also identifies the child as the son or the daughter of a particular person and reinforces its family identity.

These special characteristics of family increase its ability to socialize the new generation and make the family environment very important in socialization.

1.7 MEANING OF FAMILY ENVIRONMENT

It is necessary to specify what is meant by “family environment”. Several things can be included in it as follows.

- i) Child rearing practices in the family,
- ii) Jointness and nuclearity of the family,
- iii) Family size
- iv) Number of siblings in the family,
- v) parents-children relationships,
- vi) Intellectual quality of the home,
- vii) Parent's attitude to education,
- viii) Parent's interest in children education,
- ix) Parent's ability to help and guide the child in doing home work,
- x) Family's economic status, etc .it is necessary to examine some of these aspects of family environment which influence the educational system.

SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- 1) Define family? Discuss in detail the characteristics of family.
- 2) What do you understand by family environment? Does it have an impact on the family relationships?
- 3) What is the role of family in the development on an individual?

**AVERAGE SIZE OF FAMILY, MARRIAGE PATTERNS, DISTINCT
SOCIAL ROLES.**

By:- Dr.Seema Bhasin

2.1 STRUCTURE:

- 2.2 Objectives
- 2.3 Introduction
- 2.4 Forms of family
- 2.5 On basis of Kinship Ties
- 2.6 On the basis of Size
- 2.7 On the basis of Authority
- 2.8 On the basis of Residence
- 2.9 On the basis of Descent
- 2.10 On the basis of Marriage
- 2.11 Marriage Patterns
- 2.12 Distinct Social Roles
- 2.13 Conclusion
- 2.14 Self Assessment Exercise
- 2.15 Suggested Readings

2.1 OBJECTIVES:

The major objective of the lesson is to familiarize you with

- the concept of family
- different family types
- criteria of forms of family

2.2 INTRODUCTION

Amongst all the organizations whether large or small, family is the greatest of all. It is the main feature in our social system. It is the first social environment for the child. From the composition and the principle of its integration underlying the family, it is obvious that it is a functional unit. It grows out of biological needs, particularly those of the expectant mother and the infant child, who cannot support and live by themselves.

2.3 Forms of Family

It is difficult to remunerate the various forms of family because of wider application of this institution. However, the forms of family can be identified on the basis of certain criteria like the size, descent, residence, marriage and others, which are universally known.

Let us understand the various forms of family on the basis of specific criteria:

2.4 On the Basis of Kinship Ties : The family has been classified as Consanguineous family and conjugal family.

(i) Consanguineous family: If a nucleus of blood relatives is surrounded by a fringe of spouses, the resultant grouping is called a consanguineous family. It consists of members related by birth and thus, it is more stable. Maturation of children or breakup of the marriage bond does not destroy the consanguineous family. Owing to marriage between close relatives being universally ruled out, the consanguineous family can meet any demand of its members except for the sexual gratification; and it is this fact that necessitates the fringes of spouses. Thus, emphasis here is more on blood relationship and not marriage basis.

(ii) Conjugal Family : The type of family in which there is a nucleus of spouses and their offspring surrounded by a fringe of relatives is called a conjugal family. The emphasis here is on the conjugal bond and therefore, this type of family is not stable and it disintegrates with the death of the parents.

2.5 On the basis of Size : The size of the family can take various forms, such as :

i) **Nuclear family :** It can be defined as “a small group composed of husband and wife and immature children which constitutes a unit apart from the rest of the community”. Talcott Parsons calls the nuclear family as an isolated family. It is isolated because it does not form an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationships. Parsons argues that there is a functional relationship between the isolated nuclear family and the economic system in the preindustrial society. In particular, the isolated nuclear family is shaped to meet the requirements of the economic system.

ii) **Extended Family:** If the primary nucleus is extended by the addition of other closely related kin then it is called an extended family. Extended families are of various types. Firstly, there are those which grow mainly round the nucleus and secondly, there are those which are extended still further, by extending the principle of kinship, like in the Hindu joint family. An extended family may include a woman, her husband, their children and her married daughters, with her husband.

iii) **Joint Family:** The joint is a mode of combining smaller families into larger family units through the extension of three or more generations including at least grandparents, parents and children. It is the family which consists of members related by blood.

Acc. to Iravati Karve, the joint family may be defined as a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common family worship and are closely related to each other as some particular type of kindred.

2.6 On the basis of Authority: The family can be of two types according to authority

i) **Patriarchal family:** The patriarchal family is father centered. Here, the father or the eldest man is the head of the family and he exercises authority. He is the owner and the administrator of the family property.

It typically is evident in ancient Hebrew, Greeks Romans, and the Aryans of India. The Roman patriarch had "the patria potestas". (The power of the father) which gave the head of the family an unlimited authority over all the other members.

ii) **Matriarchal family:** This is a mother centered family. Here the woman is the head of the family and she exercises authority. She is the owner of the property and the manager of the household. These families are prevalent among the Trobriand Islander, and Khasi of Assam others.

2.7 On the basis of Residence: Families are also identified on the basis of residence and they are of two types

i) **Matrilocal family:** It is a family in which the married couple resides with the wife's family or kin group. In such families, the husbands either visit their wives periodically or live permanently with the matrilocal family. The khasis of Assam have this kind of family.

ii) **Patrilocal family:** This is a kind of family where a woman after marriage comes and lives with her husband. In this kind of family, the descent is also traced through the male line. Most of the tribal families like kharia, ho, bhil, and Gond are patrilocal.

2.8 On the basis of Descent: It again includes two categories

i) **Patrilocal Family:** In this type of family, the authority rests with the eldest male of the family. In this, the property inheritance and reckoning of descent takes place along the male line.

ii) **Matrilocal Family:** In this family, the authority lies with the female head and the property inheritance and reckoning takes place along the female line. The Khasis of Assam are e.g..

2.9 **On the basis of Marriage:** This type of family is based on the numbers of spouses the man or woman has.

i) **Monogamous family:** This type of family is the general pattern of family where the husband and wife live together. In this type of family one husband has one wife.

ii) **Polygynous family:** In this family, a man has more than one wife. Thus, sometimes reflect the inferiority of women in the society. A man who has many wives has great prestige. This family pattern is common among the bhils of central India.

iii) **Polyandrous family:** In this type of family, a woman has several husbands. This is due to shortage of women. Generally, in a family with three or four brothers, the brothers live together and share their wives. This is common among the Todas of Nilgiris, the khasa of jannsar Bawar.

2.10 MARRIAGE PATTERNS

Marriage is one of the universal social institutions. It is closely connected with the institution of family. In fact marriage and family are complementary to each other. Marriage is that institution of society that can have very different implications in different cultures. Its purpose and forms may differ but it is present everywhere as an institution.

ENDO GAMY - Marriage between people of the same social group or category. Norms of endogamy are found in every society and endorse marriage between people of the same age, tribe, race, religion or social class.

EXO GAMY - The second pattern is also found in every society marriage between people of different social groups or categories. The rule of exogamy insists that the so called blood relatives shall neither have marital connections nor sexual contacts among selves.

In every industrial society, both law and cultural norms promote **MONOGAMY** - marriage that joins one female and one male. This is the most wide spread form of marriage found among the primitives as well as the civilized people . It has become universal practice at present.

POLYGAMY- (from Greek meaning “ many unions “), defined as marriage that unites three or more people . In polygamous marriage two or more nuclear families are combined to form an extended family . Polygamous takes two forms: -

a) **Polygyny** -is the marriage that joins one male with more than one female at a given time. It was prevalent in most ancient civilizations. Example, nagas, gondes and Baigas of India.

b) **Polyandry**- is the marriage that joins one female with more than one male. This pattern is extremely rare but does exist in a few societies including Buddhist in Tibet. polyandry may also emerge in societies that engage in female infanticide , which reduces the female population so that men must share women . Another reason attributed can be to keep the property intact. In India, Khasas, the Todas, the Nairs of Kerala were Polyandrous previously.

2.11 DISTINCT SOCIAL ROLES

Eric Wolf has written , family is the bearer of virtue and of public reputation is linked with that of his family and with his own relations to his family .

Certain characteristics of family roles are common to families throughout the land. Role is a key concept It highlights the social expectations attached to the particular statuses or social positions and analysis the workings of such expectations. These expectations, which are socially based, constitute the role. When people occupy social positions their behavior is determined mainly by what is expected of their positions rather than by their own individual characteristics . Roles are bundles of socially defined attributes and expectations associated with positions within and outside family.

As in other human societies the major roles are those of husband and wife who are father and mother , of son and daughter who are sibling to each other . Every family varies from another. Every family varies from another family in every aspect. Never the less society assigns certain basic roles to perform.

Woman as a -Wife / mother / daughter / Administrator.

It is a common knowledge that the birth of a daughter in the family is usually not a moment of joy. The preference is to needs of a son. The responsibility for rearing a daughter, for molding her into a proper social person, rests with her mother. The training is mainly aimed at turning her into a good Daughter-in-law obedient, skilful, and demure. The girls chances of a fine marriage are much improved if she gives evidence of these qualities ; family's prestige is enhanced if she demonstrates these virtues after she is married , and her own happiness hinges on making the best of her roles as daughter-in-law and as a wife.

The break between being a daughter and sister in one family and becoming a wife and daughter in-law in another is sharp and as many women remember a difficult one. A woman after her marriage ceremony marks a new beginning in a woman's life. She is actually shifted from the familiar surroundings of childhood into a territory of strangers. The transition is not an easy one but she is prepared since long for this change in life. Wife is man's helpmate, partner and comrade.

After marriage woman comes under the authority of the husband's family. She has to make her own space i.e. to win over the confidence of the others in the family. She devotes herself that is her wishes her desire all are succumbed for the betterment of or welfare of the family members.

She uses her skills in organizing the life of the husband and others in the family. A wife's major responsibility lies in providing a child and preferably a son. Barrenness is a curse and a fear, despite the scientific advances. A wife cannot escape the constant reminders from the mother-in-law, sister-in-law of this ominous possibility. Her position in the family is strengthened, and her status moves upward in the family hierarchy.

Mother's carry the central role of performing women's traditional household tasks-like cooking meals /shopping for food &clothing / paying the bills /washing of dishes etc. In today's world and under the circumstances where major changes are occurring in the institution of the family, women are also contributing in the economic upliftment of the family. She sets standards, relieves tensions, maintain peace and order in the household. She is a comrade in the life that deepens and enriches the personalities of both. She stands by her husband in the entire crisis; she shares with him all the joys and sorrows, successes and attainments.

A woman also has to focus on her role in a managerial position within the

house. It is her responsibility to organize and execute various social functions. She has to take care of the entertainment and relaxation needs of the family members. Associated to this role is her duty to cater the health needs of the family, so that she gives special attention to all in terms of food, sleep, and recreation.

2.13 CONCLUSION: Family the basic institution, has the value for the individual and for the society, that cannot be gained in any other way. The unique power of the home stems from the fact that it receives and houses the human being first before any other institution can have a chance to make an impression upon him. It continues to remain the chief environment for the individual throughout his life.

The family, although has many varied forms, it is present in all cultures. Despite the social changes that have buffeted the American family, families report being happy as partners and as parents. Marriage and the family may now be more socially controversial, but they are likely to remain the foundation of our society for some time to come.

2.1 SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- 1) Discuss the relevance of different marriage styles in the institution of family.
- 2) Describe family and the importance and nature of relationships amongst members of family.
- 3) Write in detail, what different roles a woman has to perform within the family.

2.15 SUGESSTED READINGS

- Harlambos, M&Heald; 1991 Sociology: Themes and Perspectives, Oxford University Press, Madras
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**INTERNAL DISTINCTION IS AUTHORITY BASED
ON AGE AND SEX ROLES**

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3.1 STRUCTURE

3.2 Objectives

3.3 Introduction

3.4 Changes in Age and Sex roles

3.5 Conclusion

3.6 Self- Assessment Exercise

3.7 Suggested Readings

3.2 OBJECTIVES:

- To familiarize the student with family authority
- roles and statuses in the family
- Hierarchical norms within the family.

3.3 INTRODUCTION

Since the society can be understood as the network of statuses, it is quite natural that in every society we find a large number of groups which have many statuses. Every individual occupies many such statuses. His status will differ with the type of group. Each group can be understood as the network of statuses. Each group and individual has a number of statuses.

In modern complex society, each individual during the course of a single day may find himself in large number of statuses. Similarly, in case of a family, an individual may carry different statuses in a day. For example, a young girl may be daughter to parents,

grand-daughters to her grandparents, sister to elder brother/sister, guide to younger sibling, friend to any of these relations chacha/chachi,/ bua /masi to sibling child etc. And she may be the representative of the family to outside world. It means the individual occupies the statuses ,such as, daughter /grand-daughter / parent / sibling/ friend / representative and many such statuses in the course of his life. Of course, in smaller and simpler families and societies an individual can have only a few statuses.

Statuses differ with their degree of importance, some statuses are more important than others in deciding the position of an individual in society. Different societies have different criteria for deciding the importance of statuses. In our Indian society age, sex kinship statuses are important than others . We are born into a society in which the statuses are already there. They are the part of the structure of our society.

Hierarchical Authority within a family rests on the biological facts. Parents have to exert authority to socialize their children and human offspring must remain dependent on their parents for years. Human males, if only because they are larger and stronger than female, possess a certain, if limited, authority in their families .age and sex are the main ordering principles in family hierarchy. “The men have more decisive authority in the traditional Indian family as compared with women”, M.S. Gore notes “and elders have greater authority as compared with young person's”(1965,p-216). He adds that difference of a year or two in age is sufficient to establish firmly who the superior is. As between the authority of an elder women and a younger women and a younger man, Sex is the more important determinant . Men have the formal property rights, and so the formal authority of a younger man not necessarily his actual influence is higher than that of his older sister , though he is expected to respect and cherish her .

A husband is expected to be his wife's superior and to receive symbolic and actual difference from her .There is no great expectation that couple should share thoughts and tastes. It is to say that roles of man and woman are markedly different. A woman moves about within her household and perhaps in those fields and households where she may work, not often beyond the limits. A man has much wider ambit in space and among people.

Every individual in society occupies many different statuses. As an occupant of these one has to fulfill his obligations and duties towards others in the counter

position. Hence in the interest of the individual and society it is essential that these statuses get integrated or organized properly

A woman is a deferent as a wife, but not as a mother. Children owe permanent deference to both parents. Parental authority is increasing as an ideal and is sustained in fact, though the actual duration and degree of this authority are affected by economic circumstances and individuals' traditions. Within a household a son and a daughter must not disobey a parent's will, especially not the fathers. If grown up sons do not wish to follow a parental mandate, they usually find ways to circumvent rather than to contradict it. Fathers are the chief authority in the house on all official and financial matters. Then, Grandparents are the authority in all important household matters. The ideal of deference to parents is rarely questioned, and in practice it endows the elders with authority that is not lightly ignored by their children.

Among brothers, authority rests with the elders. Some of the same respectful compliance that a son gives to his father, a younger brother should give, informal terms at least, to his elder brother. When an eldest brother succeeds as head of the joint family, his younger brother, and their wives and children, are supposed to give him the kind of allegiance and obedience that the father commanded. Within the realm of women's activities, a woman's authority usually depends on the position of her husband in the household. The wife of the senior man is the permanent authority.

Hierarchical norms are usually powerful influences on family conduct, though people do not always behave in this way; personal inclination and particular circumstances may induce them to act against these expectations.

With family authority goes responsibility. The superior is also obliged to look after the welfare of his charges so that they will not suffer, either by their own misjudgment or because of untoward circumstances. It is also said that the dominant note in the formal pattern of relations in the household is that of restraint. And restraint between those of opposite sex.

Authority on the one hand, and respect on the other mix in an easy carrying out of duties and the reticence of the women is one of modesty, not fear. Restraint and hierarchy, it should be noted, are also characteristic of relations among people of different societies as well as within the family. Societies vary in a way that the power within the family is distributed. If a society expects males to dominate in all family

decision making it is termed as patriarchy. Frequently, in patriarchal societies, the eldest male wields the greatest power. Women, hold status in such societies and rarely are granted full and equal rights within the legal system. It may be more difficult, for example, for a woman to obtain a divorce than it is for a man. By contrast, in a matriarchy, women have greater authority than men.

Some relationships may be neither male did not dominate nor female dominated. The third type is the egalitarian family, in which spouses are regarded as equals. This does not mean, spouses are regarded as equals. This does not mean, however that each decision shared families. Wives may hold authority in some spheres, husbands in others. In the view of many ecologists, the egalitarian family has begun to replace the patriarchal family as the social norm.

3.4 CHANGES IN AGE AND SEX ROLES: The traditional considerations for the elderly the grandparents and all those in that order in modern western society have diminished. At individual level it is not a compelling consideration.

The nuclear family, that is the family in modern industrial society, does not include the aged ones. It is one of the consequences of the increasing social mobility and the neolocal family system that characterizes the western society. The old people are now the elder citizens, to use the American terms, and not the respected heads of their families. They live by their earned income, the retirement benefits and the state security.

In Nuclear family, there is the distinct change between the parents children relation. The traditional patriarchal authority is neither exercised nor felt. The children are not without their say. The democratic ideology that dominates the society supports it . It is sometimes also attributed to vanished economic character of the family and, to the absence of the grand parental influence from it.

Sex roles to be appropriate for each sex culturally defined and structurally institutionalized, in every society. Hey are determined by ideology, custom and laws. They are basic, “in more ways than in simply determining whether a woman should work or not. They also play a large part in shaping what form of employment a woman should enter and how far she may go in that field of employment”. “Thus, while sex-roles may be the basic roles, it would appear that they are more basic for women than for men. One consequence of this is that the dilemma of multiple roles may appear

in much sharper form for women than for men; to put it another way , there is greater congruence between a man's role and his occupational role than between that of a woman and her occupational role , if she has one".

The impact of change on the sex- role is more than apparent. In the process of socialization the children the boy and the girl begins with their sex roles training. It begins with parent's attitude, the form and the colour of the dress they get to wear, the type of toys they play with. More especially, girls learn it by taking the mother as the model, as the two are intimate and close. Boys suffer on this count as the father remains out for longer hours.

The influence of change on the sex-roles is clear from the freedom young men and women have in choosing their spouses , the economic independence of the women , the nuclear character of the family , the equality the woman exercises with her husband in decision making and the control they have over property.

3.5 CONCLUSION

Family therefore establishes the nature of the relations between the sexes and among the generations .They teach the fundamental lessons of who “we” are and who “they” are; how we may link with others; whom we may marry whom we may not marry. Thus, family socializes the individual and assists him in the choice and selection of relationships within the members of the family.

3.6 SELF-ASSESSMENT EXERCISE

- 1) Enlist the factors that are responsible for authority patterns in the family.
- 2) Age and Sex are important factors in assigning authority within the family. Justify?

3.7 SUGGESTED READINGS

- Harlambos,M&Heald;1991Sociology :Themes and Perspectives, Oxford University Press, Madras
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**GENDER DIFFERENCES WITH REFERNCES TO ATTROCITIES AND
ACCESS TO RESOURCES (FEMALE HEADED HOUSEHOLDS)****By:- Dr.Seema Bhasin****4.1 STRUCTURE:**

- 4.2 Objectives
- 4.3 Introduction
- 4.4 Women Harassment
- 4.5 Nature and Characteristics of violence against women
- 4.6 violence/Rape/ Abduction and kidnapping/Dowry Deaths/Wife battering/violence against widows.
- 4.7 Conclusion
- 4.8 Self Assessment Exercise
- 4.9 Suggested Readings

4.2 OBJECTIVES:

To ensure that the students is able to:

- know meaning of gender differences
- define various terminologies related
- have an in depth understanding of violence against women

4.3 INTRODUCTION

The term ,a female headed household , conjures up before our eyes a picture of a lonely women a lonely widow or a deserted one struggling to survive and to bring up small children by her own efforts . We see her as poor and resource less, persecuted

by her own relatives and relatives and neighbours and sexually harassed by the men as she has to deal with. The number of households where women are trying to make a living without any support is possibly being grossly underestimated.

A household denotes all those who eat from a common kitchen: a family too is assumed to be the same. Ahead of such a household or a family is the person who commonly bears the chief responsibility for its maintenance and takes decisions on behalf of it.

To admit that a woman earns the bulk of the responsibilities for decisions made by it would be doubly offensive and is a taboo by common consent. If there is an adult male relative in the family, no matter what he does and how little he contributes to the family resources, he would be designated as its head and, at least for public consumption, this position would be supported even by women who actually do the work. Meghalaya is the only exception where about 30% of women headed households do have husband and wife living together.

4.4 WOMEN'S HARASSMENT:

The problem of violence against women is not new. Women in Indian society have been victims of humiliation, torture, and exploitation for as long as we have written records of social organization and family life. Today, women are being gradually recognized as important, powerful meaningful contributors to the life of men; but till a few decades back, their condition was pitiable. Ideologies, institutional practices and the existing norms in the society have contributed much to their harassment some of these behavioral practices thrive even today. In spite of the legislative measures adopted in favour of women in our society after independence, countless women still continue to be victims of violence. They are beaten, kidnapped, raped, burnt and murdered.

It is important to clarify here the concept of 'violence' against women. The term 'violence' has been described by Gelles (1979)- as "an act of striking a person with the intent of causing harm or injury but not actually causing it". Strauss (1980) has described a violent act as "an act where there is the high potential of causing injury". The operational definition of violence may be given as "force whether overt or covert, used to wrest from an individual (a woman) something that she does not

want to give of her own free will and which causes her either physical injury or emotional trauma or both”. Thus, a rape kidnapping, murder, wife battering, sexual abuse, eve teasing are all examples of violence against women.

4.5 Nature and Characteristics of violence Against Women

VIOLENCE against women may be categorized as:

- i) Criminal violence rape, abduction, murder
- ii) Domestic violence dowry deaths, wife's battering, sexual abuse. Maltreatment of widows and for elderly women
- iii) Social violence forcing the wife / daughter in law to go for female foeticide , eve-teasing , refusing to give a share to women in the property , forcing a young widow to commit sati , harassing the daughter in law to bring more dowry

4.6 RAPE : Though the problem of rape is considered serious in all countries , in India it is statistically not serious as it is in western society .

It is not only the poor girls who become the victims of but even the employees belonging to the middleclass are sexually humiliated by their employers.

The victims face social stigma and disgrace and suffer serious guilt pangs and personality disorders if they register to protest. Ahuja (2004) in his study reveals a major characteristic of this crime reported against women :

- a) Rape does not always occur between total strangers; in about half of the cases the rape victim is known to her assistant.
- b) 3/4th of rapes (70%) occur in the “victims” or” victimizers “homes and about one-fourth in non residential buildings.

ABDUCTION AND KIDNAPPING:

Kidnapping is taking away or enticing of a minor (female if less than 18years and a male of less than 16 years of age) without the consent of the lawful guardian. Abduction is forcibly, fraudulently or deceitfully taking away of a woman with intent of seducing her to illicit sex or compelling her to marry a person against her will. In kidnapping, the victims consent is immaterial but in abduction, the victims' voluntary consent condones the crime.

Characteristics:

- 1) unmarried girls more prone to be victims.
- 2) Abductors and victims are acquainted with usually.
- 3) Two motive of abduction are sex and marriage
- 4) The absence of parental, control and disaffectionate relations of parental control in the family are crucial factors in contacts between the abductor and victims and girls running away with some acquaint person .

DOWRY DEATHS:

Either by way of suicide by a harassed wife or murder by the greedy husband and in-laws has indeed become a cause of great concern for parents, legislators, police, courts and society as a whole. Not a week passes when one does not read about a girl being harassed , tortured , killed or driven to suicide because of dowry , and yet how many of the accused are punished ? Few killers in bride-burning cases are arrested fewer are prosecuted, and fewest finally sentenced.

It is virtually unheard of for a husband or his family to be sued for insisting on taking a dowry. If anything the demands for dowry have escalated over the years along with deaths. Before an actual murder , several forms of harassment / humiliation are used against the young brides which show the chaotic pattern of social behavior of the members of the victim's family . The most important sociological factor in the causation of dowry death is the offender 's environmental stress or social tensions caused by factors endogenous and exogenous to his family , and the important psychological factor is the killers authoritarian personality , dominant nature , and his personality maladjustment . The composition of a family plays a crucial role in bride burning cases.

WIFE BATTERING:

Violence towards a women in the context of marriage becomes more significant when a husband who is supposed to love and protect his wife beats her . For a woman , being battered by a man whom she trusted most becomes a shattering experience . The violence can range from slaps and kicks to broken bones, tortures and attempted murder and even murder itself .Sometimes , the violence may be related to drunkenness but not always .Bread or reared in Indian culture ,

a wife rarely thinks in terms of reporting a case of battering to policies . She suffers humiliation in silence and takes it as her destiny. Even if she revolts , she cannot do it because of the fear that her own parents would refuse to keep her in their house Permanently after the marital break.

VIOLENCE AGAINST WIDOWS:

All widows do not face similar problems. A widow may be one who has no issues and who has been widowed one or two years after her marriage ; or she may be one who becomes a widow after a period of 5 years to 10 years and has one to two small children to support , or she may be one who is above 50 years of age. Though all these three categories of widows have to face the problems of social , economic and emotional adjustment , the first and the third categories of widows have no liabilities, while the second type of widows have to perform the role of father for her children . The first two categories of widows have also to face the problem of biological adjustment. These two types are not as welcome in their husband's family as the third type. In fact , while the family members try to get rid of the first two types of widows , the third type of widow becomes a key person in the sons family as she is made responsible for caring for her sons children and cooking food in the absence of her working daughter in law . The self image and self esteem and her sense of identity. The low status accorded to them by their in -laws and others in the family roles lowers their self-esteem. The stigma of widowhood itself negatively affects a woman and she falls in her own -esteem.

Violence against women includes physical battering , emotional neglect / torture verbal abuse , sexual abuse , deprivation of legitimate share in property , and abuse of their children

The important characteristics of violence against widows are

Young widows are more humiliated, harassed, exploited or victimized than middle aged widows,

Secondly, women know little about their husbands business , accounts certificates , insurance policies , bonds ,and become easy victims of fraudulent schemes fostered by unscrupulous members of their family who try to acquire their inherited property or life -insurance benefits ;

The authoritarian personality of the mother-in law and maladjustment are also important factors in the victimization of the widow.

4.7 CONCLUSION:

Gender affects family dynamics. Husbands continue to dominate the vast majority of families. It is suggested that marriage provides more benefits to men than to women. The problem of violence (atrocities) against women is not new. Women in Indian society have been victims of ill treatment , humiliation , torture and exploitation for as long as written records of social organization and family life are available . The attitude of indifference and negligence can be attributed to factors like lack of awareness of seriousness of the problem , general acceptance of man's superiority over woman because of which violent acts against women were not viewed as violent and deviant , and the denial of violence of women themselves owing to their religious values and socio-cultural attitudes.

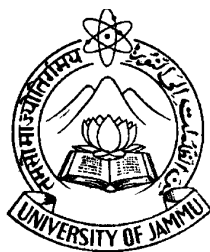
4.8 SELF ASSESSMENT EXERCISE:

- 1) Write short notes on :
 - a) Women Harassment
 - b) Dowry Deaths
 - c) Wife Battering.
- 2) Discuss in detail Violence against women in the present changing society.
- 3) What do you understand by Gender Differences? Discuss.

4.9 SUGGESTED READINGS:

- Ahuja, R.2005; Violence against women; Rawat Publications, N.Delhi.
- Harlambos, M&Heald; 1991 Sociology : Themes and Perspectives, Oxford University Press, Madras
- Chakaraborthy, k; 2002; Family in India, Rawat Publication, Jaipur.
- Ahmed, S; 2007; Indian Social System, Anmol Publications , Delhi.
- Schaefer & Lamm; Sociology, 6th ed., Tata Mc Graw hill, New Delhi.

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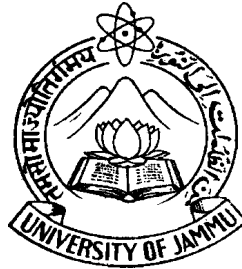
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