

Chapter 1

ASPECTS OF FAMILY & CASTE

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ASPECTS OF FAMILY AND CASTE

This chapter is an introductory part of the dissertation aspects like concept, forms, changing structure and theories of family; changing structure of caste, definitions, origin and theories of caste, are the major contents of this chapter.

Sociologists were able to touch the core feature of the society by identifying its dynamism. Transition is not only global in the social perspective but also universal in the scientific perspective. Therefore any social phenomenon is attempted to perceive positively to gather its objectivity. The traditional groups especially family and caste are no exception to this.

Family the age old primary institution and caste, the traditional groups are the prominent features of rural society in India. Family and caste are interrelated and inseparable in their nature and structure; changes by the extraneous factors that are strongly influencing the family have significant repercussions on caste as well. Hence both form the theme of the present research social change sweeping in rural India through education, justice, equality, industrialisation and urbanization shaken the very nature and structure of family and caste is the significant development of this century.

In this background the present study is unique in its own way. It intends to explore through a case study the transitional features of family and caste and determinants responsible for such transition.

FAMILY

Philosophers and Social analysts have noted that any society is a structure made up of families linked together (Goode W.J. 1989). The historical perspectives reveal that the social institutions never sprang in a day. They are the result of the development Social evolution has the major recognition in analysing the growth of

family system. The structural theorists proposed that the Society is a structure of interrelated positions assigned with certain expectations (Dhar & Dhar 1986). Therefore, as the Jati is fundamental to village Society, so is kinship. In one sense, the whole society begins with the family which is the miniature form of Society. It is also the fundamental multipurpose organization for many of the principal life functions of the individual and of Society (Mandelbaum D.G. 1970).

CONCEPT OF FAMILY

As a reproductive or biological unit, a family is composed of a man and a woman having a socially approved sexual relationship and whatever offspring they might have in the social sense, family is 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 a subhousehold. The family is also defined as a group of two adults of opposite sex living in a socially approved sex relationship and their own or adopted children (Leslie 1982, Murdock 1949). Family is defined as a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. Ross 1961 makes distinction between four sub-structures of family: 1) ecological sub-structure, that is spatial arrangement of family members and their households or relatives live geographically close to each other i.e. size of the household and type of the family, ii) sub-structure of rights and duties that is division of labour within the household; iii) sub-structure of power and authority, that is control over the actions of others and iv) sub-structure of sentiments that is relationship between different sets of members.

FORMS OF FAMILY

Sociologists have categorised family differently, hence one cannot have uniform nature and form of family (Caldwell, 1972) classified, family into nuclear,

having husband/wife with any unmarried children; stem, in addition to nuclear family, includes one or more parents/grandparents of husband/wife Joint in addition to nuclear family consist of at least one related ever married person of the same generation as that of husband/wife; Joint stem has the features of both the stem and Joint families. Chattopadhyay (1961) categorised family into simple, compound and composite. Simple family has the characteristics of a nuclear family compound family consists of two sets of children of both parents. Gore (1968) identified two basic types of families nuclear and Joint. He further explains three Sub-types in nuclear and Joint family.

Nuclear family 1) husband, wife and unmarried children; 2) husband, wife and unmarried brothers and 3) husband , wife, Children and widowed mother

Joint family 1) Husband, Wife, Unmarried and married Children 2) Husband , Wife unmarried and married children and unmarried brothers; 3) Husband,wife, married sons, married brothers and their families.

The Joint family could be either colateral, where the extension is horizontal or lineal, where the extension is vertical

Traditional Family

The concept of jointness in the context of joint family, has different connotations. For some scholars, Co-residentiality; for others commensuality and Co-residentiality (Chan & Dube, 1974) and others give importance to joint ownership of property (Madan, 1965), some scholars give importance to fulfilment of obligation towards Kin (Desai 1956). For Karve (1953) joint refers to residence, property and functions. He has given characteristics of joint family.

- 1) Common residence
- 2) Common kitchen
- 3) Common property

4) Common family worship

and

5) Kinship relationship

Another explanation gives undue importance to social relationships that exists between the members of household present the jointness (Desai 1956). The relationship are of five types - Conjugal, parental-filial, inter-sibling, lineal and affinal (Mukharhee 1962). Another classification family gives five types ;

- 1) Nuclear family which is separate in residence and functioning.
- 2) Functionally joint family which is residentially nuclear but joint with other household by way of fulfilment of mutual obligations.
- 3) Functionally and substantively joint family which is residentially nuclear but joint in terms of property, functioning and fulfilling mutual obligations.
- 4) Marginally joint family which is joint in residence, property and functions but consists of two generations and
- 5) Traditional joint family which is like marginal joint family but consists of more than three generations (Desai, 1964).

The major characteristics of the traditional family are; authoritarian structure, familistic organization, status of members determined by their age and relationship, the filial and fraternal relationship gets preference over conjugal relationship, the family functions on the ideal of joint responsibility and all members get equal attention (Caldwell 1996).

CHANGING FAMILY STRUCTURE

Scholars empirically proved that the traditional families base that jointness

is not disappearing, since, large joint families are replaced by small joint families (Caldwell, 1996). It is also found that a majority of the families are of two generations i.e. nuclear (Desai, 1964), but the study of Desai 1969 in another context found that about half of the families were joint. Similar observations were made by a study conducted by Kapadia (1956).

However, in the contemporary period there are some phenomenal trends are emerging in the traditional family. They are 1) The nuclear families are increasing and joint families are decreasing 2) More jointness was observed in traditional communities and nuclearity in communities exposed to external influences. 3) The size of the traditional family has become smaller 4) Functional joint family will be sustained due to cultural ideal that a male should look after his parents, brothers and sisters.

Thus, the changes from traditional to transitional includes; 1) Neo-local residence i.e soon after marriage couples prepare to live separately 2) Functional jointness, that obligation to parents and siblings 3) Equality of individuals where individuals wishes are stronger than the group and family. 4) Equal status for women, which contrary to the subordination role in early years 5) Joint mate-selection elders marry their children with their consent. 6) Weakening of family norms (Caldwell, 1996).

Role and Relationships

The role structure is undergoing transition from the traditional families to modern families. The intra and inter family relationships have also seen transition in their nature and structure(Chatterjee, 1978).

Relations between parents and children, husband and wife and other issues like closeness, emancipation of wife, relations between daughter-in-law and parents-in-law have seen transition. The features that have exhibited transitions are in the

different functions of the family; Socialization of family in giving education and employment to children, decision making in family and marital affairs disappearing stay and caring of grand parents and parents. Patriotic decisions have changed to parents and their children, weakening communal activities, more individual, freedom of women, changing husband wife relationship towards more equality closeness and taking food together, emancipation of women, child education in laws relations (Geertz, 1975).

Antecedents of change

There are many forces that have led to the disruption of traditional family. Education brought changes in the attitudes, beliefs values and ideologies of the peoples. There is reciprocal influence of educational system and family system. Moreover, increased educational level also increased nuclearity of families due to outside contacts and influences. Urbanization is due faster growth of shift of population from rural to urban. The urban families differ in both composition and ideology. Urban families show change in their attitude, role perceptions in behaviour. Industrialization has led people to opt for non-traditional occupations, division of labour job opportunities based on knowledge competence and skill rather than caste. The agrarian non-monetized economy, a level of technology where the domestic unit was also the unit of economy exchange. A non-differentiation of occupations between father and son, between brother and brothers, value system of authority has against rationality have undergone changes. Outside influences by sitting contacts and mass ideas have brought changes in the family along with the above said factors. Family has become consumption unit which was earlier a production unit, division of labour made family members less dependent upon their families. Lastly children have become liabilities rather than assets; the values of equality and discrimination have become part of the family system (Dager, 1971).

THEORIES OF FAMILY

Different theories proposed by sociologists are explained.

Resource theory of family power.

The resource theory was profounded by Blood and Wolfe in 1960. The basic proposition is that these spouses who bring the most resources (rewards) to the marital relationship excercise the most power. Contemporary to this theory, Heer (1963) added comparision level alternatives that is power is influenced by alternative sources of rewards in this regard many propositions have been proposed the greater the proposition of resources brought to the marriage by a spouse, the greater likelihood that the spouses will be the more powerful in the marriage. A spouse concede decisicns depend on the alternative sources of the rewards; the spouse enacting most of the responsibilities of a role accord majority of decisions (Coser, 1982).

Permanent availability theory

The proponent of this theory was Farber in the year 1964. He said that the declining kinship group leaves spouses uncontrolled and permit them to move from one partner to another partner. This happens so, because of maximizing their rewards and availability of rewarding alternatives. This proposition is congruent with choice and exchange theory, but since its agreement with the realistic world does not suit. The stability can be improved by bringing cost of moving from one partner to another. Because, spouses whose marital relationship is at or above their comparison level are likely to leave it for one which seems to offer more rewards. Similarly low reward, low cost, marriages or more likely to be stable than unstable.

Complementary Needs

Winch (1954) who is profounder of this theory proposed that couples tended to select individuals who would supply qualities lacking in themselves.

Sexual bargaining

Scanzoni (1972) proposed this theory and it is considered as choice and exchange theory. The general thesis is that the rewards of paid employment are greater than those of unpaid family housework and child care. Because the person earning in the family is the more powerful person in the family (Ritzer, 1988).

Rating and Dating

Waller's (1937) Rating and Dating proposition is a precursor to family exchange theories. He interpreted that each sex liked to be seen publicly with popular prestigious people of the other sex. It is reported that low prestige men dating high prestige women were likely to be financially exploited by their dates while low prestige women dating high prestige men were likely to be sexually exploited.

Principle of least interest

Waller and Hill (1951) suggest that the person less interested in a relationship has power in defining the relationship than the one with stronger interest in maintaining it. The individual receiving the most rewards from the relationship is likely to be more highly committed to maintaining the relationship. The person with the better alternatives to their relationship is likely to be less interested in maintaining it.

Stimulus value and role perception

This theory was proposed by Murstein (1974), Applying the exchange theory it is spelled that people tend to select their equals in the marriage market, rather than the unequals who are either less or more alternative than themselves. Because the rationale for this proposition is that equals find exchanges more profitable than do unequals.

The above theories present choice exchange theory as their base the survival and maintenance of family depends to a large extent on the reward cost and available alternative resources theories, which serve as precursor to exhibit either positive or negative behaviour through the familiar roles and functions (Sztompka 1974).

Structural functionalism

August Comte (1798-1857) and Herbert Spencer (1820-1903) have given prominent place to this theories. It was developed by Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) and refined by Talcott Parsons (1902-1979).

Functionalism views society as a system that is as a set of interconnected parts which together form a whole. Thus social institutions like family and others are analysed as a part of the social system rather than as isolated. Rather the focus is on the part of the system with reference to contribution they make to the whole system. In fact functionalism is an evolved theory of organism which was propounded by Comte, explains that there is an analogous relationship between organisms and society it advocates that social system functions in the same way as biological organisms.

Mark Abrahamson (1978) identified three varieties of structural functionalism namely individualistic functionalism, here the focus is on the needs of actors and

the various large scale structures; interpersonal functionalism, here the focus is on social relationships and societal functionalism here the focus is on large scale social structure and institutions of society, their interrelationships and their consisting effects on actors (Haralabos michael 1980; Sztompka 1974; Turner & Marynski 1979).

The conflict theory

This theory came to light as a reactionary to functionalism. The theory like functionalism is oriented towards the study of social structure and institutions, contrary to the argument of functionalists that society is static, the conflict theorists proposed that every society is subject to change functionalists believed that every element in society contributes to stability. The exponents of conflict theory see many societal elements contributing to disintegration and change.

Dahrendrof (1957) said that society has two faces i.e. conflict and consensus. Consensus theory examines value integration in society, and conflict theories examine conflicts of interest and coercion that holds society together in the face of these stresses. Therefore conflict and consensus are complementary to each other for the existence of a society.

The structural origin of conflicts need to be sought by the arrangement of social roles endowed with expectations of domination or subjection. Turner (1982) focussed on a "conflict as a process of varying degrees of violence among of least two parties. He developed a nine stage process leading to overt conflict.

1. The social system is composed of inter dependent units
- 2) There is an unequal distribution of scares and valued resources among these units.
- 3) Those units not recieving a proportionate share of the resources began to question.
- 4) Deprived people become aware.
- 5) Those deprived become emotionally aroused.
- 6) These are periodic often disorganized outbursts of frustration.
- 7) Those involved

in the conflict grow increasingly in those about it and more emotionally involved in it. 8) Increased efforts are made organize the deprived group involved in the conflict. 9) Finally open upon conflict of varying degrees of violence breaks out between the deprived and privileged (Timscheff 1967).

Marxist theory

Marx consider the economic system of paramount importance and argue that it determined all other sectors of society politics, religion and so on. The economic determinism was adopted as a sole factor, effecting the whole of society. However, the Hegalian Marxsim turned away the focus from objective orientation to subjective orientation. It was advocated that as economy effect other spares of society so it is also effected by them.

Interactionalism theory

This theory consider social interaction as basis of social organization, humans have capacity to view themselves as objects and to develop self feelings and attitudes towards themselves. It is strongly held that biological fraitty of human organisms force their cooperation with each other in group context in order to maintain the stability interaction and communication (Mertindal 1990; Timasheff 1967).

Another view which is the outcome of pragmatism school concieves organisms as practical creatures who come to terms with the actual conditions of the world. Human beings seek to cope with their actual conditions but they learn those behavioural patterns that provide gratification; and the most important type of gratification is adjustment to social contexts (Turner J. H 1987; James W 1890; Cooley 1902).

Society and institutions represent the organized and patterned interactions

among diverse individuals this way self, mind and society are interdependent. Thus, the institutions of society are organized forms of group or social activity - forms, so organized that the individual members of society can act adequately and socially, moreover society constantly is in flux with potential change (Mead H. G 1934; Coser 1982).

CHAGING STRUCTURE OF CASTE

Reviewing on caste system which is the distinctive feature of the Hindu society, numerous issues pertaining to its origin and integration into the social fabric of the Indian system. It is true to state that no society to explain it from the functional sociologist view point i.e. free from inequalities and stratification. The very inherent nature of whole universe is heterogeneity and hence inequality which prompts us to stratify the system to understand and have better knowledge of the system. This way social order is an agreement with the stratification with the universe (Ainapur 1986; Mishra 1989).

The stratification of Indian society has been under three specific situations, where inequalities were prominent. The first situation is feudalism, second situation of inequality and exploitation is that of colonial regime or British Raj. The third situation of inequality and exploitation is caste hierarchy which is based on cultural ethos such as purity, pollution and higher and lower. Thus the distinctive nature of caste stratification is horizontal (Chanbisa 1988).

The Indian society is comprised of an unique institution of caste. It is the distinctive feature of the Hindu society. The caste system is very complex to define, it is conceived as an endogamous group or a collection of endogamous groups having a common brand. The members of which commonly and traditionally follow a single occupation or certain related occupation. According to Kroeber 1939 caste is 'an endogamous and hereditary subdivision of an ethnic unit occupying a position of superior or inferior rank or social esteem comparison with other such sub-division'

In the Indian context caste determines descent, marriage, occupation, status and function and differences in domestic life. It is also a potent determinant of social stratification of the Hindu society.

The origin of the term 'caste' refers to the Spanish word 'casta' which means breed, race, strain or a complex of hereditary qualities, where as the word was used by the Portuguese to refer the classes of people the similar conceptions of 'jati' in India.

Although there is no unanimity among the scholars, the scholars attempt to define it as a natural division of occupational classes and in the course of time religious sanction was given. It is also a collection of families under a single umbrella having a common name. It is also perceived as a social group a hereditary class and an occupation.

DEFINITION OF CASTE

Serious difficulties have been faced by the sociologists in defining caste, because castes are not at all built on a same model. The system has grown up slowly and gradually and castes which are of different origin are also of different culture. Due to the actual variety of social organisation system found within the Hindu milieu there is no satisfactory definition of castes could able to evolve.

The definitions contributed on caste present that 1) Caste is a group that the freezing of social classes by means of endogamy and hereditarily ascribed status. In short "caste is a closed class" 2) Caste is a system explained to refer the inter relationship between caste. 3) Cultural traits have been taken to the consideration to define and classify the castes (Atal Y, 1979). Scholars defined caste as an ethnographic category special type of social stratification and structural phenomenon.

ORIGIN OF CASTE

Many theories have been profounded by Manu in his Dharma Shastra; Nesfield's functional theory of caste. Ibbeston's theory of caste; Senart's theory

of castes; Risley's explanation of caste; and modern theories of caste by Ghurye and Dutt.

There are many ancient records like Vedas Upanishads and Puranas. The commonly known theory is that of 'Chaturvarna' which means four fold division i.e. Brahman Kshatriya, Vaishya and Soodhra. The status explanation of four fold order is given as the Brahman originated from the mouth of the creator, Kshatriya from his arms, Vaishya from his thighs and Shudra from his feet. The conception is that as the human organs are inevitable for the human body, so also the four divisions of society. The origin of caste system as the scholar view, generally dates back to the advent of the Aryans, the post Vedic period testifies the rigid stratification and internal solidarity of the four Varnas. The rules and regulations governing social life and individual conduct differed according to the orders in society. Even the Dharma was apportioned according to 'Varna' each Varna was assigned with not only cultural or ritual hierarchy but also an occupational hierarchy (Srinivas 1966).

CASTE FEATURES

Ghurye (1969) enumerates six factors which are the outstanding characteristics of Hindu society these are 1) Segmental division; caste provides for a closed type of stratification where membership of each segment is fixed by birth i.e. ascribed. It provides for a compartmentalization of society and each caste has its own rules, regulations, standards of morality and justice; 2) Hierarchical division; hierarchy has been the prime feature of caste in fact, the ranking of castes is made on the basis of locally dominant caste. 3) Restriction on feeding and social intercourse; the principles of purity and pollution which according to some form the essence of caste. 4) Civil and religious disabilities and privileges of different sections; a result of the hierarchical division of society is that rights and obligations are unequally shared by different sections. 5) Lack of unrestricted choice

of occupation, although occupation was not caste free however, it was an indicator to determine the caste status and 6) Restriction on marriage; The endogamous factor has been recognized as key factor behind the caste system (Pramanick 1994; Ghurye G. S. 1993).

JAJMANI SYSTEM

Tribes have exchanges through barter relations. In these barter relations often people having different modes of life exchange their wares, this results in the development of a Symbiosis.

The Jajmani system in which various craftsmen perform their customary services or supply their specialized product in exchange for part of the yield of agriculture, and which is supposed to have ritual origin many have arisen from this kind of exchange.

INTER - CASTE RELATIONS

Social relations induced by social interactions are the structural pattern of the inter-caste system. There are different contexts which determine the inter-caste relations within a community system.

Co-operation between and among different castes is not a rare phenomenon in the village setting. The relations are determined by the size of caste, social and economic status and educational background of people (Ainapur, 1986).

Marital relations

Marriages normally take place within the sub-caste and not exogamous to the sub-caste. Within a caste there are many subcastes as it is very complex i.e. the interaction and mechanism of relations usually marital relations in the rural areas between different castes have social disapproval (Ahuja Ram, 1993).

Educational and occupational mobility, urbanisation, industrialisation and modernisation have greatly influenced the cognition of people, which subsequently resulted in developing soft attitude towards caste system, unclean castes and untouchables. However, new generation still fail to accept inter-caste marriages as necessary against the wishes of their parents. The conditions in rural society are still very negative in the direction of caste-equality, there is a trend among urbanites to go for inter-caste marriages under some circumstances.

Occupational Relations

From the origin point of caste, till the mid 20th century, caste and occupations were considered as inseparable and closely associated, upper caste people were supposed to perform clean jobs and down the lower castes the unclean jobs. Although modernisation currents and urbanisation phenomenon have tremendously influenced the people; it is the same still persists in the rural system. The caste system develops positive and negative attitudes towards some occupations hence, earlier exchange of products and services were shared between the land owner and landless people. Thus the Jajmani system was predominant till the mid 20th century. However, it is latently in existence in the rural society during the post independent India.

Commensal Relationships

In the Indian context, especially rural system, people share dining with their own caste members and not with other caste people. The caste system present inequality and ill treatment of lower caste people, who are considered to be unclean and untouchables and hence cannot accept food from upper caste people, on the occasions of village festivals, fairs and ceremonies, normally upper caste people sit in one row while members of unclean, sit in another row.

Social Relations

Social relations are determined by the exchange of gratitude, goods, services and mixing during community ceremonies. Although upper caste people do not accept the katcha or cooked food from the lower caste people, however, they take seedah (raw food) from the lower caste people. In the rural areas, the unclean caste people mix to some extent that to very rarely on the occasions of village festivals and fairs, otherwise the mixing of different castes was not allowed. (Chatterjee, 1978)

THEORIES OF CASTE

Theories of the Aryan origin denote that it was the attempt of the Aryans to maintain the purity of the Aryan faith against the idolatrous faith of the aboriginal tribes, which gave rise to the caste system.

Occupational Theory

This theory seeks to give a rational explanation for the origin of castes, holds that the caste originated in the division of labour or specialisation of various functions in society. Thus Nesfield found correspondence between the division of occupations and the gradations of castes. Hence the lowest caste would correspond with lower occupation and higher caste with higher occupation.

Homo-Hierarchicus

This theory was propounded by Louis Dumont. He rejects the Risley's theory of racial origin of castes. He makes it almost the natural order of things, The spirit of caste unites these three tendencies, repulsion, hierarchy and hereditary specialization. The caste divisiveness was the outcome of those people who could leave the primitive practices and occupations and could occupy more

prestigious states and those who could not leave the primitive occupations occupied the inferior status. The unique characteristic of the caste system is the separation of status and power.

Marxism

Marxist scholars like D.D. Kosambi and R.R. Sharma give economic interpretation of the origin of castes. They presume that Arayn tribe disintegrated into classes and that this some how led to their division into castes distinctive position was possible only for those who attained wealth and high social position. Thus clan exogamy and tribe endogamy later developed into the feature of the caste system. Another feature was that poorer people were denied the Upanayana. Hence they were pushed to lower strata (Ahuja R., 1993)

CASTE IN MODERN INDIA

Contemporary Indian society is under going basic transformation as for as the caste system is concerned. The seeds of such path were implanted during the British period. The factors which affected the operation of caste in British India may be grouped under three headings i) legal and institutional changes; ii) Technological changes; and iii) Occupational changes.

A series of legal reforms enacted through the legislations and the basic principles of judicial system, i.e. equality and creation of awareness of new rights shook the caste structure. Industrialization and the introduction of new technology also accelerated the pace of disintegration of castes. Besides, the old artisans and traders left their old vocations and were placed in the vorfex of new economic and productive organization. Depressed classes movement have also contributed for gaining fair treatment in terms of reservation, political representation and equality (Pramanick, 1994)

BROAD CHANGES IN THE CASTE SYSTEM

Though the change in the structure of caste is gradual but, is steady in its changing direction. The change can be summarized as 'caste system is not, in the process of abolition but is making adequate adjustment with modern changes.' The religious base of caste has cramped old social practices of imposing restrictions of varied types have dwindled; caste no longer determines the occupational career of an individual though social status is attached; equality principle is emerging; inter-caste tensions are increasing, casteism not only continues to prevail in the community life, but in a way it has increased; the jajmani system in the village has weakened; the dominance of a caste in a village no longer depends upon its ritual status; caste and politics have come to affect each other and caste no longer functions as a barrier to social progress and nation's development, (Ahuja, Ram 1993).

CONCLUSION

Summary

Family and caste as integral segments of social system as a whole have undergone both significant and superficial changes at the structural and functional level.

Divisiveness of 'jointness' the prime feature of the traditional family has given rise to 'nuclearity' as its new form. However, the nuclear families exhibit the features of stem and extension of the original family. The attitudes, perceptions, values, norms, and customs of people have been exposed to educational, economic, political scientific & technological and legislative influences. Subsequently reciprocal effect brought changes in the traditional structure of family in its different spheres. Normally, higher educations, income and class people settled with nuclear type of family very significantly, nuclearity is the feature of urban, so has been observed by the sociological studies . But it is also important to know about economic deprivation to what extent its significant impact has been observed on the structure, values, perceptions, attitudes, norms and relations of the rural families.

Caste is also no exception to the aforesaid phenomena. There is reciprocal influence of economic deprivation on the social life of the rural families and vice versa. Along with educational, political, cultural, scientific and legislative inducers; economic factors have brought significant changes in the structural, functional, perceptual, attitudinal, relational and values of caste in rural society.