



## **THE INDIAN COUPLES - ECONOMIC FACTORS LINKING THEM TOGETHER**

**Aekta Roy**

Ex Consultant with UNICEF, UNDP & World Bank  
projects for Women, Child Development and  
Social Security and Sanitation Department,  
Government of Jharkhand

*Family is the backbone of any social organization. In the family, the relation of husband and wife is both ideological and functional. Industrialization, urbanization, modernization and education have their own impact on the society and the families that constitute the society. Changes take place in the composition of the family by interaction in various units of the society - ideologies, inspirations and aspirations of its members. Couples being the basic unit of the family are specially effected by the factors that expedite change. Social science is interested to know the changes brought about in the composition, functions and interrelationship of various factors by their interaction with the society. Generally, a family consists of husband, wife along with their offsprings and maintain formal or informal relationship with other members of joint family residing with them or at their native place. After the achievement of independence in India, the question of women's upliftment became primary and necessary and so the status and right of women in couple relationship has taken a new importance. The present paper attempts to understand the dynamics of couple relationship in a rapidly changing society.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

The family may be defined as a basic fundamental and the smallest social group, the members of which are united by bonds of kinship. In its simplest form, the primary or elementary family consists of two matured adults of opposite sex who live together in a union (marriage) recognized by the society, along with their children. The kinship ties which unite the individuals of the family are basically of three types i.e. that exists between the married pair (Husband wife relationship), between the married pair and their children (Parent child relationship) and between the children of the married pair (Sibling relationships).

Many sociologists have regarded family as the cornerstone of the Society. It forms the basic unit of the social organization and it is difficult to imagine how human society could function without it. Murdock defines family as a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults. The members of a family accept the cooperative division of labor between males and females and they share a common shelter, a common nurse and a common hearth. The conjugal family discharges four basic functions:

- Institutionalization of mating
- Cooperative division of labour
- Nurture of the young in an atmosphere of intimacy
- Inculcation of basic culture of the ongoing generation

### **Review of Literature**

This section reviews research that studies factors associated with marital quality and adjustment. The

research in the area of marital relationship frequently utilizes concepts like marital success, satisfaction, consensus, companionship, working pattern or some such synonym reflective of quality of marital life. Spanier and Lewis (1980), note that marital quality was the most frequently investigated phenomenon in the field of family studies. In that review, they say that the most important advancement was in operationalizing the construct by moving from a one-dimensional to a multidimensional measure.

Johnson et. al. (1986) specified five components of marital quality as marital happiness, interaction, disagreements, problems and instability. Spanier and Cole (1976) are of the opinion that marital quality is not only a subjective evaluation but also a process in a dyad. They included four aspects of marital quality as dyadic cohesion, dyadic consensus, dyadic affection, and dyadic satisfaction. Hughes et. al. (1992), included components of activities that a couple does together, consensus on topics, marital disagreement and companionship as factors of marital quality. Amoloza and Booth (1992) did an analysis of a longitudinal study of the stability of and the developmental changes of marital quality over an eight year period.

The connection between marital success and economic prosperity or hardship has been a subject of study for centuries. At an early point in this research Terman (1938) wrote " it is well known that more divorce occur in the higher classes." In the fifties and sixties empirical studies involving thousands of respondents brought out different findings including both positive and negative relationship between marital satisfaction and income. Coombs and Zumeta (1970) argue that it was the attitude of wives towards their income situation that is relevant. On the other hand Mott and Moor (1977) reported little or no association between the husband's earning and marital stability. But while the effects of income were small, they observed mean earning to be higher among stable couples. According to Kengal (1973, p.316) marriage instability exists at all socioeconomic level, the general trend is for marriage break up to be more profound at the lower status level. Ross and Sawhill's (1975, p.216) work with data from the Michigan Panel Study of Income Dynamics revealed that marital split were related to lack of assets, income decreases and unemployment, but not to the level of income. With asset levels seen as an intervening variable between income and marital instability. Using the same data base, Hofhan and Holmes (1976) found that, when other variables are controlled, marital dissolution is negatively associated with the husband's hourly wage rate and the average hours worked each weeks. But after controlling for variable such as home ownership, saving, hours worked and unemployment, the wage rate no longer had a consistent effect.

Schoen (1975) made studies on the relation between age and marital adjustment which show that marital adjustment is low when the partners marry at a very young age, that is, when the man is under the age 20 and women is under the age 18. The study suggest that, in their immaturity, they tend to romanticize marriage and are less well prepared for the responsibilities of marriage than those who marry later. The very young, confronted by the demands and burdens of marriage, May rather quickly become disappointed, discouraged and unhappy. Srivastava et al., (1988) studied the effect of certain demographic aspects such as age differences, duration of marriage, education, occupation, socio-economic status and number of children that influence marital adjustment. The analysis indicated that the age differences between husband and wife highly contributed toward marital adjustment. Udry et al., (1974), found that marital instability is common among the husbands under 25 and wives under 20 years of age. He concludes that these young couples are less likely to tolerate unhappiness in their marriage. The studies on relationship development by Markman (1981) indicated that factors such as poor communication and problem solving skills and dysfunction with interaction, when they are

present pre-marital or early in the marriage, can predict the development of relationship distress later in marriage. Further more, once dysfunctional interaction patterns form, they are hard to modify. (Raush et al., 1998, p.94)

Brian Berry argues that social change and urbanization in the West were gradual and took over a century. Such changes, however, in contemporary third world nations are moving at faster rates and involve larger populations (Berry, 1981). William Goode suggests that: "In all parts of the world for the first time in world history all social systems are moving fast or slowly toward some form of the conjugal family system. With industrialization, the traditional family systems, usually extended or joint, are breaking down." (Goode, 1964, p. 108.) The widely held belief, that industrialization in western societies led to the spread of nuclear family forms may not be substantiated when examining the effect of urbanization and modernization on family structure in third world countries (Stone, 1975 and Gittins, 1986). Because of the third world urbanization and modernization, whatever effect they may have on family structure will probably be small compared with those of industrialized countries in the West. While industrialization and technological revolution in the West provided specialized occupations and freedom of the individual from kinship obligations, urbanization in the third world has provided only limited employment opportunities.

The relation between religion and families is one key area in which the question of religion's social integrative function is an issue. Aldous (1983), D'Antonio (1983) and Hargrove (1983) are argued that rather than attempting to reinforce traditional concepts of marital obligations, religion provides support and nurturance for patterns of family life. The studies of Albrecht (1979), Bahr and Chadwick (1985), Ellison (1991), Greeley (1991, p.120) also found a close relation between religion and marital well-being.

One of the most intriguing studies on the topic is reported in Stacey's (1990, p.58-70) book, *Brave New Families*, an in-depth study of two working class women's families residing in Silicon valley. In her study it is found that the religious involvement and spiritualistic attitudes improve marital quality rather than the reverse. Because many religions stress the value of keeping families intact, individuals whose marriages are troubled may view increased involvement as a way to strengthen the relationship.

### **The Conjugal Roles**

The 'Manu Smriti' and other classical epics emphasize the importance of 'Grihasthya Ashram' with reference to the couples together and understanding each other. In the present scenario the nuclear family consists of one main bread earner, the husband. His wife is mainly responsible for raising the children and is fully engaged in household chores which she is compelled to do without the help of kin. This division of labor presents a favorable situation in which no member of the family is in a position to threaten the ascribed authority structure by achieving a status outside the family which is higher than the achieved status of the family head. Though in highly industrialized societies, family conflicts are on rise due to the highly educated wives employment on higher or equal position to that of their husbands, which is the major reason for the high rates of separation and divorce in these societies. But this trend is not yet common in the contemporary industrial and urban societies and the wives have yet to achieve their equal status regarding economic independence.

In a famous study entitled "Family and Social Network" Elizabeth Booth presents an interesting and original interpretation of the nature of conjugal roles. According to her the degree of segregation in the role relationship of husband and wife varies directly with the connectedness of the family's network. The more connected the network, the greater the degree of segregation between the roles of husband and wife. If husband and wife each brings a close knit social network with them to the marriage - they will

be less dependent on each other for companionship and emotional support.

Many socialists place greater emphasis on what happens during married life rather than the social relationship which precedes it. They argue that the critical factor is the degree of domesticity of the women involved. If the wife, as in the past, is tied to the house with frequent pregnancies and has to spend a large part of her life involved in child rearing, she will tend to build a close knit network of female kin and neighbors. In modern society, with an increasing number of women in paid employment and a change in attitude towards the female role, women are losing their former 'compulsive domesticity'. Now they have less time to retain or build up a separate network of relatives and friends. They also have less in common with them. As a result their social networks are becoming increasingly loose knit and their conjugal roles increasingly joint. As a result of rapid urbanization and industrialization, there is an increasing trend towards joint conjugal roles.

Apart from the above facts, the rapid growth of urbanization and industrialization in present era plays a positive role in changing the relationships of couples in Indian society. Living in the different setups have developed different style of life among the couples. The present paper represents husband and wife as two units of interaction. It has taken into consideration, most of the aspects of established relationships. The study is empirical in nature and the couples have been examined on cross cultural level in rural, urban and industrial society.

### **Area of the Study**

The present study has been taken on cross cultural level. The industrial ,urban and the rural societies have been specifically examined in North Chottanagpur, being the most important industrial belt of the state witnessing an era of rapid growth and development.

Bokaro Steel City has been selected to represent the Industrial society and Hazaribagh as the urban society. To be more scientific in the study, comparative data have been collected from a rural unit, village Daru in Hazaribagh where upper castes, backwardcastes, scheduled castes and scheduled tribes reside.

### **Basis of Sampling**

Purposive stratified sampling have been used in the study. 100 couples from each of the societies living in the area have been selected according to their professional status:

- In rural sector, the land holders, the cultivators, and craftsmen have been taken as samples of the study.
- In urban sector, professionals like doctors, professors, leaders and some white collar job holders and business-men have been taken under this study.

### **Findings**

The most important factor bringing the couples together on the ground of functional realities is the economic factor. The present paper deals with the factors responsible for existence of peaceful living of the couples ,i.e. the economic factors that bring them together in real sense.

Various Socio economic aspects have been analyzed to understand the relationship of the couples in a cross cultural scenario. Factors like Family size and the type of family they live in have been examined followed by other significant economic aspects like possession of property , control of expenditure, bank transaction etc.

**Table -I: Family Composition**

Family Composition	Rural	Urban	Industrial
Joint	44	19	06
Nuclear	56	78	94
Broken	0	03	0

The above tables (I&II) clearly depicts that the size of the family decreases with growing Urbanization and Industrialization. The present study reveals that average family size in rural, urban and Industrial settings is 6.33, 5.57 and 4.33 respectively. If we take a glance of the family composition of rural society, we can see a growing trend towards nuclear families, but the rate is very slow as compared to the urban and industrial societies. It was quite obvious from the study that even in the Industrial society, couples are not completely cut off from their native families. Though all the couples were living together at the husband's working place since marriage, most of them were actively related to their patriarchal place.

**Table -II : Family Size of the Couples**

No. of persons	Rural	Urban	Industrial
0-5	48	45	84
5-10	42	50	16
10-15	10	03	0
15-20	0	02	0
Average family size	6.33	5.57	4.33

The pattern of working of the couples which links both of them in practice and principles have been examined by various factors like source of income, expenditure, daily purchasing, occasional purchasing and bank transaction. The same pattern have been adopted to examine the expenditure control by the husband or wife or by both. These aspects have separately been examined in Rural, Urban and Industrial perspective to record the changes taking place due to the change in the living pattern :

**Table -III : Economic System I**

Earner of the family	Rural (%)	Urban (%)	Industrial (%)
Both	20	17	10
Only Husband	80	83	90
Only Wife	Nil	Nil	Nil

Table -IV : Economic System II

Home Economy	Rural (%)	Rural Dual earner (%)	Urban (%)	Urban Dual Earner (%)	Industrial (%)	Industrial Dual earner(%)
<b>Expenditure Control</b>						
Husband	89	45	54	10.16	26	0
Wife	Nil	05	11	10.07	Nil	0
Both	11	50	35	79.77	74	100
<b>Daily Purchasing</b>						
Husband	60	50	02	5.88	26	10
Wife	30	20	15	23.52	Nil	10
Both	10	30	83	70.6	80	80
<b>Monthly purchasing</b>						
Husband	100	55	01	10.16	60	20
Wife	Nil	25	0	23.52	0	10
Both	Nil	20	99	66.32	40	70
<b>Festive shopping</b>						
Husband	63	25	0	0	0	0
Wife	11	10	0	10.07	0	0
Both	26	65	100	89.93	100	100
<b>Purchase of Costly Goods</b>						
Husband	70	45	0	5.88	02	10
Wife	06	0	0	5.88	0	0
Both	24	55	100	88.24	98	90
<b>Personal purchases</b>						
Husband	54	45	0	0	10	10
Wife	Nil	0	0	10.07	19	10
Both	46	55	100	89.93	78	80
<b>Bank Transactions</b>						

Husband	91	45	85	10.07	89	40
Wife	Nil	05	0	0	0	0
Both	09	50	15	89.93	11	60

Table IV depicts that the wife has command on the family expenses only in the case of small day to day purchasing. All the decisions concerning big investments were mostly handled by both with some dominance of husbands. It was observed that the economic system was based on more egalitarian principles in the case of dual earner couples and being a co-provider of the family, the wife had more command on the family expenses,. But it is a fact that , though the working wives have acquired a better status as partners with their husbands in the family, the number of wives commanding the economic scene is much less than their spouses. Even in dual earner families, not a single wife is the sole commander of family expenditure, as the husbands are in the case of the single earner families.

**Table -V : Registration of Property**

<b>Registration</b>	<b>Rural</b>	<b>Urban</b>	<b>Industrial</b>
<b>Land</b>			
Husband	83	80	84
Wife	05	06	01
Both	12	10	15
<b>Building</b>			
Husband	87	80	87
Wife	02	04	02
Both	11	10	11
<b>L.I.C. Policy</b>			
Husband	50	85	69
Wife	06	05	0
Both	06	09	31
<b>Other Property</b>			
Husband	72	01	10
Wife	03	0	0
Both	24	99	90

As projected in the table above, most of the registrations in all the three societies were made either in the name of only Husband or in the name of both the spouse. Very few registrations were made in the name of only wife. After taking a glance of Table III which shows a growing trend towards wives emerging as economic partners in the family, it seems important to observe the working principles of dual earner couples to get an overview of the actual situation.

**Table -VI : Registration of Property- Comparative Analysis of Single and Dual Earner Couples**

Registration	Rural		Urban		Industrial	
	Single Earner(%)	Dual Earner(%)	Single Earner(%)	Dual Earner(%)	Single Earner(%)	Dual Earner(%)
<b>Land</b>						
Husband	87.5	75	87	53.33	91	20
Wife	3.75	10	5	13.33	0	10
Both	8.75	15	8	33.34	9	70
<b>Building</b>						
Husband	90	75	84.35	54	95.5	10
Wife	0	10	10	2.44	15	0
Both	10	15	15	13.21	31	4.5
<b>L.I.C. Policies</b>						
Husband	84	20	90.36	31.25	73.4	30
Wife	1	25	25	0	0	0
Both	15	55	55	9.64	68.75	26.6
<b>Other Property</b>						
Husband	80	45	2	29.41	10	10
Wife	1	10	10	0	5.88	0
Both	19	45	45	98	64.7	90

It is obvious from Table VI that in developing urban and industrial societies, the right to property is not solely in the dominance of wives but a trend towards equal status can be clearly seen by the greater percentage of joint registrations in the dual earner families. Emergence of wives as economic partners has enhanced their access to property to a great extent.

## CONCLUSION

A visible change may be seen in the working principles of the couples due to growing urbanization and industrialization. As a consequence of structural isolation of the nuclear family, the conjugal bond is



strengthened. In absence of constant support of the kin, the souses of industrial society are increasingly dependent on each other, particularly for emotional support. The stabilization of adult personalities is a major function of the family which is largely accomplished in terms of husband wife relationships in the industrial society.

It has been observed that conjugal roles are more joint in a developing Industrial society. Although the wife still has the primary responsibility of housework and child rearing, husbands become more involved, sharing some of the domestic duties. In absence of the kin, husband and wife increasingly share their views for taking decisions that affect the family. They discuss matters such as household finance and children's education to a greater degree.

The economic life of the couples of three different levels of the society reveals that the economic participation of the wives in rural society is lesser than in urban and industrial society. A large number of urban wives are earners and they fully contribute to the family for economic betterment along with the husband's income. But in industrial society, the economic participation of wives as earners is of negligible importance. They only enjoy the comfortable life style provided by the industrial management to their husbands in the form of good salary, various facilities and amenities.

To conclude, the traditional norms have a deep rooted effect on the day to day working principles of the contemporary couples, but a trend towards gradual changes can be witnessed due to rapid urbanization, industrialization, women's education, employment and increasing number of nuclear families.

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