

The Changing Patterns of Kinship and Family Structures among the Kashmiri Tribals: A Sociological Exploration.

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Abstract: - This qualitative study aimed to explore the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with members of the local community, using purposive sampling techniques. Both primary and secondary sources were used to provide a broader context for the study. Thematic analysis was used to identify key themes and patterns in the data. Findings indicated a transition from extended to nuclear family structures, with a decrease in family members living under one roof and an increase in nuclear families in urban areas. Additionally, there was more equality between men and women in decision-making, greater acceptance of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages, and a decrease in the importance of joint family property and inheritance. Finally, education and individual achievements were valued over family status, leading to changes in division of labour within the family.

keywords:- Kashmiri Tribals, kinship, family structures, nuclear family, extended family, inter-caste marriages, inter-religious marriages, gender equality, individualism, education, division of labour, urbanization, modernization.

Introduction: - The Kashmiri Tribals are a distinct ethnic group that is indigenous to the region of Kashmir in South Asia. (Warikoo, 2000) They are primarily located in the mountainous areas of the region, (Kumar & Kumar, 1998) and have a long and rich history that is closely intertwined with the social and cultural life of the region. (Dr. Javaid Rahi, 2016)

The Kashmiri Tribals have a unique set of social, cultural, and economic practices that have evolved over centuries. (Ahmed & Ahmed, 2015) These practices are deeply rooted in their kinship and family structures, which are central to their way of life. (Gupta & Aslam, 2015) The kinship and

family structures of the Kashmiri Tribals have undergone significant changes over the past few decades, largely as a result of social, economic, and political factors.

One of the key factors contributing to the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals is modernization.(Manzoor et al., 2013) Modernization has brought with it new ideas and values that have challenged traditional practices and norms. In addition, it has also brought new economic opportunities, which have led to the migration of many young people from rural areas to urban centers in search of employment.(Ishfaq ahmad, 2018)

Another important factor contributing to the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals is the influence of modern technologies, particularly digital media. The widespread availability of smart phones and social media has led to the spread of new ideas and values, and has also led to changes in the way that people communicate and interact with each other.

Despite the importance of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals, there is a lack of research on this topic. Most of the existing studies have focused on the economic and political aspects of the region, and have largely ignored the social and cultural aspects of life among the Kashmiri Tribals.

Given the significance of kinship and family structures in the lives of the Kashmiri Tribals, it is important to explore the changing patterns of these structures in order to better understand the social and cultural dynamics of the region. This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a sociological exploration of the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals.

The study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on kinship and family structures among tribal communities in South Asia, and will provide insights into the ways in which social, economic, and political factors are shaping the lives of the Kashmiri Tribals. The findings of this study will be useful for policymakers, social workers, and other stakeholders who are interested in promoting the social and economic well-being of the Kashmiri Tribals.

Methods and material: - This study employed a qualitative research design. Data was collected through in-depth interviews with members of the Kashmiri Tribal communities. The sample was selected using purposive sampling techniques. The primary data source for this study was in-depth interviews with members of the Kashmiri Tribal communities. The sample was selected based on their age, gender, and social status. The interviews were conducted with both men and women, as well as with different age groups and socioeconomic backgrounds, in order to capture a diverse range of perspectives.

In addition to interviews, this study also drew on secondary sources such as books, articles, and reports on kinship and family structures among tribal communities in South Asia. These sources

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provided a broader context for the study and helped to situate the findings in a wider sociological and anthropological perspective.

Data Analysis: A thematic analysis approach was used to identify key themes and patterns in the data. The analysis was conducted using NVivo software. The data was coded on the basis of research objectives, and patterns and themes were identified that emerged from the data.

Objectives:-

- To describe the current kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals.
- To identify the changes in kinship and family structures that have occurred among the Kashmiri Tribals over time.

Literature Review:

Several studies have explored the role of kinship and family structures among tribal communities in South Asia, including Kashmiri Tribals. These studies have shown that kinship and family structures play a critical role in the social and economic lives of tribal communities, and are closely tied to their cultural traditions and practices.(Sofi, 2013)

One of the key features of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals is the importance of extended family networks. In traditional Kashmiri Tribal society, extended families (known as "khandaans") are the basic unit of social organization, and they provide a wide range of social, economic, and emotional support to their members. These networks are often multi-generational, and can include dozens or even hundreds of members.(R.P Khatana, 1976)

Another important feature of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals is the role of gender and marriage. Traditional Kashmiri Tribal society is patriarchal, with men holding primary authority over family affairs.(Hussain & Hussain, 2018) Marriage is typically arranged by parents, and often involves extensive negotiations and exchanges of gifts and goods between families. In addition, the practice of dowry (known as "jahez") is common, with the bride's family providing gifts and money to the groom's family as part of the marriage contract.

However, the changing socio-economic landscape of the region has had a significant impact on the traditional patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. Globalization, urbanization, and modern technologies have brought new ideas and values into the region, which are challenging traditional norms and practices.

For example, the rise of education and employment opportunities has led to increased mobility among young people, who are often leaving their extended families and traditional communities in search of better opportunities. This has had a significant impact on the traditional extended family

networks of the Kashmiri Tribals, which are becoming less common and less influential in the lives of young people.(Rath, 2006)

In addition, the spread of modern technologies, particularly digital media, has led to the emergence of new forms of social interaction and communication that are challenging traditional forms of kinship and family structures. For example, social media platforms like Face book and Whatsapp are increasingly being used by young people to connect with friends and family members, regardless of their geographic location. This has the potential to challenge the traditional patriarchal structure of Kashmiri Tribal society, and to promote more egalitarian forms of social interaction.(Manzoor et al., 2013)

Despite the significant changes that are taking place, there is a lack of research on the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. Most of the existing studies have focused on the economic and political aspects of the region, and have largely ignored the social and cultural dynamics of life among the Kashmiri Tribals.

This study seeks to fill this gap by providing a sociological exploration of the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. By doing so, it will contribute to the existing body of knowledge on kinship and family structures among tribal communities in South Asia, and will provide insights into the ways in which social, economic, and political factors are shaping the lives of the Kashmiri Tribals

Theoretical Perspectives on Kinship and Family Structures:

The study of kinship and family structures has a long history in sociology, and various theoretical perspectives have been developed to understand the ways in which these social structures shape human behaviour and social organization.

One of the most influential theoretical perspectives on kinship and family structures is structural-functionalism. According to this perspective, kinship and family structures are important components of social order, and they serve to provide stability and continuity to social life. From this perspective, kinship and family structures are seen as a natural and necessary aspect of human social organization, and they are essential for the reproduction of society.(Johnson, 1971)

However, this perspective has been criticized for neglecting the role of power and conflict in shaping kinship and family structures. According to conflict theory, kinship and family structures are not simply the result of natural or functional processes, but are rather the product of social and political struggles over resources, power, and ideology. From this perspective, kinship and family structures are seen as sites of struggle, where different groups and individuals compete for power and influence.(Verdon, 1981)

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In the context of the Kashmiri Tribals, conflict theory may be particularly relevant, given the patriarchal nature of traditional kinship and family structures. The emphasis on male authority and control in traditional Kashmiri Tribal society may be seen as a reflection of the struggle for power and influence among different groups and individuals, rather than simply a functional aspect of social organization.

Another theoretical perspective that may be relevant to understanding the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals is social exchange theory. According to this perspective, kinship and family structures are based on the exchange of resources, goods, and services between individuals and groups. From this perspective, kinship and family structures are seen as sites of negotiation and exchange, where individuals and groups seek to maximize their own interests and benefits.

In the context of the Kashmiri Tribals, social exchange theory may be relevant for understanding the changing patterns of marriage and family formation. The practice of dowry, for example, may be seen as a form of social exchange, where families negotiate the terms of marriage and seek to maximize their own interests and benefits. The changing economic and social conditions in the region may be leading to changes in the nature of these exchanges, and to the emergence of new forms of social and economic relationships.

Overall, these theoretical perspectives provide a useful framework for understanding the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. By exploring the ways in which social, economic, and political factors are shaping these structures, this study will contribute to our understanding of the complex dynamics of social life in this region

Findings: The study finds that there has been a transition from extended family to nuclear family structures, with younger generations increasingly choosing to live separately from their parents and other family members. The number of family members living under one roof has decreased, and there has been an increase in the number of nuclear families living in urban areas. Moreover, there has been a decrease in the number of marriages arranged by parents or elders. The age of marriage for both men and women has increased, and there is now a greater emphasis on individualism and personal choice in family decisions. In addition, there is more equality between men and women in terms of decision-making within the family. The findings also showed a greater acceptance of inter-caste, with a decrease in the importance of joint family property and inheritance. Furthermore, there has been an increase in the importance of education and individual achievements over family status, which has led to changes in the division of labour within the family. These changes have been influenced by a variety of factors, including social, economic, and cultural factors.

One significant change observed in the study was the declining importance of traditional kinship ties, such as caste and clan affiliations, in favour of more individualistic values and identities. This shift is attributed to the increasing exposure to digital media and the influence of modern education and communication technologies. The study also found that there was a growing trend towards more egalitarian gender roles and relationships, with women increasingly participating in economic activities and asserting their independence. This trend is largely attributed to the influence of women's rights movements and the availability of education and economic opportunities.

Factors contributing to the changing patterns of kinship and family structures:

The study identified several key factors that are contributing to the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. These factors include:

- **Globalization and modernization:** The increasing exposure to global media and the influence of modern education and communication technologies are contributing to the changing values and attitudes of the younger generations.
- **Economic opportunities:** The availability of better economic opportunities outside the traditional family structure is encouraging young people to move away from their parents and other family members and to form nuclear families.
- **Women's empowerment:** The increasing participation of women in economic activities and their assertion of independence is contributing to more egalitarian gender roles and relationships.
- **Political and social changes:** The changing political and social landscape of the region, including the ongoing conflict in Kashmir, is contributing to the changing values and attitudes of the younger generations.

The findings of the study suggest that there are significant changes in the kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals, and that these changes are being driven by a complex interplay of social, economic, cultural, and political factors. The study highlights the importance of understanding the dynamics of social change and the role of broader structural forces in shaping the lives of individuals and communities in tribal societies.

Discussion

Interpretation of the findings the findings of this study indicates that there has been a significant change in the kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. The traditional extended family system is giving way to nuclear families with a shift towards individualism and a more egalitarian gender role division. The older generation still prefers the traditional system, while the

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younger generation is more inclined towards the nuclear family system. This shift is attributed to various factors such as increased education, urbanization, and exposure to modern media.

Comparison with previous studies on kinship and family structures among tribal communities The findings of this study are consistent with previous studies on kinship and family structures among tribal communities in India. A shift towards nuclear families and individualism has been observed in many tribal communities, which is attributed to factors such as increased education, urbanization, and exposure to modern media.

Implications of the changing patterns of kinship and family structures for the social and cultural life of the Kashmiri Tribals The changing patterns of kinship and family structures have significant implications for the social and cultural life of the Kashmiri Tribals. The traditional extended family system provided a support network and social security to its members. However, the nuclear family system does not provide the same level of social support, which could lead to increased stress and isolation. The changing gender roles could also lead to a shift in power dynamics within the family and community.

Conclusion:- The findings indicate that there has been a significant shift from the traditional extended family system to the nuclear family system, which is attributed to factors such as increased education, urbanization, and exposure to modern media. The shift towards individualism and changing gender roles are also significant factors contributing to these changes. The findings of this study have significant implications for policy and practice. It is essential for policymakers to recognize the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among tribal communities and consider the social and cultural implications while developing policies. Social welfare programs could be designed to provide support to those who may be vulnerable due to the changing family structures. Additionally, it is crucial to promote gender equality and empower women within these changing family structures. This study has only scratched the surface of the changing patterns of kinship and family structures among the Kashmiri Tribals. Further research could explore the impact of these changes on the economic and political life of the Tribals. A comparative study could be conducted with other tribal communities in the region to identify any commonalities or differences in the changing patterns of kinship and family structures. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to understand the trajectory of these changes and their long-term implications.

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