



# A sociological study on changing family structure in Baramullah Kashmir

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## ABSTRACT

*Globalization as a process is the outcome of various factors like technological, educational, economic, political and socio-cultural etc. It is a process of conversion of local or provincial things into global ones. With modern ways of life, our traditional values and norms lose their importance and new ideas, values and practices were added to society. Almost every institution in our social structure is affected by modernization and its agents. Change in the organ of society results in changing other institutions as well. Family as a fundamental unit witnessed dramatic changes over a period of time. The change in the rural settlement resulted in the change of the joint family system in our country. Family structure, size, the authority has been changing due to the impact of liberalization, privatization, and globalization in the entire world. In our country, the majority population still resides in the countryside but the family system has changed both in urban as well as rural areas of the country. The present paper will highlight the major alterations in the family system in Kashmir.*

**Keywords**— Modernization, Family structure, Authority, Nuclear family

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The family system in Kashmir did not witness dramatic changes after the conversion of the majority population from Hinduism to Islam. The joint family system which was dominating during in Hindu socio-religious setup continued to remain in operation for ages and is still prevalent in the society. From the historical scriptures, it is evident that the valley of Kashmir from ages remained under foreign rulers which forced the locals to do forced labour (begar). The head of the family (father) will have to give one of his sons for the purpose of begar to far off regions of Ladakh and Gilgit. The family with multiple male members will send her strongest son as he can survive the harsh working conditions and return back, the weaker ones may perish and die on the way. The joint family system was common keeping in view the socio-political situations of the valley as it gives family members security of life. The climatic and political conditions in the valley are fragile from the very beginning of settled life. With harsh winters and bad road connectivity, low agricultural productivity the joint family system provided them workforce which will collectively make necessary arrangements for the entire family. In family values, morals and ethics were given importance (Walter L: 2005). The primary function of the family is socialization of an individual and in joint family child was loved by uncles, aunts and grandparents and at the same time, his or her conduct was strictly checked by parents. The role of grandparents in the upbringing of the child was of prime importance in this structure. In traditional joint families of Kashmir, parents were often busy in agriculture-related activities; responsibility of their children was on grand-parents. The role of grand-mother is more visible, she is always singing lullabies and cradle songs for her grandchildren in absence of their mother who is working on fields. The famous lyrics are:

*“Bishte bishte te byaro khutkho vann  
Tuore kyo waloth babray pan  
Sue kamen chekoth koutren  
Koutre baithe markan  
Zoon chay gindaan taarken”*

## 2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

**Khan (1978):** The author has described changes in the socio-cultural and political life of people living in Srinagar the capital of Kashmir and its adjoining areas. The author praised new city life with deeply affected by modernization, helped the old taboos and dogmas to get vanished from the city. On the other hand, the author dislikes the growing influence of modernization as old values and cultural traits were replaced by modern tastes and outlooks. The city life was changing as people no more like dried vegetables and bakeries like kulcha and bakerkhani. The introduction of new food items was accepted by the city dwellers and aboriginal food items losing their prominence. The city people also witnessed changes in their dress patterns, the men were no longer wearing long woolen coats locally known as pherans and women in the city were fond of new dress patterns and the

traditional (Kasab and pooch) were no longer used by them. The coming of Europeans and Indians changed the outlook of people in Srinagar.

**Kapadia (1966):** The author in his book has pointed out that the joint family is not completely out of order due to modernization and industrialization. He has called the profundity of generations as the feature traditional joint family. The entire power of the joint family is in the hands of the head of the family, who is called the karta in the joint family. The karta takes decisions on all family matters. In the sense, the Indian joint family can be called a family of independent social structure. The members of the joint family have either blood relations or relatives by marriage. The members usually have feelings of common possessions and combined rights and duties. All the members usually live jointly, participate in joint prayer meetings and eat from the same kitchen. The author refuses the conception that the joint family is survived by agricultural activities and the emergence of industrialization will split it. The study shows that the joint family is present in business class in urban and semi-urban areas.

### 3. METHODOLOGY

The present paper is in reference to the Baramulla district of Jammu and Kashmir. For the collection of data three community development blocks were selected through stratified sampling method. The blocks selected were Rohama, Rafiabad, and Dangiawacha. Three hundred respondents were selected from the respective blocks through simple random sampling method. For this purpose, two villages were chosen from each of the blocks which means six villages were chosen with 50 respondents from each village. The study is based on explorative and descriptive research design. The research was based mainly on primary data which was collected through interview schedule and participatory observation methods. The secondary data was also used to trace the ancient pattern of family and correlate it with the present scenario.

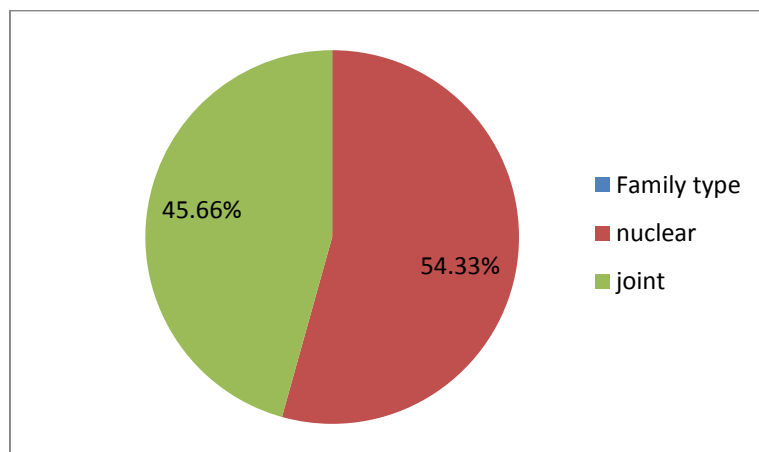
#### 3.1 Type of family

The family is the basic institution in every modern society. The people of Kashmir have their own family system. Here in this part of the country the division and separation are looked as disrespect to parents generally among rural people, though this factor is not witnessed among urban and among higher castes. The family structure among Kashmiris is cyclic in nature, like nuclear to joint and then again nuclear. The description of the same will be discussed in the next chapter. The table below will show the family type of respondents:

**Table 1: Distribution of respondents on the basis of family type**

Family type	Frequency	Percentage
Nuclear	163	54.33%
Joint family	137	45.66%
Total	300	100

Source: Primary data



**Fig. 1: Respondents distribution on the basis of family type**

The table above shows that about 54.33% of respondents live in nuclear and 45.66% to joint families. The head of the family in both is male and hence the system is patriarchal, male-dominated. But the position of woman as mother and wife has undergone visible in both the structures. The woman is no more passive members of the family, they are educated and their will is counted in most instances. Among the majority of the peoples of the earth, however, nuclear families are combined, like atoms in a molecule, into larger aggregates (Murdock; 1960:02). The Muslim families in Kashmir are nuclear in size but the relationship with other close relatives has maintained like in a joint family. The elder brother acts like a father to his brothers and sisters after the death of the father.

#### 3.2 Conflicts in the joint family

The peculiar feature of the family system in Kashmir valley among Muslims is the growing conflicts which generally start after the entrance of daughter in law in the family. And the situation becomes worse if there are two or more than two daughters-in-laws in the family. In society there are covetous relations among female members of the family like the relation of the bride with mother-in-law (Hesh te Nosh), bride with sister-in-law (Zaam te Baykakin) and the most devastating between wives (daughters-in-law) (Noshen) of a particular family which often leads to division of the family. One of the major reasons for the breakdown of

the joint family system in the valley is tension in the family. The traditional folk literature gives us graphic descriptions of constrained relations in Kashmiri joint family (Farooq Fayaz; p: 22). Once parents begin the process of the marriage of their son, he will be advised by parents and other members of the family that he should not accept all the demands of his wife. The mother in law (Hesh) in general is very jealous of her daughter-in-law (Nosh) who thinks that she will establish her prominence family and will grab her rank in the family. She considered it, her right to tease and criticize the daughter-in-law (Nosh). The mother-in-law after taking her son into confidence will attack and oppress her daughter-in-law. In this process the daughter in law will leave her in-laws and tension in the family will arrive at the division of the family. Sometimes wife after captivating her husband will counter-attack her mother-in-law which will lead to conflicts in the family. While modern factors like technology and improvement in standards of living have to lead to the expansion of the nuclear family system in the valley, at the same time the domestic violence and conflicts within families also lead to the disintegration of the traditional family system. Apart from this the joint family system is still found in society and has survived blows of modernization. During the survey, the respondents were asked to give their opinion regarding the importance of the joint family system. The table below shows the responses of the respondents on the question does the joint family system still holding importance in society.

**Table 2: Distribution of respondents on which is a fast-growing family system**

Family	Frequency	Percentage
Joint family	111	37
Nuclear family	189	63
Total	300	100

*Source: Primary Data*

A typical nuclear family consists of a married man and woman with their offspring's although in individual cases one or more additional persons may reside with them (G P Murdock: 1968). The nuclear family is universal and prevalent throughout the world mainly in urban settings. In the nuclear family, the man and his wife with their children receiving primary training in group living through their parents in the family setting. There are greater emotional bonds in the nuclear family as children are totally dependent on their parents. The parents in this type of family serve as guides, educators, and models to them. There are various reasons for the growth of the nuclear family system in society. The below table will help us to find out the main causes of the growth of the nuclear family among the Muslims of Kashmir. But in modern times people are not taking it as heavy as one separates from his parents and siblings to form a new family. Interestingly in some of the well-educated and modern families, they prefer to build a house for the children in advance and once they get married family will collectively decide that who will leave the family and take the new house. This is a constructive change in society as it decreases the rates of conflicts and quarrels between members of the family. The nuclear families are growing universally and neo-local residence is weakening the family links but in case of Kashmiri society the couples who decide to live separate will be given a piece of land generally close to the original household and will build their house there. This helps families to remain close and help each other in matters of sorrows and other grave issues faced by either family (Dost Mohammad 2006). There is a difference in housing patterns found in the rest of the country and Kashmir as in valley there is no flat system where a number of families will reside in the same building. The housing pattern in the valley is quite different from other parts of the country pertaining to the harsh winter conditions and topography of the valley. The below table will illustrate the reasons for the expansion of the joint family system in society.

**Table 3: Arguments in favor of nuclear family**

Nuclear families	Frequency	Percentage
Freedom	71	37.6
Strong bond	44	23.3
Fewer quarrels	55	29.1
Financial stability	13	6.8
Any other	6	3.2
Total	189	100

*Source: Primary Data*

There were various reasons responsible for the fast growth of the nuclear family system among Muslims in Kashmir. The traditional joint family has lost its influence and the nuclear family is dominating the social system. The table above shows that about 37% of respondents disclose that the main reason for the expansion of the nuclear family system is freedom found in this system. The couple and their children live in an atmosphere of freedom, without the interference of other members. They generally work for the brighter future of their children; mostly father doing all the hard work and mother looked after the home. The table shows that about 23% of respondents were of the opinion that in a nuclear family, relationships and bonding are generally strong between the members as mostly husband, wife and their children form the basic unit. During the survey, it is disclosed by the respondents that one of the main reasons for the disintegration of joint family system is the conflicts between the women in a particular family, which leads to the partition of the family into several nuclear families. This has been revealed that rate of quarrels and disputes are a characteristic feature of joint family; about 29% respondents were of opinion that absence or lesser quarrels are responsible for the expansion of nuclear family in society. However, besides this there are other factors like financial stability, healthy individual opportunities for the members to achieve success in this type of family, as per the data analyzed about 10% respondents revealed that there are various other factors like, financial stability, care, growth and development, career opportunities of children etc. which are responsible for the growth of nuclear family system in the society. Economic cooperation not only binds husband to wife; it also strengthens the various relationships between parents and children within the nuclear family (G P Murdock; p.8).

### 3.3 Modernization and its effects on the family system

There is no doubt that modernization has affected each and every aspect of society. With changes in the outlook of people, their perceptions also changed. The family as an institution has helped individuals to socialize and adopt values and norms prescribed by society. The agents of modernization and globalization have dramatically changed the family system. The people in modern times are using technology and this has led to changes in social set up. The family members are now linked with their kith and kin more easily and now it becomes easier for them to connect with the members who are living in other parts of the world. For getting views of people regarding the effects of modernization on the family system in Kashmir a question was added in schedule and responses were analyzed in the table below.

**Table 4: Distribution of respondents on the effects of modernization on the family system**

Responses	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	235	78.33
No	65	21.66
Total	300	100

*Source: Primary Data*

Each and every aspect of social life was influenced by the process of modernization, family as an essential institution was also influenced by the process of modernization. The traditional power and authority get divided into several members of the family which were previously enjoyed by the head of the family. In the past once the family gets separated there will be chaos and conflict on the distribution of property among members for a very long period of time, such issues are very rarely present in today's Kashmir. The above table shows that about 78% respondents reveal that whole structure of family has been affected by the modernization, the pattern of house building, visits by relatives, change in the attitude of neighbors and several other areas are deeply influenced by the modernization. The effects of modernization are more visible in urban centers and rural areas witness slow changes, the above table also shows that about 21.7% of respondents were of the opinion that modernization has not affected the family system to that extent, however minor changes are there but these are universal and natural as every change is not the result modernization.

**Table 5: If yes in what perspective?**

Perspective	Yes	No
Size of Family	110	46.80
Weakening Family Norms	55	23.40
Healthy Family Relationships	30	12.17
Equal Status for Women	40	17.02
Total	235	100

*Source: Computed from Primary Data*

Out of the 300 respondents, 235 respondents say (yes) that modernization has affected the family system among the Muslims in Kashmir. There were various aspects in which these changes and effects were witnessed in the family system. Out of 235 respondents 110, about 47% reveal that the impact of modernization is evident on family size, roles and pattern of living. The people in the valley now prefer small family size with two to three children, using the modern mean and techniques of birth control. The Muslim natives of Kashmir valley are now using measures of population control and old tradition where the average number of children was four to six is now limited to two to three, this is however against to the teachings of Islam but it is practiced by Muslims in the valley. The above table shows that with modernization, the family relationship with other relatives have become weak and people who used to visit the relatives more often now rarely visit their relatives. With modern tools and techniques, the family relations have become weak in respect to visits paid to each other, now only gatherings can be seen in times of death as it is the social and religious obligation to visit the family of deceased. Use of modern tools like mobile phones, internet services have limited the relations to a phone call or WhatsApp text messages. Social thinkers and other intellectuals are shocked to see the advancement of the society where people have no formal work but are busy and have no time to visit their kith and kin. The table, however, shows that modernization has not only a negative impact on the family structure but also some positive indicators. About 12% of respondents said that in this global world we have to keep pace with the changing world, we have to adopt the features of the modern period. The respondents revealed that changing the family system is due to the emergence of the industrial world and in this various people migrate from one place to another in search of employment and with time they settled there, setting up their own family with children and spouse (Gore: 1968). Modern tools of communication have helped such individuals to remain in touch with their relatives at home. The separation of family among the bothers to nuclear families is not looked with a negative attitude but in modern Kashmir with the spread of modern education people with collective conscience decides to have separate families and distribute their father's among them without any conflict. The above table revealed that the effect of modernization can be noticed within the family system by the change in the behavioral patterns of the member.

### 4. CONCLUSION

The institution of family is changing with the changes in other institutions of society. In past, the joint family system was dominant in Kashmiri society but the last three decades have helped the nuclear family to overlap this traditional system. The shift from joint to nuclear however depends on several factors like culture, modernization, education, values, and other socio-economic and political developments. In Kashmir, most families got separated due to domestic conflicts within a family as there is an increase in the number of daughter-in-laws the more chances of separation. However, the joint family is still prevalent and is surviving in this age of globalization. In Kashmir people still believed that the joint family is playing a vital role in developing economic structure. Being a Muslim dominated region, Islamic teachings has also helped the joint family to withstand.

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