

Introductory Sociology
Prof. A. K. Sharma
Department of Humanities and Social Sciences
Indian Institute of Technology, Kanpur

Lecture - 6
Family-II: Perspectives on family

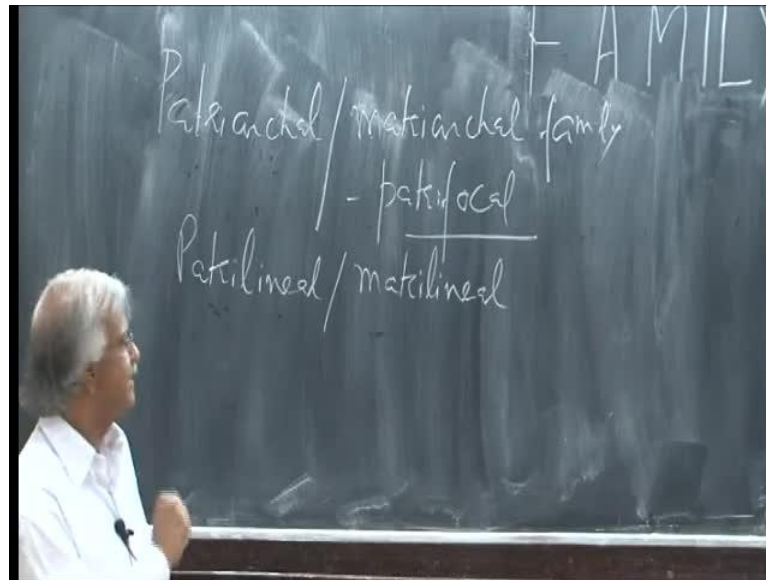
Now, in the first lecture on family, I gave you George Peter Murdock's definition of family and also presented some variations in family and the institution of marriage. There are some other interesting variations or at least for understanding the sociology of family you need to know a few more concepts, I will write them and then we will apply our sociological perspectives to family like monogamy, polygamy, polyandry and we see there are so much of, there are many other variations if you think of yourself will become aware of that there are so many patterns varying according to community, region, religion and so on.

For example while in among Hindus today not always, today among Hindus and according to Hindu law monogamy is the, monogamy is the legally permissible form a family. If you are a Hindu, you do not have the right to have two or more wives. If you have two or more wives, you can lose your government job and legal action can be taken against you, among Muslim because Islam permits so Muslims are permitted to go up to four wives and they can also keep a number of concubines, there is no restriction on concubines.

In Hindi we call it rakhel women with whom their sexual relationship, but who do not have the status of a wife, to be wife is to have certain legal rights. So, there are concubines who do not have legal rights, but these were not always the case. Hindus were also polygamous at one time and surveys have shown that this is only a myth that Muslims have four wives. In reality the extent of polygamy among Muslims is not significantly more than among Hindus. As a matter of facts surveys have shown that in many parts of the country the practice of polygamy is more among Hindus than among Muslims. So, it is only a myth that Muslims can go up to 4 they can, religiously they can, legally they can, but they, the dominant form of family among Muslims is also monogamy.

Then there are variations that if there are many women married to a man they may be sisters, if there are many men married to one woman they may be brothers. In Punjab this kind of marriage was often seen. Especially if there is a need, somebody's spouse dies then to take care of that man or woman there can be polygamous or husbands.

(Refer Slide Time: 04:26)

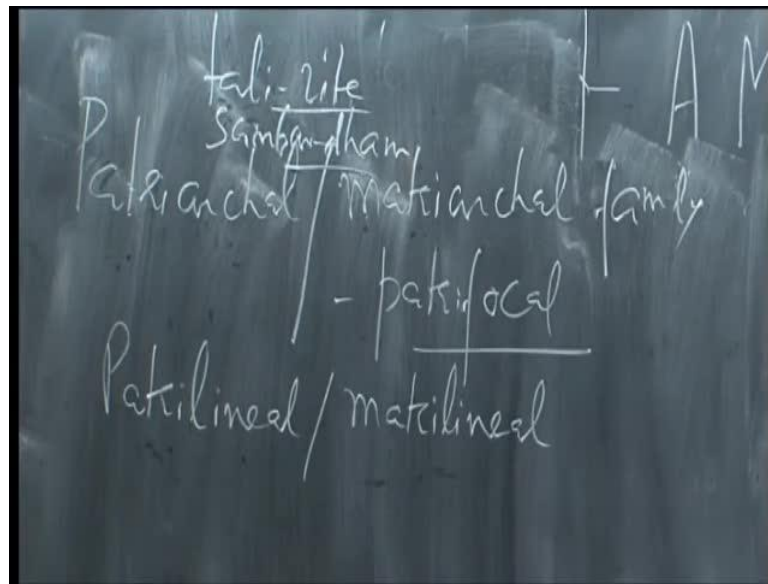


Like nuclear joint family and like monogamy polygamy we also make a distinction between patriarchal and matriarchal family or sometime patrifocal. Patriarchy patri for father, archy for power. Patriarchal family is that family in which father is more powerful than mother.

Matriarchy is that family in which mother is more powerful than father. Some related terms are patrilineal, matrilineal. Patrilineal means that the lineage, the descent comes from father side, matrilineal mother side. Patriarchy, matriarchy, patrilineal, matrilineal, patrifocal, matrifocal. Just now Mr Sarvendra Yadav is telling me that what I said about tali-rite of Nayar family can be better understood if I say that Nayar family was matriarchal and matrilineal. I do not know whether you call it a weakness of sociology or the merit of sociology that it permits several interpretations and because sociology has not actually come to that stage when something can be described scientifically in a value neutral dispassionate manner, different field workers, different writers, different anthropologists write their own stories.

So, the story of tali-rite marriage which I narrated here was taken from the latest edition of M Haralambos. In old Haralambos which is there in our library nothing is written about tali women it is only in the new addition of the book. In some other book Mr Yadav was referring to Nayar women or Nayar community must be seen as matriarchal, matrilineal, matriarchal, mother is more powerful so and it is matrifocal after marriage. And he was telling me that this tali or the first marriage takes place what I read in Haralambos was that there is a tali marriage before puberty and after that other marriages are called sambandham.

(Refer Slide Time: 08:13)



One is tali marriage, tali-rite and others are called sambandham, relations. Sambandh is a Sanskrit term for relations. Now, I am told that in the version of this marriage written somewhere else that this first marriage takes place with a Nambudiri Brahmin, this is another interesting aspect. Yes, I have also heard and I have also read this in some other context. Nambudiri is a community of Brahmins in Kerala. Among Nambudiri's only the eldest son is married and the eldest son is married to a Nayar woman through tali-rite other, if a Nambudiri has a 5 sons then only the first son will get married to a Nayar woman or sometime to a woman of their own caste, Nambudiri. Other Nambudiri's or the younger brothers are not legally married, younger brothers of that nambudiri brahmin are supposed to maintain only sambandham.

Yadav also told me that what I described that any Nayar, any Nayar man can go to any Nayar woman, that is not entirely correct in the description that he read. He found that there must be some consent, some consensus between the men and the women. Actually what I read to justify that Haralambos even said that because all Nayar man have access to all Nayar woman or to woman of lower caste.

So, when a Nayar man in the night enter the house of a Nayar woman he keeps his weapons outside the house. So, if any other Nayar man comes and he sees that the weapons out there that means some other Nayar has entered the house. So, this second late comer will not enter the house and he will sleep in the varanda and go back before the day begins. By seeing the weapons at the door then new visitor will simply sleep in the varanda and leave before the day starts, there are versions and why this happens? This can happen, I understand, why, this should happen. Actually in, as I said one day that concepts are concepts and reality is reality.

By using concepts we are only trying to describe reality, but reality is not concept and because of this difference between concepts and reality what is written in words depends a lot not only on the reality, but on the understanding, interest, sensitivity, background, biographical situation of the writer. Maybe if a contemporary Nayar writes this story what Haralambos has written he can find quite offensive or a Nayar woman can find it quite offensive to read what haralambos has has been writing.

So, he will give much more sympathetic to Nayar condition and he will say that no no what Haralambos is writing is all nonsense, but this is true that Nayar women or Nayar community maintains a matriarchal family, a matrilineal family that they are married to 1 person only or 2, 1 person. There may be some relaxation in sexual relationship Nayar must have been a more permissive society, but marriage will done with 1 Nambudiri or Nayars with 1 person and it is actually that person only who at the time of birth of a child takes the responsibility of providing for expenses of rights and rituals.

So, there are versions and there have to be versions. If the backgrounds of different writers is different it is after all not a science, but right now my purpose is only to explain the variations, to show the forms that family takes in different societies and not get broke down to what is happening in the Nayar community or is it good or bad,

sociologists are not to evaluate what is good or bad, anything that exists exists and if it exists there must have been some reasons.

For example just now say Yadav told me that the reason why in Jaunsar-Bawar polyandry existed. 1 woman and several men, the purpose was to retain the whole property, landed property in the family and to ensure that the landed property does not get divided. Now, in Nayar family also a woman after marriage remains in mother's family. Mother is more powerful, matriarchal, matrilineal the lineage is from mother's side and it is matrifocal because after marriage they are living at their mother's place, it is a different story. In some other book I found another version that it was matrilineal, matrifocal, matriarchal only for namesake the actual power in that family was enjoyed again by a male and that male was maternal uncle of a child.

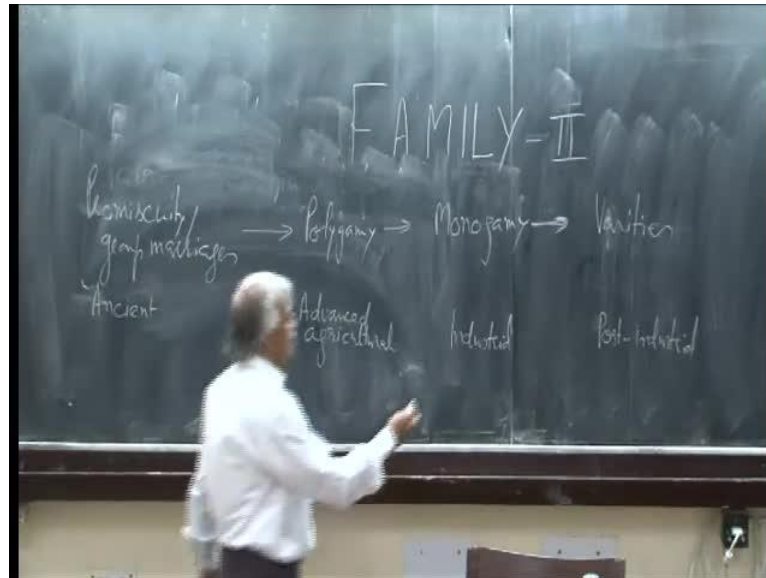
It was not women, but women's brother who exercise power in practice. So, it is only a theory that women that Nayar society, Nayar community was matriarchal, matrifocal, even their men were powerful and similarly, in many patriarchal societies or patriarchal matrifocal forms you will find that it is not the male head of the family who exercises power on new bride, but it is mother-in-law. Our TV serials, our stories, fictional works, history, religion is full of strange relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law.

So, all the way we call it patriarch. Yes, in one sense in our dominant Hindu families patriarchal, patrilineal, your father is Chakravarthy you are also Chakravarthy, your father is Sharma you are Sharma, it does not matter what your mother is. Your father is Chakravarthy, mother is Gosh, but you remain Chakravarthy. Lineage comes from father's side. In matrilineal society, examples of matrilineal society, in northeast, if you go to Manipur side or among certain tribes specifically like Khasi they still exercise matrilineal kind of family and I have heard that when boys from northeast come to place like JNU for studies they get a cultural shock because in boys, girls, because in their own community a girl is more powerful, when a girl is born the whole community celebrates, when a son is born the community feels sad.

So, they come from matrilineal, matriarchal kind of system and when they come to Delhi for studies they find themselves in a very different world which is patriarchal and

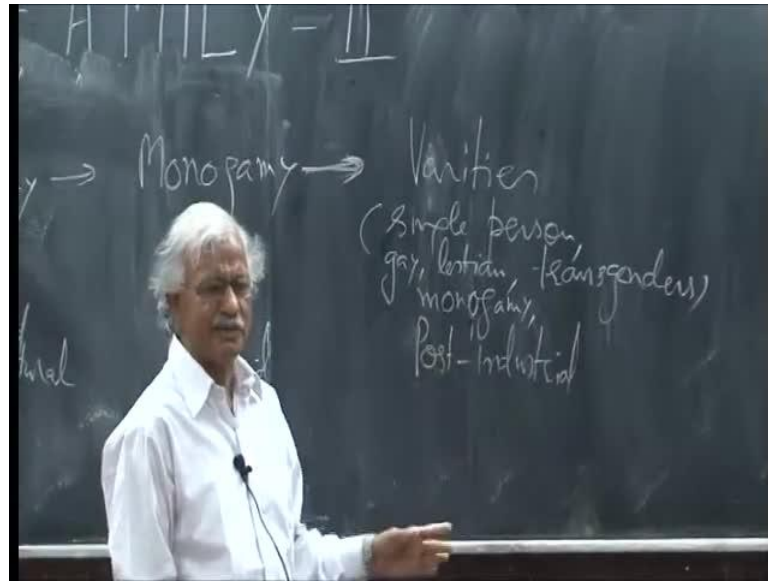
patrilineal. So, there is a cultural shock. It will take them some time to adjust in the new framework.

(Refer Slide Time: 17:35)



I, regarding origin of family I do not know what is correct, but in several books it is maintained that family has undergone a change from a situation of promiscuity or group marriages. All men are men, all women are women. All men are husbands, all women are wives. Promiscuity or group marriage to polygamy as time pass and one sociologist or anthropologist established that there has been written like this, they must explain what happened. Why promiscuity or group marriages or collective marriages led to a system of polygamy and from polygamy to monogamy. And today in post industrial society verities, there are verities of family. Not one type of family, verities of family. This is you can call tribe ancient, this is advanced agricultural, this is industrial and this is post industrial.

(Refer Slide Time: 19:29)



Verities means some examples of verities single single person either a man or a woman living alone throughout life, some of them with adopted child. So, there is no presence of adult of both sexes in that family or gay family, lesbian both are men, homosexuals 2 men living together, common residence, economic cooperation, sexual relationship, there is no possibility of reproduction, but they can adopt a child and they satisfy them many requirements of Peter Murdock's definition of family except that both of them belong to the same sex. Lesbians, women to women, transgenders, so, it has become a matter of choice it does not mean that monogamy has ended. There are the dominant of, the dominant form of family is a still monogamy.

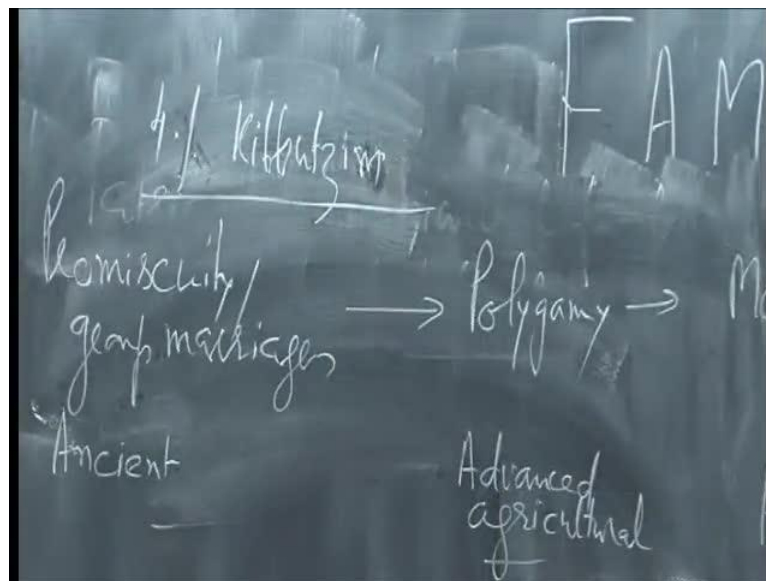
In United States, in Europe still majority of people live in monogamous family and in monogamous family it may be father centered, it may mother centered. Among African Americans or blacks mother centered family of the type of Nayar family is still very much in existence and there are regions when divorce rate is high then the women depend more on their own women relatives than on men. So, they form a kind of collectivity and they live with their own or adopted children.

So, as time pass the nature of family change. What actually happened here cannot be known as such, but social scientist have drawn inferences about this from the studies of tribal society which are still living in primitive condition and for example, in Central Australia, in the tribal communities of Central Australia anthropologist found an

interesting distinction according to age, that all the senior persons means elderly people, all the elderly people of the community were called fathers and mothers. The term father was used for old men. All old men are fathers, all old women are mothers. All adult men are called husbands, all adult wives all adult women are called wives. All young males are called sons, all young females are called daughters.

And from this they infer that there must have been a practice of collective marriage or group marriage or promiscuity in the tribal society in the past and they draw infinite that perhaps in the past in primitive society or in ancient times everywhere there must have been this kind of group marriage because then only it makes us, if all elderly people are father or mother, if all adults are wives or husbands, if all smaller ones are sons and daughters then it indicates the prevalence of collective marriage. There are many other variations. Now, since I do not want to keep on talking about family. So, regarding this classification of the family I will stop here. Only one thing that comes to my mind readily is that in Israel nearly 4 percent population of Israel lives in what they called

(Refer Slide Time: 24:44)



Only one thing that comes to my mind readily is that in Israel nearly 4 percent population of Israel lives in what they called kibbutz, that is another type of family kibbutz. 4 percent of population Israel lives in the system they called kibbutz K I B B U T Z. In kibbutzim it is a kind of socialist society, egalitarian society, there is a small

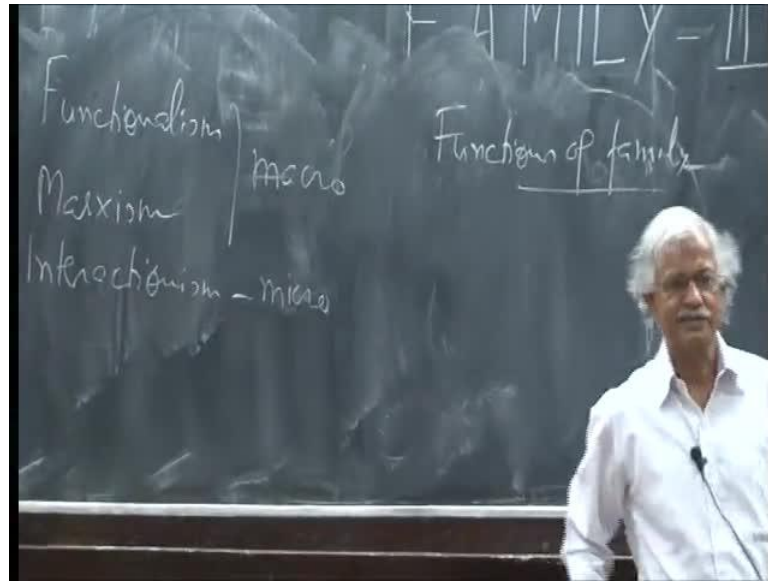
house comprising of 1 bedroom and 1 living room, there is no kitchen or anything and in the house 1 man, 1 adult man and 1 adult woman live together husband and wife.

Now, children arrange separately there is a separate arrangement for children, community arrangement and all the children belong to the community to kibbutz. There are no personal sons or daughters and this system is very much in practice even today. There is no personal son or personal daughter, all the children belong to kibbutz. All the requirements of life are met by the community. So, for food, for services, for clothes, say as a barber, agricultural implements, religious services, all services are common. Initially when children are small parents can spend a few hours with the, their own children at the place where children are kept. Some kind of say hostel or children's home. All children are separated from their parents.

So, only initially and that is called fun time, that has nothing to do with socialization of children or inculcating norms and values of society, fun time. Parents can spend some time with their children when children are small, that is fun time that has nothing to do in meeting the requirements of children or socialization. That is also a kind of family.

What will you say whether George Peter Murdock's definition applies to that family or not. Some people will say yes it applies to that also, some say there is a controversy. So, family has changed. The kind of family we have in mind today monogamous family, this is the product of industrial society. Now, the some ideas on family or theoretical perspective on family I will just indicate 2 or 3 functional perspective cooperation and conflict.

(Refer Slide Time: 28:02)

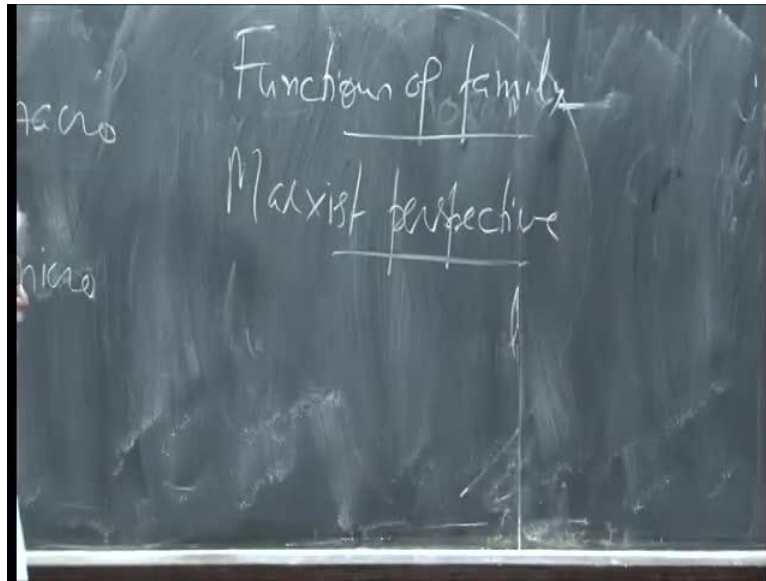


In the context of cooperation and conflict I mentioned functionalism, marxism, interactionism. This is micro theory and these are macro, one from the perspective of equilibrium, cooperation, another from the perspective of conflict. The functions of family are obvious. Functions of family, Peter Murdock's definition itself shows what are the functions of family. Functions of family are reproduction, sexual satisfaction, love, affection, emotional bond, economic cooperation and we feeling, a feeling of happiness. It is a primary group, face to face, function of family socialization of children, inculcating norms and values of society.

Family is still the most important or the primary agency of socialization. Most of the things with long lasting impact have been learned in your fathers family, your religious views, your views about humanity, your views about altruism, your relationship with society, your goals of life, your values, your priorities have been determined largely by what we have learnt in the family.

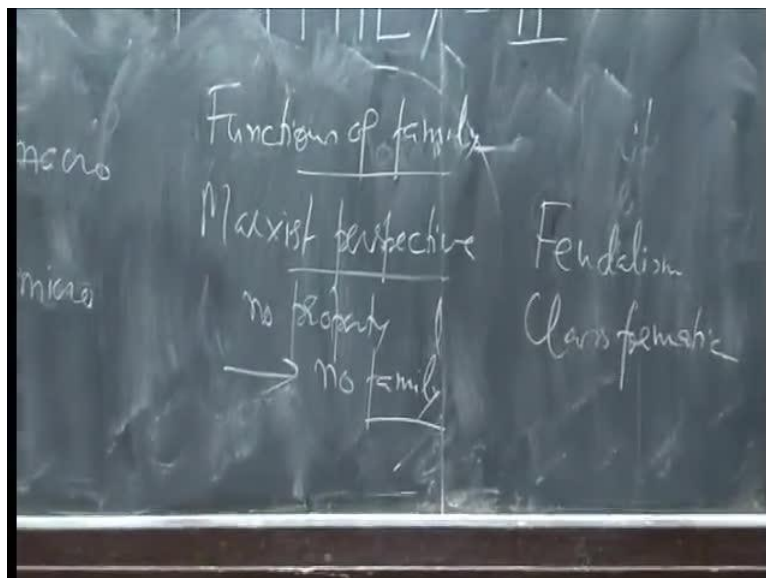
So, if human society is about culture which is passed from one generation to another, it is done in the context of family. So, these are all economic cooperation, a unit of production and consumption, sexual relationship, emotions, development of personality, stabilization of personality, emotions, recreation, these are the functions of a family which are very much part of the definition of George Peter Murdock.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:01)



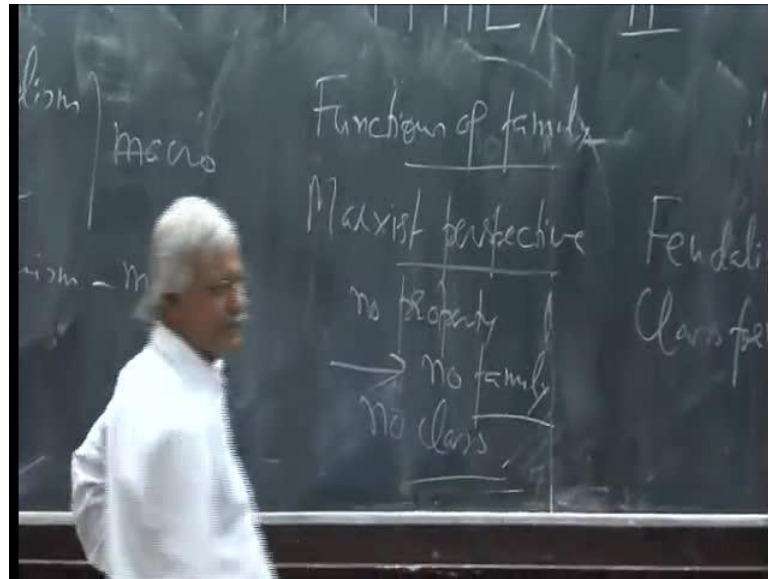
More interesting are the views of Marx. Now, Marx follows that line of research in which it is believed that at one time family was matrilineal, matriarchal and sent society, agricultural society, pre-industrial society, they had matrilineal matriarchal society.

(Refer Slide Time: 31:52)



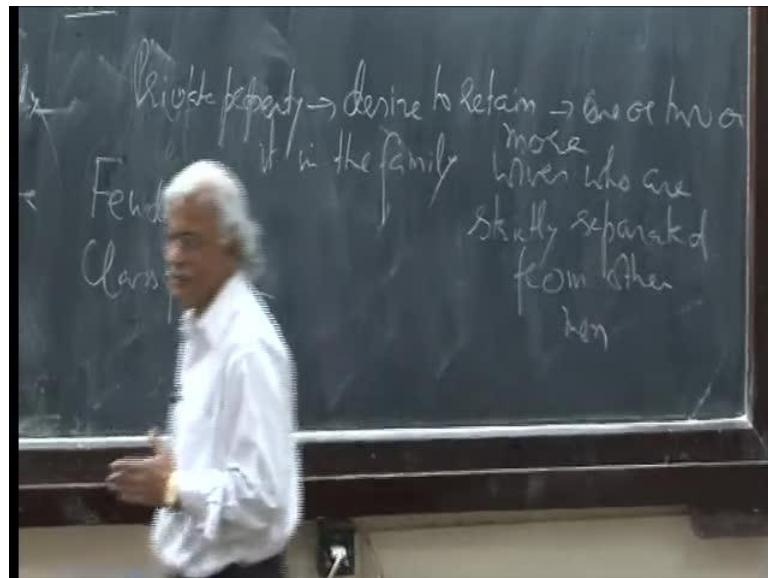
Gradually, with industrialization or a little before that in advance forms of feudalism feudalism when there is a class formation, when there was no property, no property no family, in the sense in which we understand the term family. There were no property, no surplus, the whole wandering and food gathering or hunting group collected food from hunting, from forest, roots, fruits, herbs consumed together and live like men and women. There was no family, no class, no family, no property.

(Refer Slide Time: 32:43)



When there is no property there is no need for family, but now in feudal society or as society advanced and private property emerged. Some people have property, others are property less. Those who have property they want to ensure that their property remains with them, but they will die.

(Refer Slide Time: 33:19)



So, it was in that context in the context of class formation when there is private property then desire, to desire to retain it in the family. How can that desire be met? That desire can be met by having 1 or 2 wives or more, 1 or 2 or more, 1 or 2 or more monogamy or

polygamy, 1 or 2 wives or more wives who are strictly separated from other men. Now, this ensures, then social, cultural, religious restrictions are placed on the movement of women and this is how family begins.

When there was no property and the life of the whole tribe or the whole band, whole food gathering, wandering, hunting group was adventurous, precarious and there were all kinds of environmental risk. Risk of attack from wild animal, risk of food shortage, risk of flood, famine, natural catastrophe, risk of epidemics, the whole group live together and they was no family. If at all based on the works of some anthropologist Friedrich Engels, a close associate of Karl Marx believed that 90 percent of the time in human history has been spent in that state in which woman was more powerful, but with emergence of property there is a downfall of women status.

The reason is this that there is a private property and the estates, the feudal lords, the owners of agricultural land or the managers, possessors of agricultural land or the owners of means of production in general. Land is a specific to feudal society, you can call it means of production in general. That those who own means of production in capitalist society, industry, raw material, land, shares, debentures. The owners of means of production who have lot of private property, they desire to retain their property with them only or with their biological years, their own biological years. How can they ensure that their property remains with them for their own biological years, that is by marrying 1 or 2 or more women and putting restriction on their movement.

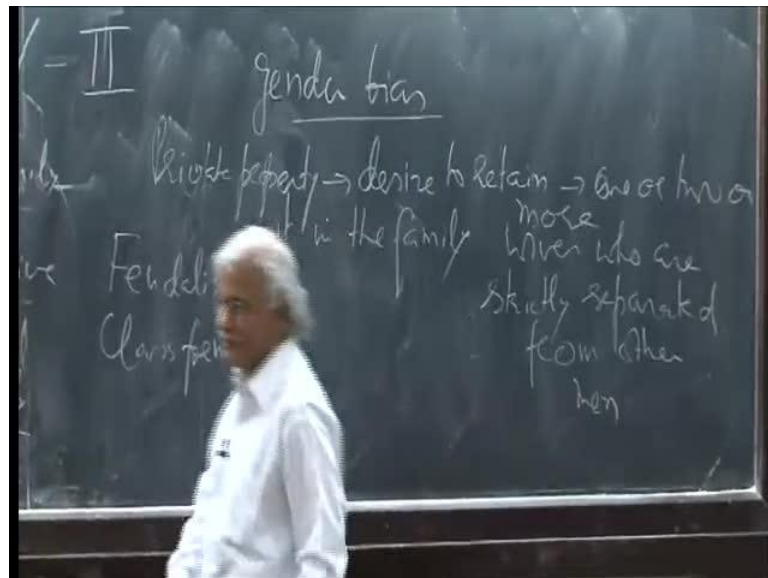
So, that they do not come and contact with other men. Various kinds of restrictions are placed on women's movement. After the development of feudal society, the whole human history is the history of enslavement of women. A feminist would say, a feminist, critical theorist or feminist would say that the whole history of human society of last 500 years or so is the history of enslavement of women by men and at the root of that is emergence of private property.

You must have noticed some of you who come from a village setup, you must have seen that in several villages even now women, particularly married women or not supposed to even show their face to an outsider and why outsider, other male members of the family also. Husbands, elder brother or brothers cannot ever see the face of the woman. A woman cannot leave the house without mother in laws permission. She cannot go to

market, she cannot dare to go her native place, she cannot decide anything to buy for the family, she cannot sell anything, there are very strictly defined codes for married women. The purpose is that the child that this woman bears is the child of her husband only and Marx and Engels would say that when you see disparity, gender disparity in society. Disparity may be economic, educational, political and we see that there is there is gender disparity.

Now, in this class I find that there are 4 or 5 women, all are men. Out of 100 students there are only 5 or 6 women. All others 95 or 94 are men. Are women incapable of pursuing engineering studies or science studies biologically? Now Marxist will say that no women are as capable as men and women had proven, women had proven that in all works of life they can be as good or may be better than men. Today CBSE result has come. The pass percentage for women is higher than pass percentage for men. In in all fields woman have proven, political, science, education, culture in all fields woman have proven that they are not inferior to men, but everywhere today you find a gender disparity.

(Refer Slide Time: 40:13)



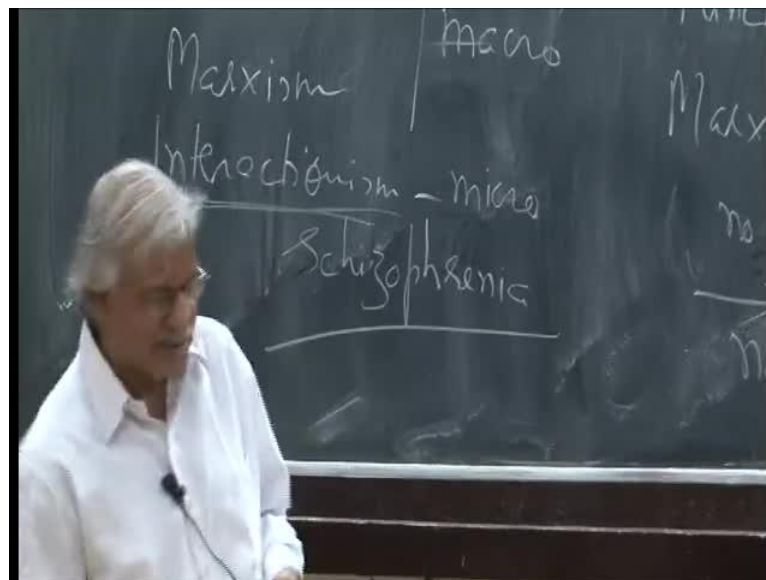
Sociologists use a common term for this, a gender disparity or a gender bias. Specific rules for males and females, rules are different right from the beginning, rules are differently assigned to women and men. Gender bias, all fields gender bias and at the root of gender bias according to Marx and Engels is the emergence of private property

and Marxist writer's think that as long as you have private property, as long as you have class formation in society or you have a capitalist society and there is a distinction between owners of means of production and laborers, this will get reflected in gender bias and in inequality between men and women in different domains.

You gradually, you can also see what Marxist mean when they say that morality, law, education everything is determined by relations of production. When there is no property everyone is equal women are not inferior to men. As a matter of fact in much of human history women were considered to be superior to men. 90 percent of the time of human history has been spend in those social formations in which women were superior to men.

Like the situation in Kasi tribe, like the situation in Jaunsar-Bawar or Nayar women or Eskimo women or Australian tribal women type, but now with the emergence of industrialization, capitalism, private property and it desired to retain their personal property so that classes remain firm, their personal property to their own heirs, there is the gender bias.

(Refer Slide Time: 42:36)



Others like interactionist are very unhappy with family and many interactionist have analyzed cases of mental illness like schizophrenia split personality and they find that in several cases the cause of schizophrenia or the split personality, was the presence of conflict in the family, if mother and father have conflicting relationship. In one case it was found that father and his parent were on one side in all that, whole day in family

there was conflict father and parent on one side, mother and parent on another side and the child was placed in a dilemma whose side to take and this child gradually developed personality, a split personality, schizophrenia, a psychological disorder. The reason was a split, a conflict in the family relationship.

So, these interactionist sociologists are more concerned with reality at the micro level. They are more interested in analyzing cases of deviance, mental disorder etcetera etcetera and relate that to family formation, they are critical of family. Feminists are particularly critical of family because they think that the basis of gender bias in our society is family and they think that a woman is to acquire their rightful place in society then family must be attacked. Interestingly family survives, but on some or other ground several people, leaders, ideologies, organizations, states have been attacking the family system. Feminists do not want family because they think that family is the infrastructure on which the superstructure of inequality between men and women has been developed.

Marxists do not want family because for Marxists families associated with private property and that means the basic inequality between men and women will go only at that time when the class inequality will vanish. And class inequality can vanish in a socialist society, when means of productivity have been collectivized and there are no individual or private owners of means of production.

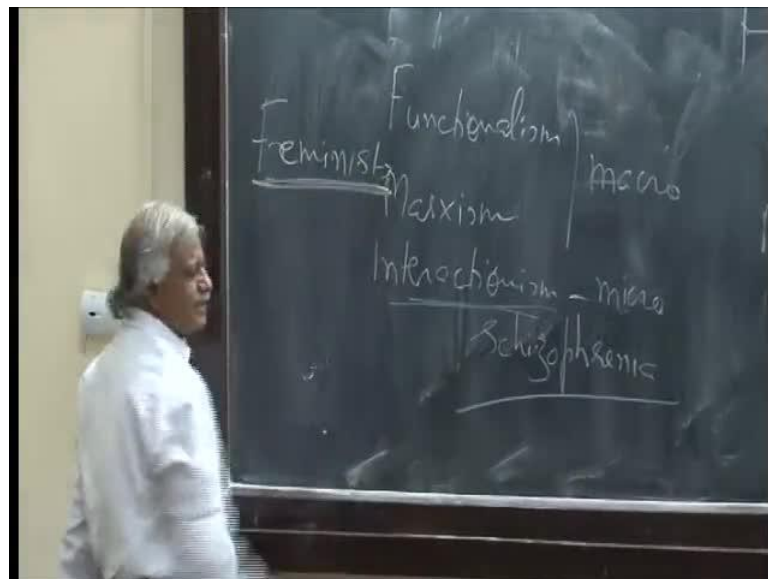
Ironical if you do not agree with Marx it looks like the same kind of thing utopia has during the freedom struggle everyone believed under the leadership of Gandhiji that after independence a kind of Ramrajya will come and then Ramrajya there will be no problem of any kind. No regional inequalities, no caste differences, no economic inequalities, no corruption, no bribe, no dishonesty, no fraud, a moral society of equals and everybody believed in that students, tribals, men, women, poor, historians, writers, people belonging to different regions, cultures, religions, Ramrajya has not come and likewise in socialist society also you find that although means of production have been collectivized, but the disparity between men and women continues, but it gets reduced it gets reduced.

In China, in erstwhile Soviet Russia women were quite powerful. I was I was telling that in Soviet Russia Marxist Leninist party continued to attack family for a long time. They wanted that family be abolished, there is a society of equals, means of production are

collectivized, there are no classes, everyone is equal. So, in that society of equals let people with the persons of their liking and actually in that society only true liking, true emotions, true love, true affection will come.

Today, behind love and affection most of the time it is some kind of economic exchange, when that economic exchange goes then only we will have true love, true affection and this is true that in Soviet Russia proportion of women on political bureau, in universities, in industries, in hospitals, in literature, everywhere in all works of life improved tremendously though women have never come to the same level exactly to which men have gone.

(Refer Slide Time: 47:57)



China China also, but despite all the efforts of Chinese society problems of women have remained and therefore, feminists say that the problem, feminist perspective. Feminist say that the problems of women are universal and they have nothing to do with religion or ideology or region of this or that. If women want equality, they will have to organize, they will have to think on the issue of men, women relationship and they must fight the system of inequality. So, feminist find that like in China despite efforts to improve the status of women, Chinese women in in some sense suffered suffered maximally from a patriarchal order.

I will stop by giving just one example of how women suffer in China despite communist ideology, despite Marxism, Leninism, but for a different reason, economic region

demographic region china decides 1 child policy. That couples will produce only one child. If you produce a second child then every month from your salary say something like 10 percent may be deducted, if you produce a third baby you will be imprisoned.

With such strictness 1 child policy was enforced, but in terms of values and religion China remained a feudal society and in agricultural society obviously the need for a son is more than need for a daughter. So, one child policy simply strengthened the male bias and led to enormous rise in cases of female feticide or force sterilization of women. Women suffered, they did not have forced sterilization of men in in their village (()) they had force sterilization of women not force sterilization of men. And the degree of female feticide or the effect on sex ratio that 1 child policy in China had is not seen anywhere else. India is nowhere near the atrocities committed on women due to the 1 child policy. So, women have some problems, you need to them and for families it is only when the women organize together and destroy the family system of today that there will be real equality between men and women.

Thank you.