CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A study of society is of great importance for understanding the different elements of culture, tradition, is handed down from the ancient past to the present and this tradition contains many values that are guiding forces to human beings to live an orderly life in this world. The fact is, society is consisted of many families and in fact family constitutes the basic unit of society. The nature of the family life determines the nature of the social customs and manners and all the families put together will ultimately determine the social ethos. Therefore, a study of family in terms of its nature and function becomes a necessity in understanding a social structure. It is in this connection a study of single-parent family system becomes a necessity and a single-parent family system is one of the major issues that is studied even in Western countries.

In this regard we are inspired to quote definition of the U.S. Census Bureau: "A family includes a householder and one or more people living in the same household who are related to the householder by birth, marriage, or adoption. All people in a household who are related to the householder are regarded as members of his or her family. A family household may contain people not related to the householder, but those people are not included as part of the householder’s family in census tabulations. Thus, the number of family households is equal to the number of families, but family households may include more members than do families. A household can contain only one family for purposes of census tabulations. Not all households contain families since a household may comprise a group of unrelated people or one person living alone."
This issue leads us to the next important topic namely a family as a functional unit, about which a brief study becomes a necessity.

1.1 THE FAMILY AS A FUNCTIONAL UNIT

The biological, emotional and economic needs are the foundation of a family. It grows out of biological needs, partially those of the expectant mother and the infant child, who cannot support and live by themselves.

Family is the agency through which the impressionable rising generation is made familiar with such tradition. It teaches the individual what situations to anticipate, how to behave and what behavior to expect by giving one the gifts of language, dress and which integrate within one’s cultural ethos. It facilitates adjustment with people and groups outside the family circle.

Family plays an important role in transmission of the cultural traditions from one generation to another. It acts as an educative unit and a socio-cultural agency. The importance of this aspect lives the fact that children all over the world get their earliest instruction in the family, beginning with language.

1.2 DISTINCTIVE FEATURES OF THE FAMILY

Family has the following distinctive features:

Universality

In view of the fact that all aspects of an individual’s life, are considerably influenced and made possible by family grouping, and it is found from all over the world and at all levels of culture. Besides, there is normal conclusive or convincing evidence that
there ever was a time when this institution did not exist. Modern civilization has not so far succeeded in providing a complete and fully satisfying substitute to the grouping. Family is the most universal and the most important organization for socialization. In other words, generally speaking family remind as a macro group in ancient time and in the traditional societies.

**Emotional Basis**

The integrative bonds in a family are of mutual affection and blood ties. This emotional basis makes it ideally suited for the important role of early education, which makes it an institution of considerable importance as a transmitter of culture.

**Educative Role**

The most important year of every individual’s life, i.e., childhood is spent in the family. It is here that one gets the earliest and the most fundamental lessons in socialization. One is mentally formal according to the norms of society, which get ingrained in one to re-appear in adult life as conscience or super-ego. The cultural traditions that are imbibed by an individual in the familiar setting make the formative influence of the family supreme.

**Limited Size**

The family throughout the world is characterized by its precision as compared to other types of groupings like the sibling.

**Nuclear Position**

With regard to all the different types of groupings, family plays an important role in, so far as it prepares the individual for participation in all of these secondary groups for
their demands and situations. It serves as the nucleus for the growth of other types of groupings, which never deal with the cultureless creative that a newly born child is.

**Sense of Responsibility among Members**

Even though emotions and feelings are the main basis of family, it is not complete devoid of reason. A sense of responsibility among its members in relation to one another is an aspect, which is more rational and reasoned than emotional and instinctive. This feeling of personal responsibility towards one another is very important to ensure the smooth working of the familial grouping, and consequently of society as a whole, and therefore, we find society stepping in to ensure it through customs and mores.

**Social Regulations**

Society has to ensure, by evolving more folkways, that the individual member in a family do perform all those functions, each other on the basis of which the wider network of social relationships is dependent for its success, e.g., there are social restriction on divorce varying in intensity in almost every society.

**Persistence and Change**

Family as an institution is the most permanent and universal one in human societies, as an association, it is subject to constant change in composition and structure, even within the same society. In the family, women play vital roles in running the family, as expected in cooperation with the male members, particularly, their respective husbands.
1.3 WOMEN IN INDIAN FAMILY

Women are the arbiters of social change. They play an important role in teaching the human entrants to this world; the first lessons of life and making them accept values, which are helpful later in shaping their personality, attitudes and behavior.

Women set the pattern for the family. Public discourse in India concerns itself with the supposed threat to disintegration of traditional Indian family life and value and due to the cultural invasion from the West, the joint families have disintegrated and there have been a decline in the value system. The disintegration of joint family system had inevitably led to the deserting of senior citizens and made them to suffer in one way or the other. The number of homes for the aged is fast increasing and definitely there is loss of affection for one’s parents in sons and daughters. All these changes are due to the disintegration of joint family system and this invariably brings us to realize the phenomenon of nuclear family system and which often results in to single-parent family. Once people lose affection for their parents it is easy for them to lose affection for their life partner. An observation of the meaning of family becomes a necessity.

1.4 MEANING OF FAMILY

The word “family” has been taken over from the Roman word, “familia”, from which Latin word ‘family’ is derived. The familia could include the triad with which we are familiar, two parents and children (biological or adopted), as well as slaves and grandparents.

The family had undergone many changes and brought out many social problems. Though the family had undergone many changes, yet it is the backbone of our social
structure. The family is formed by the ceremonial marriage between a male and a female. This ceremonial aspect of marriage between a male and a female is to impart to the bride and bridegroom that marriage is a religious act and auspicious in nature. It makes them to understand that they are expected to live as husband and wife till the end of their lives. This is the traditional concept of Hindu marriage.

There are different types of family and they are three in number:

a) Nuclear family
b) Extended family
c) Single-parent family

1.4.1 Types of Family

a) Nuclear family: The family group consisting of a father and mother and their children.
b) Extended family: The extended family refers to grandparents, uncles, and cousins, whether they live together within the same household or not. However, it may also refer to a family unit in which several generations live together within a single household. In an extended family, parents and their children’s families often live under a single roof. This type of family often includes multiple generations in the family. In India, the family is a patriarchal society, with the sons’ families often staying in the same house.
c) Single-parent family: Single-parent family are those in which children have day-to-day contact with only one parent usually results from death of one parent, marital separation, divorce or birth of a child to an unmarried woman. A recent trend in
which an unmarried individual adopts a child also creates single-parent families. In most instances, single-parent families are headed by a female parent.

1.5 THE FAMILY AS A BASIC INSTITUTION

The Family as a basic institution has some essential functions to perform and certain contributions to make to the society for its well being and survival. The structure of the family group, the value embodied in family living, and the way children constitutes are reared and are all vital to the society since the family constitutes the society. The mother is the first molder of the child. He gets his forms and personality from the family. By the time he gets into the society he has a set pattern for meeting life situations, although his personality develops continuously.

The chief characteristics of the family as a basic institution are:-

1. The family experiences are continuous and persistent.
2. The family is the major agent for transmitting culture.
3. Family conditioning has a special emotional quality.
4. The family has a status.
5. Family is an area of interacting personality.
6. Family passes on ideas and ideals.
7. Every family has heir-looms.

1.5.1 Role of Different Members in the Family

Each member in the family has different functions to perform and roles to assume. The roles do not follow a set pattern nor they can be brought under hard and fast rules and regulations; society assigns certain basic functions to all the members of the family.
1.5.2 Women in the Family

The various roles of women assumed in the family are those of wife, and sometimes as the leader, administrator, and manager of the family income. It is a heatedly argued matter that in the Indian society women are dominated by men and they work like domestic servants and often the family income lies with the husband who will distribute the amount that the wife would demand for domestic expenditure. This is the case in the Indian family system and yet in theory and ideology. A woman is considered also as the leader, and administrator and the manager of family income. It is in this light that the following discussion is made.

1) **Wife**

A women’s status in the family is that of a partner with her husband. Woman devotes her time, labour and thought to this role for the welfare of the member of the family. She sacrifices her personal pleasures and ambition. Her energies and responsibilities are exercised for monitoring the activities of the family.

Wife is man’s helpmate, partner and comrade. She creates the immediate situation in which various members of the family interact with each other. She sets standards, relieves tension, and maintains peace and order in the household to which man devotes his economic ability. She is his companion in the love-life and enriches the personalities of both. She challenges men to high endeavour and worthy achievements. She stands by him in the entire crisis with their common life experiences and she shares with him success and failure. She is the personality to whom he turns for love, sympathy, understanding, comfort and recognition.
2. Administrator and Leader of the household

A well ordered household is essential to normal family life. Disorderly procedures at home affect the adult personalities. She is the chief executive of an enterprise calling for organization of effort, assignment of duties, directions of servants or purchase of equipment and materials, preparation and service of meals, selection and care of clothing, laundering, finishing and maintenance. In the great majority of homes all these process are carried out completely by the woman or under her direction.

As administrator of the household, it is also the women’s responsibility to organize the social life of the family. She also acts as a director of recreation. She arranges and executes appropriate social functions.

3. Manager of Family Income

The man in the family is the chief economic agent while the woman manages the family income. It is her responsibility to see that the maximum return is secured from the expenditure of the income available. She must decide what needs shall be met with first and judge what amounts shall be spent on necessary comforts and luxuries, when she thus apportions the income among the various members of the family, she acts as an economic agent in an economic process namely, distribution of income.

To play this role effectively where the income is limited she requires a special training if it is more difficult to spend judiciously than it is to earn. In certain cases, women in family also contribute to family income through her own earnings to fulfill the roles of motherhood and homemaking.
The Mother

The whole burden of the child bearing is laid upon the woman in the family. Nature has prepared physiologically for this biological process. Nevertheless, she plays it all alone. Man can only stand by recently while the creation of new life proceeds. He can assist with tender care and constant consideration, but further participation is impossible for him in rearing the child, the task is left to the women. The absence of the father from the home during many hours of the day leaves the mother largely unaided. She is primarily responsible for the child’s habits of self-control, orderliness, industry, thrift and honesty.

The mother also gives the child informal education which constitutes the subjective transmission of the social heritage. It is from its mother that the child learns laws of the race, manners of men, moral codes and ideals. The mother, because of her intimate and sustained contact with the child, is also favorably placed to discover his traits and special attitudes. She gives the attention needed during the development of conceptional abilities. She discovers and nurtures special traits, aptitudes and attitudes which give distinction to his personalities.

The mother is the family health officer. She is concerned with the physical well-being of every member of her group, the helpless infant, the sick child, the adolescent youth and the senescent parent. She organizes the home and its activities so that each member of the family has proper food, adequate sleep and sufficient recreation. She also gives special attention to those who are temporarily or permanently suffer from health problems. The mother creates the home environment, the father sharing the role with her. It is chiefly her talent which makes the place a quite comfortable shelter. She cultivates taste
in interior decoration and arrangement so that the home becomes an exciting, restful and cheerful place. Mother is the central personality of the home and family circle.

The Father

The father also contributes, to certain extent for the development of child’s personality. Boys need mal-identification figures for the development of masculine personality and to derive an understanding of how men should behave through this process of identification. The father helps the child to confirm to the demand of reality, helps to broaden his interest and stimulate to develop quality of leadership, discipline, authority which is conducive to the emancipation of the boy from home in due course.

The girl child too needs its father to love it and guide it in certain ways which helps the child in personality development. It is the father who will put the child in an educational institution when the right age for learning is attained by the child. Father-child relationship of an unpleasant or unsatisfying nature has ill effects on children.

Researchers have discovered, on the basis of their studies that father-child relation have been found to be the basis for the development of unappreciable personality. According to Freud, this infantile quality causes later on many psychological problems to a grown up person.

Children in the Family

Human beings need children to lead a happy family life. The child enlarges their capacities for love. The position of the younger children in the family is one of dependence. They care for their affection from parents and immediate relatives.
1.6 CRITICAL FAMILY SITUATIONS

1. Widowhood

Becoming a widow involves personal adjustments to bereavement and readjustment to a single life again. Both are difficult situations, which is certain for many married woman since they usually outlive their husbands. When the husband dies the first problem the widow faces, especially if she has children or if she had never worked for many years, there would arise financial problem. Sometimes a widow may send her children to a relative house or place them in foster home, if she is rich, until she would be able to make permanent arrangement for them. Men usually remarry, and escape from the burden of loneliness and from their responsibility for looking after the children.

2. Divorce

Disrupted families are incomplete whether as a result of death, divorce, separation or due to some other conditions. A number of studies have shown the traumatic effects that divorce can produce, and a feeling of insecurity and rejection may be aggravated by conflicting loyalty, and sometimes leading to the formation of disturbed personality in their child. It could appear that divorce is much more traumatic for children whose homes were happy prior to the divorce than for those who come from unhappy homes.

In Olden days, The Hindu Shastrs regarded marriage as a bond indissoluble in life. The wife was to worship her husband as a god. In Hindu Law there was no such thing as divorce. The custom of divorce existed only among the lower castes. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 has recognized the right of a Hindu woman to divorce her husband. Under Section 13 of the Act any marriage solemnized, whether before or after the commencement of this Act, may, on a petition presented by either the husband or the wife, be dissolved by
a decree of divorce on the ground of the other party. At present, there are women who go to court seeking divorce against their unloyal and troublesome husbands.

1.6.1 Single-Parent Family

According to the Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia, ‘Single-parent (also lone parent, solo parent and sole parent) is a parent who cares for one or more children without the physical assistance of the other parent in the home’.

1 of every 4 families with children under the age of 18 is a single-parent family. Nearly 60 percent of all children born in 1986 spent 1 year or longer in a single-parent family before reaching the age of 18. Clearly a growing phenomenon, the single-parent family is often subject to extreme economic problems.

1.6.2 The Nature of Single Parenthood

Single parents commonly experience difficulties with role identity. Single parents often experience role strain from attempting to balance wage-earner and parental responsibilities. Lack of formal education and consequently lack of job skills limit access to occupations that provide enough income for an acceptable standard of living. Poverty is persistently linked with single parent households, especially those headed by women. Such families are the poorest of all major demographic groups in the United States. Although child care is an issue for all parents, an overwhelming number of single parents cannot afford high-quality day care- a major barrier to attending career development and skill training programs as well as maintaining employment. Among the solutions to these problems are changes in public policy and public attitudes toward single-parent families and more adequate financial support and child-care systems. Another key is career
development- in addition to employment and economic security; career education can improve the physical and emotional well-being of participants.

### 1.6.3 Type of Single Parents

Many single-parent families are low-income families consisting of a mother and her young children. Three major sub-groups of one parent families have also been identified: displaced homemakers, adolescent mothers and single fathers.

a. **Displaced Homemakers**

Marital dissolution drastically reduces the new single-parent family’s available income. Displaced homemakers are at an additional disadvantage because; they often have little or no employment, obsolete training or skills, low self-esteem and external locus of control.

b. **Adolescent Mothers**

Each year in the United States, 1 in 10 teenage girls become pregnant. This vast sub-group of single parents faces many obstacles to self-sufficiency such as, lack of education, job readiness, and emotional maturity. Their crucial need to complete their education and achieve employment goals is complicated by their immediate needs for food, housing, child care, and emotional support.

c. **Single Fathers**

Although they generally have a more healthy economic status than their female counterparts, single fathers often find their sole child-rearing role conflicting with work expectations. They also find themselves filling social roles for which they are not prepared.
1.6.4 The Causes of Single Parenthood

Lone parenthood can come about through a number of different routes. People who are married can become lone parents through:

1. Divorce
2. Separation
3. Death of a spouse

Official figures for Britain show that the largest proportion of female lone parents in 1995-97 were single, with about a third being divorced and just under a quarter separated. The figures for those who were single do not differentiate between those who were cohabiting when the child was conceived and those who were not. These proportions have changed over time. Between 1971 and 1995-97, according to official statistics, the proportion of lone mothers who were single rose from 21 per cent to 33 per cent, the proportion who were divorced rose from 16 per cent to 38 per cent, while the proportion who were widowed fell from 21 per cent to just 6 per cent. The proportions among lone fathers were somewhat different in 1995-97, with more becoming lone parents through being widowed. It should be noted, though, that lone fathers make up only a small minority of lone parents. Only 1 per cent of the family households in the 1996, General Household Survey were headed by lone fathers, compared to 18 per cent that were headed by lone mothers (Thomas, Walker, Wilmot, & Bennett, 1998).

Clearly, then, the rise in lone motherhood is closely related both to increase in the divorce rate and to an increase in births outside marriage. Marriages that resulted from pregnancy were often unstable and could end up producing lone motherhood through an eventual divorce or separation. Now, the partners may choose to cohabit rather than marry
and, if their relationship breaks up, they end up appearing in the statistics as a single, never-married, parent. Rapoport (1982) claim that the single-parent family is an important ‘emerging form’ of the family which is becoming accepted as a legitimate alternative to other family structures.

Morgan (1994) suggests that the rise in lone parenthood could partly be due to changing relationship between men and women. He says important factors causing the rise could include the expectations that women and men have for marriage and the growing opportunities for women to develop a life for themselves outside marriage or long-term cohabitations. A longer-term trend that helps to account for the increase could be a decline in the stigma attached to single parenthood. This is reflected in the decreasing use of terms such as ‘illegitimate children’ and ‘unmarried mothers’, which seem to imply some deviation from the norms of family life, and their replacement by concepts such as, ‘single-parent families’ and ‘lone parent families’, which do not carry such negative connotations. The reduction in the stigma of single parenthood could relate to ‘the weakening of religious or community controls over women’.

1.6.5 Marital Breakdown

The study of contemporary marriages reveals the fact that there is rise in marital breakdowns. The usual way of estimating the number of such breakdown is through an examination of the divorce statistics, but these statistics do not, on their own, provide a valid measure of marital breakdown.

Marital breakdown can be divided into three categories:

1. Divorce which refers to the legal termination of a marriage.
2. Separation, which refers to the physical separation of the spouses, they no longer share the same dwelling.

3. So-called empty-shell marriages where the spouses live together remain legally married, but their marriage exists in namesake only.

1.7 SINGLE-PARENT FAMILIES IN POVERTY

One of the most striking changes in family structure over the last twenty years has been the increase in single-parent families. In 1970, the number of single-parent families with children under the age of 18 was 3.8 million. By 1990, the number had more than doubled to 9.7 million. For the first time in history, children are more likely to reside in a single-parent family for reasons other than the death of a parent. One in four children are born to an unmarried mother, many of whom are teenagers. Another 40 percent of children under 18 will experience parental breakup.

Ninety percent of single-parent families are headed by females. Not surprisingly, single mothers with dependent children have the highest rate of poverty across all demographic groups (Olson & Banyard, 1993). Approximately 60 percent of U.S. children living in mother-only families are impoverished, compared with only 11 percent of intact families. The rate of poverty is even higher in African-American single-parent families, in which two out of every three children are poor.

Effects on Children

Past research has indicated that children from single-parent families are more likely to experience less healthy lives, on the average, than children from intact families. For instance, children growing up with only one parent are more likely to drop out of school,
bear children out of wedlock, and have trouble keeping jobs as young adults. Other consequences include risks to psychological development, social behavior, and sex role identification.

However, recent reviews criticize the methodology of many of these studies which support the “deviant” model of single-family structures. Confounding variables such as, income and social class, explain a large portion of the negative finding. When income is considered, substantially fewer differences arise between the intellectual development, academic achievement, and behavior of children of single-parent and two parent families. Lack of income has been identified as the single most important factor in accounting for the differences in children from various families (Casion, 1982; Lindblad-Goldberg, 1989; Amato & Keith, 1991).

**Poverty**

Mother-only families are more likely to be poor because of the lower earning capacity of women, inadequate public assistance and child care subsidies, and lack of enforced child support from non-residential fathers. The medium annual income for female-headed households with children under six years old is roughly one-fourth that of intact families. However, the number of children per family unit is generally comparable, approximately two per household.

Long-term unemployment markedly increases the likelihood of poverty, receipt of public assistance, negative life changes, and exposure to chronic, stressful conditions, such as, inadequate housing and poor neighborhoods. Poor single mothers often experience a
cycle of hopelessness and despair which is detrimental to both themselves and their children.

1.8 OVERCOMING DIFFICULT CIRCUMSTANCES

Successful single-parent families have adopted more adaptive functioning styles including:

1) More available personal resources, which enhances their coping effectiveness;
2) Better family organization, which balances household responsibilities and decreases task overload;
3) A positive family concept, which values loyalty, home-centeredness, consideration, communication, and closeness;
4) An ability to highlight positive events and place less emphasis on negative aspects of stressful events; and
5) Possessing less stress-producing, supportive social networks.

Many commentators have argued that it is less desirable for children to be brought up by one parent than by two parents.

1.9 OVERALL EFFECTS OF SEPARATION AND DIVORCE ON CHILDREN

The results of a survey based on pooled data from 80000 adults suggest that parental divorce has an adverse effect on children’s lives compared with those raised in intact families, adults who experienced a parental divorce had lower psychological well-being, more behavioral problems, less education, lower job status, a lower standard of
living, lower marital satisfaction, a heightened risk of divorce, a heightened risk of being a single parent and poorer physical health.

This suggests that divorce is not severe as stress for children as other things which can go wrong during childhood. Divorce may represent a severe stress for some children, resulting in a substantial disadvantage and decline in wellbeing, but for other children divorce may be relatively inconsequential. Some children may show improvement following divorce. For children, research shows that the negative effects of divorce on social adjustment are stronger for boys than for girls. Social adjustment includes measures of popularity, loneliness and cooperativeness.

In other areas, however, such as academic achievement, conduct or psychological adjustment, no differences between boys and girls are apparent. The researchers examining the effects of divorce on adults also show very little difference between the effects on men and women from divorced families obtain less education than do those from continuously intact families, and this difference is larger for women than for men. One possible reason is that non-custodial fathers are less likely to finance the higher education of daughters than of sons.

**Effects of Separation on Children**

**Pre-school children**

Observation of children during the first year after parental separation showed that pre-school age children cannot understand the meaning of divorce. Consequently, they react to the departure of a parent with a great deal of confusion. For example, they may
think, “Daddy left because I was bad.” Regression to earlier stages of behavior is also common among very young children.

**Young children**

Children of primary school age have greater maturity and can grasp the meaning of divorce more clearly. Some children see the divorce as a personal rejection.

**Adolescents**

Adolescents are more affected by their own age group and less dependent on the family than younger children. For this reason, they may be affected less directly by the divorce. In addition, adolescents are concerned about their own relationships.

**Changes in Effects over Time**

Comparison of early studies of divorce with more recent studies suggest that more recent groups of children are showing less severe effects of divorce than earlier groups. Firstly, as divorce has become more common, attitudes toward divorce have become more accepting, so children probably feel less stigmatized and will find it easier to obtain support from others in similar circumstances.

Secondly, because the legal and social barriers to divorce were stronger in the past, couples who obtained a divorce several decades ago probably had more serious problems and experienced more conflict prior to separation than today.

**Parental Absence**

Studies show that children who experience the death of a parent exhibit problems similar to those of children who ‘lose’ a parent through divorce. These findings support the view that the absence of a parent for any other reason is problematic for children.
Research also shows that children who have another adult (such as a grandparent or other relative) to fill some of the functions of the absent parent have fewer problems than do children who have no substitute for the absent parent.

In general, studies show that a close relationship with both parents is associated with positive adjustment after divorce, except in high conflict divorces, when frequent contact with the non-custodial parent may do more harm than good.

**Economic Hardship**

Divorce typically results in a severe decline in the standard of living for most custodial mothers and their children. Economic hardship increases the risk of psychological and behavioral problems among children and may negatively affect their nutrition and health.

Studies show that children’s outcomes—especially measures of academic achievement—are related to the level of household income following divorce. This demonstrates the importance of affordable childcare and effective child support enforcement to reduce economic hardship.

**Life Stress**

In addition to the stresses detailed above, divorce often results in other stressful events for children such as, moving house and changing schools. This reinforces the importance for children of improving lone parents’ access to permanent housing if they become homeless.
Delinquency

A common assertion is that children brought up in lone parent families are more likely to become delinquent. In February 1994, a Family Policy Studies Centre International Conference on Crime and the Family concluded that the main influence on children’s behavior is parent’s ability to supervise their children appropriately, with other factors such as, poverty, school failure and lack of self-esteem having less effect. Family structure, whether children are brought up by one parent or two, was of minor significance. This finding confirmed an earlier study by the Home office which found that lone parent families did not have higher delinquency rates than two parent families.

1.10 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

According to U.S. Census Bureau estimates, 59% of United States children will live in a single parent home at least once during their minor years. Over 16 million children currently live in single parent homes. More and more of these families can be defined as “binuclear” families, with both parents actively involved in parenting and creating two separate homes for their children.

Families without male heads are almost automatically defined as “broken” or “disorganized.” Likewise, the matriarchal family structure and the absence of a father have not yet been proven pathological, even for the boys who grow up in it. Sociological studies of the Negroes have demonstrated the existence of an extended kinship system of mothers, grandmothers, aunts and other female relatives that is surprisingly stable, at least on the female side. Moreover, many matriarchal families raise boys who do adapt successfully and they themselves make stable marriages. The immediate cause of pathology may be the
absence of a set of emotional strengths and cultural skills in the mothers, rather than the instability or departure of the fathers.

The female-headed family in the United States is increasing. In 1978, 17.4 percent of all American children lived with their mother only, a percentage that has more than doubled since 1960. One in three of these female-headed families, live below the poverty level: one in four is white; one in two is black. The issue then is as important as it was in the 1960s, when Moynihan, Gans, and others argued so warmly over what was to be done for one such type of family.

An increasing number of American children experience the disruption of family life caused by divorce. Not only do they lose the regular company of one parent, they may have to move away from friends and familiar surroundings. There has been almost a tripling of children affected by divorce over a 20 year period. In 1956, for example, there were 361,000 children whose parents divorced that year; since 1972, however, there are over one million such children each year.

Many children live under the custody of a single divorced parent. By 1978, 7.1 percent of children under the age of 18 were living with their divorced mother only and an additional 0.7 percent with their divorced father. On the basis of present divorce rates, it is estimated that two of every five children born during the 1970s will spend at least of their childhood in single parent homes.

In the past, the rate of divorce was higher among the less educated and those of lower social status, suggesting that higher social status, with its greater economic security and material ease, helped to avoid some of the stresses which produced divorce. But by
1975, the rate of divorce among men who had completed four years of college was the same as for all men. Women with four years of college, however, still have a divorce rate 10 percent lower than the total population.

Children from “broken homes” have a higher incidence of academic and emotional/behavioral problems than other children. An analysis of the 1986, NAEP data indicates that third graders living with one parent scored considerably lower than third graders living with both parents (Natriello, McDill, & Pallas, 1990). Similarly, analyzing data from High School and Beyond, Ekstrom et al. (1987) find a significant correlation between single-parent homes and dropout rates for Whites and Hispanics (but not for blacks).

Guttman, Geva, & Gefen (1988) find that teachers and students are more likely to report that the child shown in a film exhibits academic, social, and emotional problems if they are told the child’s parents are divorced than if they are told the child comes from an “intact” home. As Guttman et al., 1988 warn stereotypes about “broken homes” may adversely affect children: Well-adjusted children from healthy single parent homes may “live down” to the low academic expectations of school staff. The children that are from single parent homes, with troubles, may have their emotional problems falsely attributed to their family structure. Two parent homes might tend to offer more resources, role models, and adult supervision than single parent homes.

With this view in mind, along with the previous research findings, observations and survey made by the researcher, Single-parent family and Intact family was selected as the
Independent variables and Self-esteem, Peer-group relationship, Adjustment ability and Academic achievement were selected as the Dependent variables.

1.11 VARIABLES USED

1.11.01 SELF-ESTEEM

An Adolescent with a stable self concept and values has a higher level of self-esteem and fewer feelings of inadequacy. The Adolescent with an unstable self concept and values show such qualities as negativism, introversion, dominance seeking, hyperactivity and other forms of problem behavior.

Self-esteem is the effective position of the self whereas; self concept is the cognitive part of the self. Not only do we have certain ideas about who we are, but also we have certain feelings about who we are. Once self-esteem refers literally to the extent to which we admire or value the self, and out of this emerges what we refer to as personality. High self-esteem usually comes from being able to do one or two things at least as good as if not a trifle better than most other people. Essentially high self-esteem persons see themselves as valuable and important, as persons worthy of respect and consideration, who have pretty definite ideas of what they think is right. In addition they are not afraid of taking a little risk now and then in terms of doing something new and different.

Low self-esteem persons do not see themselves as important or likeable. They do not view themselves as the sort who can do what they really want to do, nor do they believe they could do it well, even if they try. Low self-esteem persons prefer to stick to what is known and safe in as much as they do not believe that they have much control over their lives in any way.
SIGNIFICANCE

Personality development is the main concern of every individual in a society and the world at large. The home is the first institution which forms the base for the child’s character and personality. The school is the nests which supports and strengthens the base and helps the child mould his personality.

DEFINITION

According to Branden, self-esteem is a confidence in our ability to think. To cope up with the basic challenges of life and confidence is our right to be successful and happy. According to Frey & Carlock, self-esteem is an evaluation of the emotional, intellectual and behavioral aspects of the self-concept. It is operationally defined as the total score obtained on self-esteem scale developed by Karunanidhi (1996), The Head of the Department of Psychology, University of Madras, India.

1.11.02 PEER-GROUP RELATIONSHIP

The school context provides an opportunity for youth to socialize with selected peers, independently from adults (Youniss & Smollar, 1989). Friends make unique contributions to each other’s learning, emotional support, and socialization beyond that of their parents (Hartup & Sancilio, 1986). Validation from friends provides psycho-social support that leads to healthy development and adjustment (Ladd, Kochenderfer, & Coleman, 1996; Harris, 1995). However, adolescents also face pressures to live up to the norms of their friendship group (Brown, Dolcini, & Leventhal, 1997), which may include involvement in bullying behaviors. For this reason, the friendship network, the pattern of friendships among individuals within a group, is an important aspect of adolescent school
bullying. Both bullying and victimization are associated with intra-personal problems such as, anxiety and depression, (Kumpulainen & Rasanen, 2000; Salmon & West, 2000; Kumpulainen, Rasanen, & Puura, 2002), eating disorders (Kaltials-Heino, Rimpela, Rantenen, & Rimpela, 2000), low self-esteem (O’Moore & Kirkham, 2001), and less satisfaction with school (Kochenderfer & Ladd, 1996; Karatzias, power, & Swanson, 2002).

Peer-group and Adolescence

Adolescence is an uncertain and insecure status found only in modern society, where preparing for adulthood is lengthened, partly by the demand for longer years for education, and advanced technology does not need the young coming into the labor force at an early age. In their extended and uneasy transition to adulthood, adolescents find in primary relations among peers a sympathetic context for ready acceptance of one another and for a sympathetic sharing of the problems of growing up. Their peer groups, as we saw earlier, are agents for a continuous socializing over the prolonged gap from childhood to adulthood, modifying and sometimes contradicting socializing by the family.

Through peer groups the adolescent discovers a way to come to grips with the larger society, to resist and challenge it, and even to rebel against it. This would not be possible for the individual alone. The sustaining support of peers and the emotional ties of primary groups are necessary elements in generating an adolescent subculture.

SIGNIFICANCE

Peer groups exist among all segments of, and at all levels in, society. Peer groups perform a number of basic functions in society. The function of the peer group takes on a
particular significance in relating the individual to the ever-enlarging society. It becomes increasingly an agent for adult socialization and a means for integrating the person into the large, impersonal structure. Children in peer relations contribute strongly to their own socialization into gender. Since Herbert Mead’s work on socialization as we know that the child’s world of play and games contributes significantly to their personality development.

**DEFINITION**

According to the Gale Encyclopedia of Children’s Health, ‘Peer pressure is the influence of a social group on an individual’. Peer acceptance is the degree to which a child or adolescent is socially accepted by peers. It includes the level of peer popularity and the ease with which a child or adolescent can initiate and maintain satisfactory peer-group relationship. It is operationally defined as the total score obtained on Peer-group relationship scale which includes Peer-group relation and Social acceptance developed by Hudson & Fey (1982).

**1.11.03 ADJUSTMENT ABILITY**

A healthy environment enables one to develop a stable self-concept which in turn brings high self-esteem and a sense of security in the individual. Home is the first environment a child experience. A healthy home is a social unit formed by a family living together and which provides many sided opportunities for the development of innate abilities of each of its members. Such an atmosphere satisfies the physical and psychological needs of every individual. A child’s first experiences are very important in certain respects. A healthy home background is essential to develop one as an integrated person. The interaction with persons within and outside the home environment enables a child to develop a sense of security. From infancy itself this sense of security is developed
from physical contact with the members of the family with whom positive relationship is achieved. Homely atmosphere also develops a sense of belonging in the minds of children.

Adjustment may be defined as a state of harmony between the smooth harmonious functioning of the whole individual viz, physical, psychological, social and ethical on the one hand, and the conditions in his environment on the other. Absence of harmony between the two creates a problem of adjustment. Thus, an adjustment arises when an individual faces a demand made by his environment which he cannot fulfill.

The problem of Adjustment arise everyday in the life of an individual. The environment constantly changes, and the individual too is changing every moment. The harmony between the two is also constantly disturbed. These changes affect the outer and inner environment of an individual. The individual has to adjust himself to reality in a social milieu in a fast changing society. The reality of world of objects and events of people, their needs and wishes influence adjustment either directly or indirectly. Adjustment, thus, connotes a bipolar concept of self and others.

**Parent-Child Interactions**

The word, ‘interaction’ denotes an ongoing exchange between people. This meaning is important to keep in mind when discussing parent-child interaction, for the relationship is not one-way, something parents do to their children but rather two-way, a give and take between the parent and the child. Parent sometimes raise this point themselves when they are questioned about the style and content of their interactions with their children. Parents report that male infants and toddlers are “fussier” than female infants and toddlers; boys, they say, are more active and anger more easily than girls. Girls
are better behaved and easy going. So if we observe parents treating their sons and daughters differently, it is just because they are responding to biologically based sex differences in temperament? Research by Psychologist, Connors (1996) indicates that girls may be better behaved than boys because their mothers expect them to be so. In observing girls and boys three and half to fourteen months old, Connors found few differences in the children’s behavior. However, she also found that the mothers of girls were more sensitive to their children while the mothers of boys were more restrictive of their children. Connors reports that fourteen-month-old girls are more secure in their emotional attachment to their mothers than fourteen-month-old boys, and she attributes this difference to mothers’ differential treatment of their children.

The process of adjustment is characteristic of life and development of each individual, which has been stated by Alexander et al. (1974). It may occur by becoming aware of our own behavior and our own problems. Every person experience some frustrations and conflicts, but is able to solve most of them normally with his own resources. In the words of Vasanthal (1987), the problem of making a living in our culture is an important source of stress during the adult years.

**DEFINITON**

According to the Collins English Dictionary, adjustment is the act of adjusting or state of being adjusted. According to Newman (1981) the concept of Adjustment refers to active, creative effects to live effectively. This requires gaining skills through interaction with one’s word acquiring a degree of control over one’s daily life, successfully meeting life’s challenges, self understanding and the ability to make accurate judgement about people and places. According to the Macmillan Dictionary, adjustment is a change in
something that makes it better, more accurate, or more effective. It is operationally defined as the total score obtained on College students’ adjustment scale developed by Pareek et al. (1976).

1.11.04 ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

Academic achievement is the product variable which gets toned up or the positive or negative influence of a host of independent variable. Academic performance is considered as a composite criterion and not a unitary one. Gupta & Kapoor (1969) have stated that, academic performance like performance in other fields, is not an uni-dimensional, but a multidimensional activity, involving a number of phases. Bhatnagar (1969) considers academic performance of students as an aspect of their total behavior.

Factors involved in Academic Progress

General satisfaction with school or college is found to be more closely related to a student’s success than specific satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Smith, 1961). Shailer (1964) has shown that academic achievement of a student can be improved by self-concept enhancement; Ambition is also an important factor which facilitates achievement in academic situation (Gebbart & Hoyt, 1958). Learning methods also contribute to one’s academic success. A number of investigators have shown that motivation, attitude, interest and intelligence level constantly facilitate academic progress and attainment. A performance is based on a number of factors such as children’s attitudes, interests, personality characters and social class in addition to learning of achievement, Lavin (1965).
**Academic Progress and Life career**

In the broad sense, the aim of education is preparation of an individual for life. Educationists like Dewey considered that education is life itself. Education performs important functions towards the individual as well as towards society.

**DEFINITION**

In the Dictionary of Psychology, Chaplin (1965) defines educational or academic achievement as specified level of attainment or proficiency in academic work as evaluated by teachers, by standardized tests or by a combination of both.

According to the Dictionary of Education, Carter (1959) states that academic achievement means ‘the knowledge attained or skills developed in the school subjects, usually assessed by test score or by marks assigned by teachers or both’. Thus, the scores earned by the college student in the Terminal Examination were taken as the Academic achievement.

The next chapter review of literature will give an insight into research done in the past on these aspects.