

CHAPTER - VII

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CONCLUSION : SUMMARY AND FINDINGS

The Saurashtrians who are selected here for the study are a prominent artisan community who migrated to Tamil Nadu from Saurashtra, after staying for several years in Maharashtra and Andhra Pradesh. They may be described as a settled immigrant community exhibiting dual culture, speaking more than one language, and working in diverse occupations in Tamil society. The Saurashtrians are now considered not only as a weaving community but are counted as one of the major business communities in Tamil Nadu.

In the past few decades considerable socio-economic changes have taken place within the community. Compared to the agricultural communities, literature available on artisan communities in Tamil Nadu is scanty. Despite the long history of Saurashtrians in Tamil Nadu (nearly 400 years) no sociological study referring to their family and kinship system has been undertaken by any one so far. A few scholars have written on the historical and religious aspects of the community. These factors induced in the researcher an urge to conduct an empirical enquiry on this immigrant community in Madurai.

The present study tries to understand changes in family and kinship through three dimensions i.e. structural, interactional and attitudinal. Special attention is given to study changes in the structural and interpersonal relationships in family, kinship and occupation.

The three occupational groups involved in this study are viz. weavers, traders and salaried employees. The size of the sample selected for the present study is three hundred respondents, hundred from each occupational group covering six Saurashtran neighbourhoods in Madurai. They are (1) Khanpalayam; (2) Mahal; (3) Villapuram; (4) Krishnapuram Colony; (5) Chinnakadai; (6) South Krishnan Coil.

The various objectives, scope and importance of the study, hypotheses, sampling procedures, methods of data collection, the researcher's problems in the field etc. are given in detail in the first chapter. More precisely the objectives of the study can be summarised as follows:

1. Internal adaptations of this community to meet external challenges within a traditional normative framework;
2. To examine the family and kinship network of Saurashtran community in Madurai and the transformations which have occurred in them in response to several exogenous factors;
3. To understand the dynamics of adaptation among the weavers, traders and other sections within the community in the light of family structure, occupational mobility and social contact.
4. To assess the ideological and atitudinal changes of the old and young generation towards value orientation connected with their social and occupational life.

Family reflects the social character of a particular society in which it is a part. It is believed that as the social structure changes so does the structure of family. The family undergoes changes

both latitudinally and longitudinally. Chapter one examines the concepts and definitions of family and kinship. The chapter also describes the major approaches to the study of family.

The conceptual understanding of Indian scholars on family and kinship has been explained in the first chapter. The perception of Indian scholars is also considerably varied and changed. Joint family is no more treated as joint living of persons. Family is conceived as something more important than just mere living together or eating together of individuals. It is viewed that while a modern family may be outwardly joint, it may lack the essential qualities of a joint family. Similarly, a family which is nuclear in structure may be well-connected with the large extended family located at a distant place. In the analysis of family in India, scholars have diverted their attention from counting the members of the household towards actual familial behaviour and role relationships including the socio-psychological aspects of emotion, love and affection and stress and strains in family life in addition to structural phenomenon.

The functioning of kinship system in the developed countries has been explored. Even in the highly industrialized nations the individuals are kin-oriented in their outlook. Western scholars have found that many nuclear families are tied together within a matrix of mutual kin assistance. This leads us to believe that the kinship system in urban society continues to survive despite the socio-economic and geographical mobility of the individuals.

A review of Indian family studies has been done in Chapter two. No two studies in India carry similar results. Studies have shown that even two communities living in the same territory differ

greatly in their social organisation and familial arrangements. No radical change as such has been found in the Indian family life and rather it adapts itself well to the changing conditions of life. Separation of household does take place and at the same time co-operation between the brothers of two households or parents and children is continued. Indian family exhibits both continuity and change. The various social events unite all the members of the kin group. The mutual kin assistance operates through several means. In the domain of Indian households, tradition still plays a dominant role in the matters of mate selection, occupational choice and household authority.

The changing character of Indian family has also been highlighted by our scholars. The changing phenomenon is explained in terms of various forms of visible as well as invisible adaptive strategies. They are as follows: late marriage, rising nuclear households, decline of respect shown to elders, kin selectivity based on mutual common interest, reduction in inter-kin marriages, restriction of assistance to near relatives and acceptance of widow's remarriage.

The review of literature on family and kinship brings out the fact that the changes occurring on family in India are not uniform in direction. In the urban context, the factors which bring about the break-up of family are now stronger than those which help maintain its unity. Indian scholars predicted that the rise of nuclear family in India will not disrupt much the functional aspects of the family. Moreover, no single factor can be cited as a major reason for the familial change in India. Further, a gap between the ideal and actual family behaviour is noticed by many researchers in their field studies.

Chapter three covers the rich historical and cultural traditions of the Saurashtrians. It discusses who the Saurashtrians are and what made them leave their homeland and settle down in Madurai and cultivate a distinctive socio-economic organisation. It is understood that the Saurashtrians' migration towards Madurai took place when Madurai came under the rule of Nayak kings. One cannot say now that the Saurashtrians are a precise representation of Gujarati society. In the process of migration, they changed their settlements and their language and culture too underwent a change. Each stage of their migration made them undergo several adaptive changes. As a consequence, the Saurashtrian culture in Tamil Nadu assumed new socio-cultural traits which were quite different from those of their land of origin. Further, the Saurashtrians living in different parts of Tamil Nadu have adjusted well with their immediate social environment.

Our historical analysis shows that the earlier Saurashtrians found ample scope for their traditional occupation in Madurai. Under the protection of native rulers, especially the Nayak kings, the community remained as an independent and self-reliant one. Apart from its notable skill in weaving, the community is known for honesty, hard work and integrity. A notable feature of the community is its observance of numerous distinctive rituals and festivals.

The study indicates that the Saurashtrians strongly believed in the ideals of four-fold scheme of Varna and they tried to establish their superiority over others by their adoption of Brahmanical customs. Even a lower class Saurashtrian considered himself superior to an upper class non-Brahman in Tamil Nadu. Despite their high profile and Brahmanical mode of living, their status in Tamil society was always a

disputed one. The occasionally confronted with the Brahmans who prevented them from wearing the sacred thread. They also incurred the hostility of the Non-Brahman Tamils by opposing the Dravidian movement in Tamil Nadu.

However, the Saurashtrians have achieved economic betterment, educational advancement and salaried employment in the recent years. As a result of it they have improved their image. The various district gazetteers and government reports have described them as a progressive community. The Saurashtrians' migration has been regarded as advantageous not only to the community but other groups in Tamil Nadu among whom they settled down. The state government has earned much revenue through exporting the outstanding textile products of this community. At present this community does not show much enthusiasm in silk weaving. Decline of skill, high cost involvement in making hand woven silk items, competition from mill sector, inadequate facilities have induced the Saurashtrians to switch over to cotton weaving.

The leaders who emerged in the beginning of the present century modernized the community by establishing caste associations, educational and economic institutions, etc. As a result this community has made inroads urban professions which have better income and status. They also managed to gain representation in administration, temple committees and some even participated in the Civil Disobedience Movement. It has been said that the Saurashtran leaders' interest in the progress of the community led to their contest in elections and participation

in social and economic movements. Prominent entrepreneurs of the community initiated the textile mills in Madurai and many switched to machine works. With the passage of time, the growth of textile mills started producing an adverse impact on this community which is directly involved in weaving. Chapter third also provides a general discussion on the traditional social structure and organizational features of Saurashtrans.

Chapter four, five and six bear the empirical analysis of data. These chapters present the structural, interactional and attitudinal dimensions of changes. The weavers and the white collar employees predominantly live in nuclear households. A large percentage of traders are found in the joint family system. The semi-extended family in our study is represented more by weavers and less by traders. We see no fundamental differences between the weavers and the white collar employees in their family structures. Class-wise, sixty eight per cent of low income group is found in nuclear households and fifty six per cent of high income group is found in joint family. The middle and uppermiddle classes reveal similar familial features.

In our study, respondents' education is not significantly related to family income and type. A trader who has little education earns more than an average educated urban employed person. Regarding the number of children a respondent had, definitely the higher educated respondents had fewer children than the less educated or uneducated. Along with the trend towards nuclearization, it is noticed that there is a desire on the part of Saurashtrans to limit the size of the family. The norm is to have a small family consisting of four to six members.

The structural division of family was caused by many factors. The foremost reasons are lack of space, allotment of new houses by co-operative societies, death of parents, disposal of parental house and family quarrels etc. Ideally, a majority of our respondents feel nuclear family as better. Two serious disadvantages of nuclear family commonly cited by the weavers and traders are as follows : Weaving work is mostly team-work, and, therefore, loss of working hands as a result of separation acts as a serious obstacle for weavers. For the traders living in nuclear households it is difficult to invest more in business, since their monetary strength is also reduced considerably as a result of separation from the joint family.

The movement of respondents in their occupational career is also analysed in the fourth chapter. A substantial change in occupational aspirations has been observed among the weaver respondents. Instances of vertical mobility have been noticed among the traders as well as among the white collar employees. The traders generally became upwardly mobile either by improving their business or rising up to the position of a businessmen from the level of a small shop assistant, enlarging of business firms by new enterprises, or by deviating from the father's traditional or low grade occupation. Most of the white collar respondents had hailed from trading family background.

The subjective aspects of occupational prospect and alienation have also been evaluated. The desire for change of occupation is strong among the respondents of low income group, especially the

weavers and middle class traders. The weavers in general are suffering from a pronounced occupational alienation. The major reasons for their alienation are hard manual labour, poor wage, low social recognition and increasing cost of living. Most of the weavers do not have faith in the future improvement in their traditional occupation. A few traders engaged in textile business also developed the same tendency. Many of these respondents feel that these traditional occupations would have no future and they no longer want their children to adopt such occupations. The white collar professions are sought out by these respondents. In general there is a strong desire for upward mobility through education and employment exists among the Saurashtrans. Mentioned below are some of the findings of occupational analysis of our study.

1. An overwhelming majority of weavers follow the footsteps of their fathers with regard to their occupational career.
2. A steady decline in handloom business and a shift in the direction of modern business are observable differences among the respondents at present.
3. The data show that the change from the position of a small shop employee to self-owned businessman is favoured by many upwardly mobile traders.
4. It is very rare among traders to become weavers and they seldom move downward.
5. The scale of business is a determinant factor in absorbing sons into family business.

6. There is a discernable movement of the sons of those engaged in business towards salaried professions.

Marital and kinship relations have also been affected by the changing conditions of life. In the sphere of marriage, changes are observed in age at marriage, celebration of marriage, selecting invitees to the ceremony, and a flexible attitude towards widow's re-marriage, crossing of regional endogamy, approval of inter-kin marriages and neo-local residence. The rituals and ceremonies performed at marriage have also undergone change. Alliances are sought among the kin. The attitude towards selection of partners has undergone a change. There is a greater demand for educated brides and bridegrooms in the matrimonial market. Parents now seek the consent of future spouses before settling marriage. A rigid norms still exist in matters concerning inter-caste and love marriages, Gotrum of spouses, divorce and a rigid practice of matching horoscope and the observance of Bhovlas (an important oath taking ceremony among the Saurashtrians).

The study suggests that though the Saurashtrians follow the norms of patrilineal and patrilocal residence, the ties with maternal kin are quite strong among the present day Saurashtrians. The incidence of cross-cousin and uncle-niece marriages has further strengthened the ties with the maternal kin. Our respondents have shown a greater emotional attachment to their mother's kin than to that of their fathers.

Segments of extended kin group are usually located in the same or adjacent neighbourhoods and kin ties are reinforced through

mutual visits. Empirical analysis shows that there is no uniformity of kin behaviour among the Saurashtrians as it varies with occupation and economic classes. Although kin obligations notionally continue, the actual exchange of service is much reduced. There is a tendency to limit the kin activities to a few close relatives. However, kin reciprocity and mutuality are valued highly among the traders of the community. On the whole, fifty two per cent of our respondents have categorised their relationship with relatives as a formal one.

Chapter five analyses Saurashtrians' relationship with family, kingroups, community and with the large society. Within the family, the husband and wife possess a more or less equal authority. Many of the couples in our sample have harmonious and happy relationships. A total of 111 respondents in our study have faced tensions in household life, as a result of disagreement in interpersonal relationships. However there is a trend towards making joint decision in household matters. Decision on household chores is usually entrusted to women of the household. The Saurashtran husbands assist their women folk in carrying out the household routines. This is more marked during crisis situations such as child birth, illness etc.

Kinship and community ties continue to dominate interpersonal relationships in all the six neighbourhoods studied. Many prefer to live with their own castemen in their neighbourhoods. They say that castemen are obliged to render help at any time. However, a few thought that living close to castemen will have adverse effects. Many have chosen friends from within the community itself.

A few others found unpleasantness in the company of castemen. Considering all, the white collar group in our study made extensive social contacts. The weavers remained weak in their external contacts: some of them said their hard work and long working hours leave them no time to develop meaningful social ties with Tamils. The other groups (traders and white collar employees) have said that they have received high levels of social acceptance from the Tamils. Indeed, there is no sense of isolation among the immigrants. The external adjustment of Saurashtrians with the larger society has become stronger in the recent years. As compared to the past, certainly some positive developments have taken place in their social interaction.

Family culture is a composite of norms and values. At any point of time, it is reflection of the physical and social structural aspects of the time over what it has inherited through time. Physical structure can be defined as the ecology of the setting. Social structure refers to the matrix of the sub-systems around the family and the forces emanating from it. There is a close inter-relation between family culture and family structure. Hence, structure and culture tend to influence each other.

Chapter six deals with the values, norms and ideologies of Saurashtrians. Until recently, the Saurashtran community has maintained its traditional normative structure due to lack of social mobility of its members as well as due to the slow modernization process in Madurai. The situation is different today. It is assumed that in

the present day situation an individual changes his aspirations and attitudes when he moves up in the socio-economic scale.

Although the Saurashtrians reside together, there is a considerable variations in the absorption of values, habits and sentiments occurred among the individuals. This diversity of values is expected to act against the homogenous cultural setting of the community. A liberal outlook in child-rearing practices, decision-making, considering elders' advice and preference towards modern occupations facilitate the assimilation process of younger generation. Our hypothesis is proved as right here. We assumed that the deviation from the traditional set of values and norms brings the Saurashtrians closer to the Tamils. The images of Saurashtrians towards homeland and host society has been analysed. Many of them have now considered Madurai as their homeland. They show a strong attachment to Tamil language, culture and the people of Tamil Nadu. They do not carry any animosity towards the surrounding Tamils. Many of them, of course, are unwilling to return to their land of origin.

With regard to fulfilment of desires and future life prospects, many of our young respondents are quite optimistic. One can say that the younger generations is basically realistic, flexible and pragmatic in their attitudes towards work and life. They are aware of education which is considered as key to upward social mobility and success in life. They place a great emphasis on status-oriented urban jobs. Even the weavers of the community prefer a secure modern life to the insecure traditional life. Although the Saurashtrians are imbued

with a strong caste ideology, they are not as rigidly stratified as the Tamils in their caste structure. But they are now divided more on class lines. Even though poverty has touched many people of the community, they have not shown interest in occupations like agriculture or other non-traditional pursuits. On the basis, it is concluded that the Saurashtrians are moving towards achievements orientation in their social and occupational life.

Suggestions and Recommendations

The Saurashtrians, at the state level not only lack uniformity in culture and language but also lack wide networks. Attention should be paid to reorganise them as one group. The members of the community should forget their internal differences whatever it may be, and should come forward to integrate into the mainstream of community life. The marital alliances among Saurashtrians living in various places may reinforce their unity.

The Saurashtrians' identity exists on the basis of inherited traditions such as rituals and weaving skills. Relationships with the native land is considerably lacking. The organizational spirit of other communities is increasing at a fast pace but the Saurashtrians seem to be lacking in modern types of mobilisation. The Yadavas of Tamil Nadu formed association at the national level although they were regionally and linguistically divided in the past. The Saurashtrians may have to follow the organizational techniques of such caste groups for their own unity and integration. The political involvement of

this immigrant community has also weakened. It has to be remembered that in a state like Tamil Nadu caste organization, political participation and caste mobility go hand in hand. The early Saurashtran leaders gained much for the community through political means. The Saurashtrians will be deprived as long as they lack political consciousness and unity.

They should divert their competitive spirit towards education. Although a number of community-owned educational institutions are in operation, only a section of the community has benefitted. Since the weavers have started showing an awareness in educating their children, more encouragement from the well-to-do section of the community will enable the poorer section to fulfil their aspirations. The community has opened a poly-technique in Madurai and imparted the consciousness of vocational courses among the members. The introduction of an advanced curriculum on weaving technology would enable them to improve the skills of younger generation.

The Saurashtra Sabha in collaboration with the state aided agencies can open weavers' training centres and can give training of advanced weaving techniques among the weavers. This would enable the weavers to manifest their hidden talents in addition to creating employment opportunities. The interest in silk weaving has considerably decreased and the quality of weaving has been deteriorating. Of course, to some extent it is a change brought about by historical factors. Still the silk weaving industry can be preserved if monetary

and social inducements are given to the silk weavers. The government on its side may come forward to do something to promote the inherent artistic talents of these immigrant silk weavers.

At present a streamlining of weavers' co-operative society is more essential, especially in the matters of administration, work distribution, allotment of houses, advancement of loans, maintenance of accounts and disposal of products, etc. The chapter four in our study has highlighted several problems faced by the weavers coming under this co-operative sector. The Saurashtra Sabha should work towards facilitating the work of the weavers, co-operative societies and the master weavers. The Sabha should take into consideration of problems and suggestions of various trade unions and commercial associations of weavers and traders. It should work out to find suitable solutions to their common problems and guide them in proper direction.

There are also several shortcomings on the part of educated as well as the parents of the educated. A person's education would be meaningful if he applies his knowledge in his practical life. Although many Saurashtrians are well-qualified they are not utilising their potentiality. Attainment of formal education is considered just as a vehicle to get into a job. Many educated youths idle away their time till they find a well paid government job. Many are unwilling to start productive enterprises. In several cases, the educated are not allowed to take initiatives regarding future career as their parents differ in their views. A few youngsters who were willing to study

further could not do so because their parents did not encourage them. A respondent did not allow his son to take up government job as he was posted outside Madurai. He wanted his son under his direct supervision and control. These factors not only restrict the choices of educated but affect their future careers as well. Under the present circumstances many Saurashtran youths find it difficult to satisfy their aspirations.

Moreover, to improve the economic condition the Saurashtrians need to change their habits. Firstly, they should develop and encourage the habit of savings. Since the income from weaving is unsteady, savings will enable them to tide over difficult times. No doubt, Saurashtran women invest more on ornaments, but the ornaments are valued more as symbols of prestige and self-satisfaction than as savings. Next, many of the Saurashtrians fear to invest money in modern business. They do not want to take risk in such a new type of business. They feel that modern business does not suit them as in such business they foresee no future. They should remove this feeling from their minds.

Researchable Areas

1. A comparative study of Saurashtran and Tamilian weavers in terms of social and occupational changes.
2. A comparative study of Saurashtran, Kannadiga and Telugu immigrant weavers with a focus on their settlement in and adaptation to Tamil Nadu.

3. Study of socio-economic roles of textile co-operatives in Tamil Nadu with special reference to their mediation between artisan groups and the state government.
4. Case studies of master weavers and their apprentices with reference to interpersonal relations, transmission of skills and evolution of artisan culture.
5. Socio-historical study of weavers' guilds in Tamil Nadu (including the Saurashtran guilds) prior to British rule.
6. Artisan communities and evolution of urban centres in Tamil Nadu : A study of social dynamics.