CHAPTER - 1

Introduction
INTRODUCTION

Family is a basic unit of society, characterized as one whose members are economically and emotionally dependent on one another and are responsible for each other's development, stability, and protection (Kivnick and Sinclair, 1996). Currently in our society, the traditional definition of the family is undergoing transition because of the emerging prominence of alternative lifestyles. Thus a family consisting of a husband, a wife, and their immediate children are more common.

The average Indian's life is totally centered around the family. Since a generation ago, joint families are the norm; but now they are almost extinct. Everybody prefers to live independently and even the elderly are prepared to be left alone or in pairs by the younger generation. Burnett (2003) stated that, families provide the vast majority of care for their dependent members throughout the life course, and grandparents, who always serve as a safety net for their grandchildren, are no exception. During the past quarter century however, grandparents who are primary, long-term caregivers for young kith and kin have emerged as a new, relatively vulnerable population of family caregivers.

The grandparents' role is to assure the family's quality and safety, by deed, attitude and example. Grandparenting is a special relationship niche in any culture. Grandparents and grandchildren seem to have a synergy like no other relationship. Grandparents have an unusual opportunity to make a special difference for children. In recent years scientific studies have led to
new insight into nature’s requirements for optimum development in growing children. Grandparents are holding the best position in the family to bring these new ideas into the lives of their grandchildren, adding fun, joy, and wisdom to life for everyone. A real grandparent is devoted to the family, and has a vision of the family that extends from the past into the future. A good grandparent grows in the role using wisdom, experience and long view of life conferred by age to benefit all, and work as a “team” with parents.

Being a grandparent gives importance and meaning to later life. When parents become grandparents they become guardians of two generations of their families. It is difficult to describe grandparenting in our society because, contrary to several stereotypical descriptions of the role of the grandparent, there are wide variations in the role. This is reflected in age and in the generational diversity of grandparents in our society. Besides, there are social and demographic factors; and other behavioral aspects too.

Indian grandparents provide care for their grandchildren within a range of structures. Some provide regular day care, while the parents are at work, others provide care while co-residing with the grandchildren. The grandmothers provide daily child-care, when the grandchild’s parents usually work full time. Such grandmothers wanted to help the parents financially by not leaving their grandchildren in paid day care centers. Under such circumstances, grandparents attempted to support the middle generation nuclear family. This was also observed by Furstenberg and Cherlin (1985) in advanced nations.
Researches amply testify that once the grandparenthood bond was established in childhood, it remained fairly stable throughout the rest of the life. Nonetheless, grandparents' career moved through distinct periods during the grandchild's pre-school and elementary years, when grandparents typically enjoyed their most frequent contact. As grandparent and grandchild spend time together, the grandparents' role broadened and deepened. These were the years Furstenberg and Cherlin (1985) referred to as the "Fat years", during which grandparents can become living ancestors and historians, treasured companions and role models. Whereas, children's adolescents and young adult years signified increasingly lean periods.

More often in African-American culture, the traditional role of grandparent was to provide stability and security for their grandchildren while the parents were away to seek a better education and job opportunity. Poe (1998) In comparison, today grandparents take on parenting role of their grandchildren because of the feeling that they are obligated to their grandchildren and to their families. Thus, they were deprived of the genuine grandparent-grandchild relationship.

To the grandparent, the birth of a grandchild usually brings sheer delight, a sense of renewal and a feeling of fulfillment. Bonding with the baby from the beginning is a great way to build a strong three-generational family. It is important that the grandchild sees you, using your wisdom and experience in a longing and caring way. Your relationship with your grandchild and his parents will set the stage for the time when they "move up" the generational ladder themselves.
As the role of the women has changed - they are increasingly working outside the house, their help to the elderly is becoming negligible and more burden is levied on the elders to take care of their grandchildren. It is worthwhile looking at the industrially advanced societies, since it projects the future of India. Brody (1985), discussed such changes in women's roles in the US in a study of three generations. These have far reaching consequences not only for the economy and society but also for the lives of older people and their families. The significance of these changes would be clear when one notes that forty (40) per cent of people between 55-59 years and twenty (20) per cent of those aged 60-64 years and ten per cent of those aged sixty five (65) to sixty nine (69) years had at least one living grandparent. One might note that ninety (90) per cent of older people with children were grandparents and forty six (46) per cent were great grandparents.

A growing number of children are in the care of someone other than a parent, and, in many cases, that someone is a grandparent or other relative. "Kinship care" is the term most commonly used to refer to arrangements in which a grandparent or other relative is raising a child (Poe, 1998).

We also know that grandparents can make their children's job of parenting a lot easier. When they lend a sympathetic ear to an upset parent they tend to provide a safe outlet for often difficult emotions. But, now-a-days majority of the youth opined the elderly differently, as a result of rapid advancement of science and technology in developing countries like India. The son no longer turns to his father for his advice, but turns to the expert. The
daughter has her own ideas of bringing up her children. She seeks the help of a paediatrician, psychologist or a psychiatrist depending on necessity. There is a general lack of respect for the elderly, partly because youngsters view that the knowledge of the elders is outdated.

According to many parents, not only they were missing their parent’s involvement, but also were missing their grandchildren too. One young mother sadly complained that, her own father lived two blocks away, yet never took time to spend more than an occasional hour with her children. When the researcher spoke with the grandfather (Bala krishna, 1998), he did not want to "meddle" with his daughter’s life. He thought that he was doing her daughter a favour by allowing her to be "independent". Lack of communication is one of the most frequent reasons for grandparents’ or parents’ non-involvement. Many parents were hesitant about asking their own parents to be more involved because they felt guilty about doing so. "My parents have worked hard all through their lives", a young father opined, "I don’t have the right to ask them to get involved in mine." But the truth was, however that individuals do have a right, to at least ask their own parents for time and attention. Parents are parents for all of their lives and grandparents too, when the time comes.

Another reason, not too common, is that some grandparents did not want to get involved even if they are asked. Some preferred to be ‘independent and burden free’. Under these circumstances, the only thing an "abandoned" parent could do, is to involve a third party.
In such families two issues concerning the future of the family and bringing up a child are: a) who is responsible for bringing up of children and b) how important is the task to be performed. Childcare means providing safety, health and growth through shelter, food, clothing, regulation of stimulation, sanitation, medical attention and protection. To rear a household of active children and to maintain good relations with all family members day in and day out is a challenging task, which requires a special sort of a trained person. Grandparents are the ideal persons who were already experienced, in bringing up of past generations and could provide good qualitative care than any other, as they learn from their mistakes with their own children and have a good chance of not repeating them.

The daughter's in-law in the Indian joint families will have to do all the house-hold work which left no time for them to look after their own children, at such instances, grandparents, especially grandmothers, who will be free from all the duties, took care of children. Grandparents are wonderful for grandchildren, for the unique and very special love they give. This unconditional love is the glue of the vital connection between grandparents and grandchildren.

Elder's status now a days is not confined to the roles of social rituals and ceremonies alone. They also participated in management affairs of the family. Some dramatic changes in the grandmothering style are, the kindly aged passive grandmother who rocked and knitted was replaced, in the recent pages of good house keeping. The contemporary grandmother's difficulty stemmed, in part, from uncertainty as to what one should do in the grandparental role and in part from the fear of doing too much.
Further more, there is an increasing number of grandparents to great grandparents. At the turn of the century three-generation families were common, now the four generation family, and five generation families are not uncommon. It has been estimated that three fourths of all the elderly in the nation have living grandchildren (Cunningham and Brookbank, 1988). Barranti (1985) stated that, today's children can expect to spend nearly one-half of their lives as grandparents.

Greene and Boxor (1986) noted that daughters had more involved relationships with their parents than did sons, particularly with their mothers. Johnson (1985) in her description of Italian American families, pointed out how matrilineal these families were. Women gave first priority to solidarity of intergenerational bonds with either parents or children, thus paternal grandparents had less contact than the maternal grandparents. When the grandchild sees his grandfather organizing his life with meaning and purpose, the former entertains not only a certain pride in owning up the latter, but also actively indulges in even exaggerating grandpapa's busy schedules. The younger generation is happy to be proud children of productive parents and grandparents, who have in a manner of speaking, learnt to look after themselves, and keep themselves busy and engaged in meaningful pursuits.

The psychological nature of the grandparent-grandchild bond is different from the parent-child bond. The grandparents and grandchildren can relate to one another in ways that may be difficult for parents and children. This special relationship can be more relaxed than that of parent-child. Grandparents do not have to play the "heavy", that is why grandchild relationship can be enjoyable and satisfying to both generations (Grandparents, 2003).
Apart from this, grandparents undergo a variety of life changes, most often reported were the negative changes, grandparents who quit jobs and became full time caregivers might miss contact with co-workers, regret decreased opportunities for socialising with friends and confidants when they assume parental responsibility for their grandchildren.

The challenges faced by grandparents who are raising their grandchildren can be daunting, but they are surmountable. It is important that society become increasingly aware of supporting grandparents who are caregivers. As President Clinton said during the year of grandparent proclamation signing ceremony; Despite (society’s) many changes, grandparents remain a source of knowledge and stability in American families. Grandparents help us to understand the past and encourage us to hope for the future (AOA, 1997).

The American National records show that, 36% of custodial grandparents rate their own health status as fair, poor or very poor and they are more likely than other grandparents to report limitations in activities of daily living (Minkler and Fuller-Thomson, 1999). Physical and functional decrements affect grandparent’s quality of life, increase the risk of mental health problems, compromise their ability to meet the physical demand of the caregiver role, and are likely to worsen with advancing age. Health problems may be especially troublesome for urban, ethnic minority grandparents (Burnette, 1999; Burton, 1992; Minkler and Roe, 1993).

Grandparents felt their relation as enjoyment of contact rather than an obligation that inspire them to maintain the contacts by brief conversations and important discussions which replaced their childhood recreational talks. Grandmothers were closer to their grandchildren than the grandfathers and this was especially the case when daughters were in the middle generation (Kennedy, 1990 and Kivett, 1985).
Subsequently, grandparents need the stimulation of children, and grandchildren must learn to appreciate the living history their grandparents' represent with their accumulated knowledge, experience and wisdom. Wisdom cannot be taught, it comes with age. It's up to grandparents to take advantage of the opportunities that are presented while keeping in mind that they are not parents. In turn, grandparents must be willing to broaden their understanding, respect and appreciation of young people. At the same time, it is important for grandparents to learn to enjoy their role yet understand that they carry different responsibilities and benefits than do parents.

With the advancing time, there will be changes in the nature of children, and these also lead to broader views in prevailing theories of child development. Changes in prevailing conditions of life, such as those associated with the transition from an agrarian to an industrial economy, also brought about changes in attitudes, because of shifts in the relationship between families and between children and their caregivers.

One thing is clear though, child development is a result of the influence of both biological and environmental factors. People's beliefs and values, and their ideas, about the qualities children have to develop in order to function effectively as adults in the society, influence the ways in which people raise their children and interact with them. The requirements of life in a particular society, the skills and abilities valued by that society also influence their child-rearing practices. All these factors constitute a most important set of influences on the child’s development. These factors make up the child’s social environment, and they differ from one cultural group to another.
In India, grandparents stepping into raise grandchildren or other relatives is not a new concept, and these multigenerational and intergenerational family arrangements were very important in many cultures for child-rearing and economic survival. However, it is the recent concern for the advanced nations like U.S. to pay close attention on grandparents who are involved in child-rearing. But in the developing nations like India not much attention was paid by either researchers, bureaucrats or the government on these aspects. It seems unfortunate that such an important familial role—even though important in terms of the duration of the role in the family life cycle, the potential interrelationships associated with the role, and the symbolic importance of the role (Bengston and Robertson, 1985) has not been researched extensively.

NEED FOR THE PRESENT RESEARCH

The 20th century transition to lower fertility and mortality ignited an unprecedented growth in the numbers and percentages of elderly. The largest percentage increase in the elderly population will occur in the world's poorest regions.

According to Population Reference Bureau (2001), the percentage of people above sixty-five years was seven per cent of the total world population. In India, the people of sixty years of age and over were four per cent of the total population. People below fifteen years of age was thirty-six per cent, whereas the life expectancy at birth was sixty-seven years.
Population aging is a growing challenge throughout the world. Less developed countries like India face the greatest challenge from population aging. Policy makers in less developed countries have relied on families to support aging family members. Traditional support systems for the elderly were deteriorating in many areas, just as the need of the support is growing. Urbanization, industrialization and other aspects of development are disrupting family structures, so people are moving away from older parents.

Further, incentive came from an interest that the ideas, values, beliefs and opinions of the family members of different generations vary, due to advances in awareness, science and technology. As such a generation gap is seen in the perceptions of different generations. In order to see the differences in perceptions of three generations regarding grandparenting, the present research has been embarked for Indian population. Recently, a few researchers have viewed interpersonal perceptions as crucial components of close relationships and have investigated "perceptual differences" as reflecting something important about the family and individuals involved (Fienberg, Howe, Reiss and Hitherington, 2001). In view of the above facts, the researchers evinced interest in exploring the perceptions of grandparents role among members of three generation families.

The existing literature in Indian context seemed to provide little information in this regard. The views of the youth and the elderly themselves towards the grandparenting in a three generation family, has not been
adequately studied and documented. Hence the need and significance of the study is to make concentrated efforts. Plenty of scarce resources are being invested in the study and for this investment to be worth-while the set of objectives should be ultimately realised. This process of realisation of these objectives for the study is not mechanical, by rendering the building up of thesis through careful planning, organisation, research evaluation and feedback. Research and evaluation of the onset thesis helps in identifying the strong and weak points of the overall study and provides scope for effective feedback and improvement. Hence, the present study shall be much helpful for optimum utilisation of scarce resources being invested in the study. Also the results are expected to facilitate the administrators to take correct decision to formulate and revise policies and to modify the actual operations of the programmes. As such, the present study is expected to go a step further in this direction.

This study is interdisciplinary in nature related to human development, gerontology and psychology. Studies on ageing, which is an interdisciplinary approach and heavily leans on interdisciplinary research for its growth and development, and is expected to contribute significantly to the theory building in the field of human development and family studies, gerontology, psychology and women studies, in which the research is warranted.

This study tacitly suggests several for reaching implications to the extension planners, policy makers, academicians, social-scientists and social workers to make efforts on, for integrated human development.
SCOPE AND LIMITATIONS

This study is an unique attempt to envisage the grandparents' role-perceptions of three generations in bringing up grandchildren.

The researcher wishes to point out the scope of the study in the interest of future researchers. Although the study can be spread over the whole nation and especially the state of Andhra Pradesh, for the purpose of convenience, the pilgrim city with multifarious backgrounds mainly dependent on small business to support the living was chosen for the study. Therefore, the findings of the study are applicable to Tirupati town only to make the study representative of Chittoor district of Andhra Pradesh.

The study was carried out with some unavoidable assumptions as regard to time, money, study area, sample size and other research facilities usually encountered by a single student researcher. Limitation of time has set up a barrier for probing into more dimensions of research.

The identification of respondents and eliciting information was felt one of the difficult task by the researcher, particularly because of the complexity of the system approach. The subjects included, 750 in all from Tirupati on purposive sampling basis. However, considerable care and thought have been restored in selecting variables, so that the objectives are fulfilled and provides a support for the researcher to undertake the study.
### PLAN OF THE THESIS

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