

DISINTEGRATION OF FAMILY INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

This paper is about those factors and social changes which are responsible for the disintegration of traditional family institution. Family is the major institution of the society. Without it the existence and continuity of the society is not possible. This is the most important primary group of society. It plays an important role in shaping the personality of its members through the process of socialization. It is the first to introduce its member to the society and fixes their duties towards the society. Reproduction, socialization, transmission of culture, providing emotional, financial, social and physical security to its member, developing personality of its family members, providing formal and informal knowledge through traditions, norms, values, mores, folkways, customs etc. are some of the main functions of the family. This institution is also known for its unity, integrity and social solidarity. It connected its members socially, religiously and spiritually into a strong bond.

But from the last centuries it faces many social problems due to many social changes. The family institution has been very much affected by these social changes as these changes influenced the solidarity of the family organization. The structure – (extended /joint to nuclear) composition-(size) and functions – (many of its functions is now being operated by the secondary institutions like functions related to recreation, health, education etc.) of family institution, all are affected by these social changes. In fact these changes are for the development of the society but it has adverse effect over the family institution. Furthermore factors such as individualism, urbanization, influence of western culture, developed means of transport and communication, rapid industrialization, decline of agricultural and cottage industries, over population and poverty, problem of privacy and accommodation, enlightenment of women, family quarrels etc. are some of the major factors responsible for its disintegration. Even the legislations such as Hindu Married Women's Right to Separate Residence and Maintenance Act 1946, Hindu Marriage Act 1955, Hindu Succession Act 1956 formulated for the betterment of society also affected the family organization. In spite of betterment these factors and acts of legislation disorganized it and reduced both the size and functions of the family. This family disorganization further gave birth to many social problem like female foeticide, child marriage, child abuse, dowry, domestic violence, separation, divorce, broken families single women household, alcoholism, drug addiction, unemployment, etc. in the society. In this paper all these factors and problems are going to be discussed which are responsible for the declining of social values and importance of family institution.

KEYWORDS: Social changes, Disintegration, Primary Group, Socialization, Legislations, Social Problems.

Family is one of the major basic socially approved institution of the society. It is universally present in all human societies though its composition and structure differ from society to society. It is regarded as the base of all social organization. Without it the continuity of the society is not possible . It is the most important permanent primary group of society characterized by reproduction, permanent residence, economic cooperation, proper division of labour and cohabitation. Through family the individual has its first contact with society. The individual learns the first lessons of intimacy, love, sacrifice, emotions, and cooperation in family only. It prepares its members according to the aspirations of the society by teaching them social norms and social values. It also plays an important

role in shaping the personality of its family members through the process of socialization. Family also formulated rules and regulations to regulate the behavior of its members and to transform them into social beings. Apart from this traditional family system is known for its unity, integrity and social solidarity. Moreover Karta the head of the traditional family system connected its members, **socially** – as they have common residence, common hearth, common property, common values, common cultural heritage, common traditions, common functions, **religiously** – as they follow same religion and celebrate all their religious functions and festivals jointly and **spiritually** – as they worship common ancestors for their family as well as for their occupational well being, into a strong social bond. He also placed social control over their members through informal rules and regulation formulated by him.

Along with this family institution perform many other important functions such as –

- (1) Reproduction** – An important function performed by the family not only for the continuity of the society but also for the satisfaction of the physical needs of its members.
- (2) Socialization** – The process which converts human beings into social beings, is another main function of the family Institution. Family through the process of socialization teaches its members the values of love, affection, co-operation, self sacrifice, discipline which moulded him into a good social being. Family also teaches him how to interact with the other members of the society.
- (3) Economic cooperation** – In traditional family system there is a clear cut division of labour. In traditional family system most of the products are manufactured at home with the cooperation of all the members of the family. The whole family serve as an economic unit and every member of the family helps each other for the satisfaction of one another needs.
- (4) Social control** – Head of the family regulates the behavior of its family members through informal means of social controls such as - family norms, values, traditions, customs, and other rules and regulations formulated by him.
- (5) Religious functions** – Traditional family institution is the centre of the religious teachings for the small children of the family. Elder family members by narrating religious folktales to them transmit valuable culture to the next generation. Moreover, in Hindu religion man performed several religious practices with his wife to seek the blessings of his ancestors.
- (6) Economic Functions** - In traditional Family property is held jointly, if any of its member is in economic trouble, then family acts as an insurance company for him and provided him economic security.
- (7) Protective function** – Family provides social, physical, economic and emotional security to its members. All primary and secondary needs of the family members are satisfied by the family under all conditions.
- (8) Social functions** – It performs numberless social functions. It instills the spirit of sacrifice, selfless, cooperation, affection, sharing, among its members. Members cooperate with one other for the satisfaction their needs. It also helps its members to develop their personality .
- (9) Transmission of culture** – Individual learns family norms and values by the process of imitation, suggestion, identification, and sympathy. Every elder generation by the method of informal teaching passes cultural traits of the past to the coming generation. In this way, cultural traits were passes on from one generation to another.
- (10) No space for individualism** – Traditional family system functions for the well being of all its members. They are connected with each other with the strong feeling of sharing and self sacrifice. Common residence, common kitchen, common property and common pool of income checks

individualism and a sense of belongingness, sense of cooperation, and the spirit of sacrifice are generated in family institution.

(11) Recreational function – Family provides healthy recreation to all its family members. In the process elder generation transmit valuable culture to their younger generation by narrating folktales to them. Family members enjoy with each other by gossiping, cutting jokes, singing folksongs, religious songs and religious stories.

(12) Civics virtues – Family checks the problems of deviation and delinquency by teaching great virtues like sacrifice, intimacy, affection, cooperation, sense of belongingness, spirit of selfless, sense of collectivity to its members. Under the supervision of elder members anti – social tendencies of the younger members are checked and they become the ideal members of the society.

(13) Socialism – Traditional family generates the feeling of collectiveness instead of individualism. Every individual member contributes according to his capabilities and gets according to his need. This element of family institution is based on socialistic ideal.

These are some of the important functions performed by the family organization - **as an institution, as a social group, and as a social system.**

As an institution - It prepares its member for the society by teaching social values, norms, etiquettes to them through the process of socialization.

As a social group – It is not only mere a biological group but also an important socially approved organization for meeting various needs of human being. It is an important primary group.

As a social system – To treat the family as a social system is to note the forms of its social organization and its modes of functioning. The family system is one example of interrelated statuses that fulfils certain basic functions. It is a sub-system of the larger society that is related to and interdependent on other sub-system in the society. It fulfils selected tasks for the society that are highly patterned, recurrent and organized. With in the family system are sub-systems (marital system, mate-selection system, sexual system, child-rearing system) which are also highly patterned, recurrent and organized in order to fulfill selected tasks.

Although persons are a part of the system, it is the statuses, roles, norms, ways of ranking, means of social control and the values of those persons that are of significance in dealing with social systems. [1]

But from the last centuries family institution faces many social changes which brings changes in the structure, composition and functioning of the family institution. Old traditional system of family institution affected to a large extent by these social changes. Social changes such as the increasing pressure on land, the better facilities of social mobility due to the developed means of communication and transport, industrialization and urbanization are responsible for brining about change in the family organization. According to many sociologists migration from rural areas to urban areas in search of occupation due to **push or pull factor** is also an another important factor responsible for the breakdown of traditional family system. People migrated towards cities due to attraction or due to the decline in their patriarchal occupation or decline in cottage industries. Moreover, luxurious life style of cities attracts people to cities to improve their social status. They also want to get some freedom from the very rule of **karta**, as in traditional joint family all decisions, regarding financial, social, occupational and any other matter related to the family are taken by the head of the family and individual has no say regarding any decision taken by him.

Changes in the composition - Due to the impact of industrialization and specialization of occupation the size of the family decreased. Now, due to social mobility only two generations- father, mother with their married or unmarried children lives together.

Moreover, sense of individualism has great impact over the size of family.

Change in the structure – Due to the change in traditional occupation Patrilocal rules of residence changes into Neolocal residence. Now, other members including women took active part in decision making regarding every social, financial, or political matter of the family.

Change in the function – Many functions of the family institution such as – educational functions, economic function, occupational training, marriage, recreational functions, and political functions are now performed by the other secondary institutions of the society.

Thus, **migration, industrialization and urbanization** have a great impact over the traditional family institution. Including these many other factors are also responsible for affecting and disintegrating the traditional family institution.

FACTORS RESPONSIBLE FOR DISINTEGRATION OF FAMILY INSTITUTION

(1) Impact of westernization – Traditional family institution has been greatly influenced by the western ideology. The sense of individualism, changing marriage patterns, increasing number of divorce all are the result of western influence. Individual rather than by their family prestige and social status is now recognized by his own efforts, capabilities and achievements. At the same time marriage is now no longer remained as a sacrament it is merely become a contractual bond between husband and wife.

(2) Developed means of communication and transport – With the help of developed means of transport people from joint families can easily move to the cities in search of better life opportunities. There, some of them adopt new trades; some of them get employed as a labour in different industries and rest of them continue to follow their own family occupation. Due to developed means of communication they come to know about the different life styles of different people and other different life opportunities. They start following the culture and life style of those people which is responsible for weakening the strong bond of unity and social solidarity of the joint family.

(3) Decline of agriculture and cottage industries – With the development of industries it becomes difficult for the rural families to compete in price, quality and time with the products produced by the industries which resulted in the breakdown of the cottage industries. Declining of agriculture and cottage industries increases pressure on land and forced workers to shift to cities to find a job there. Migration from villages to the cities adversely affected the joint family system.

(4) Education – Modern education system, on the one hand, helps especially, women to attain a respectable position in society, system, also aware them about their rights and position in the family. On the other hand, it increases the number of separations, divorce and cases of domestic violence which further, adversely affected the family system.

(5) Ideological Gap Between Elder Generation and Younger Generation – The ideological gap between the younger generation and the older generation is increasing day by day. Due to increase in spirit of equality, individualism and materialism younger generation find it difficult to cope up with their elders.

(6) Family Conflicts or Tensions – Tensions regarding family property, privacy, income and expenditure, and distribution of household work between women lead to the breakdown of traditional families.

(7) Lack of Accommodation – The members of family find it difficult to live together in a small house especially, in large cities. Hence they are forced to establish their own separate house.

(8) Social legislation - Traditional family system has been greatly influenced by certain new legislations in India It has adverse effect on the features of the family. The major among these are

(1) Hindu Married Women s Right to s Separate Residence and Maintenance Act – This legislation was enacted I 1946. According to it, under specific conditions a wife can demand alimony while living separately from her husband.

(2) Hindu Marriage Act – According to para13 of this act, any husband and wife, who have been married either before or after enactment of this legislation can under specific condition, apply to the court of divorce. This law enacted in 1955.

(3) Hindu Succession Act – This act became law in 1956. According to it, the daughter was given equal rights to the property of the father and women also got the rights to dispose of, mortgage, and use their property in any manner they pleased. [2]

Though, these changes are made for the development and betterment of society but unfortunately, these changes and laws enacted to improve not only, breakdown the functioning of family institution but it also affects the size and structure of the family organization. These changing factors also gave birth to many other serious social problems in society such as –

(1) Female foeticide – One of the test – amniocentesis - started to check the growth of foetus has been misused for female foeticide. According to Indian census, the sex ratio in the 0 to 6 age group in India has risen from 102.4 males per 100 females in 1961[3] to 104.2 in 1980, to 107.5 in 2001, to 108.9 in 2011. [4]

(2) Dowry – On one hand, due to improved methods of communication, transportation, better education and even improved status of women contributed towards the national development a lot but, on the other hand, incidence of dowry put a big question mark on our development plans especially, with reference, to women. India, with its large population, reports the highest number of dowry related deaths in the world according to Indian National Crime Record Bureau.[5] In 2012, 8,233 dowry death cases were reported across India, while in 2013, 8,083, dowry deaths were reported.[6] This means a dowry related crime causes the death of a woman every 90 minutes or 1.4 deaths per year 100,000 woman in India. [7] [8]

(3) Domestic Violence – Domestic violence is another important social problem arises due to the breakdown of traditional family system. Traditional families provided full social security to its members especially, women and children. But in modern families domestic violence is a prevalent phenomenon.

(4) Changes in relation of parents and children – Conflict between the two generations is another outcome of family disorganization. The feeling of love, sympathy, self scarifies emotions all are replaced by the sense of individualism. The control or authority of the elder generation over the younger generation is constantly decreasing.

(5) Increasing rate of child delinquency – Children are safe under the supervision of elder in joint family system but the change in the structure of family and change in the position of women increases the problems of child delinquency at alarming rate. If, she is working, then children are often neglected which is one of the main cause of increasing child delinquency in modern society.

(6) Conflict between husband and wife – Now the women is no longer considered inferior to men due to their change in status. She demands for equality in all sphere of life, But this change in her position constantly, affected their mutual relationship and multiply the cases of separation.

Thus, there are many factors which lead to disorganization of family in almost all the societies. Due to increasing industrialization, urbanization, materialism and individualism family organization is greatly affected .But apart from this it is a universal truth that family is an important institution of our society. No doubt families are transforming in present time but

they continue to perform their previous function of providing social, physical and emotional security to its members.

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