

Concept of Family : Causes of Disintegration of Joint Family in Indian Perspective

Abstract

Family may be defined as the permanent union of man and women for the procreation and education of children. It is the most basic and universal group whose assistance may be found in all the states of society.

The family is a biological unit whose members have common dwelling place and the parents are bound together by institutionalized social relationship which regulate the sex relation between them and determine the system of nomenclature and reckoning descent and the degree within which marriage is allowed or forbidden. The family is the most intimate group to which man belongs and the most effective agent in the transmission of the social heritage.

Now I would like to shift my focus to the causes for the disintegration of joint family. The modern Indian family being disintegrated or affected by many of the changes originating in the west especially industrialism with the concomitant growth of scientific knowledge and extension of communication. Owing to the inrush of people from the villages to cities the traditional – Hindu family is disintegrating. Various psychological, social and economic problems played a great role in the disintegration process of family in modern India.

Keywords: Family – System Of Institution- Nuclear Family-Biological Unit- Economic Unit- Origin Of Family- Sexual Promiscuity- Economic Security - Types Of Family- Patriarchal – Matriarchal- Monogamous- Polygamous- Simple- Complex- Compound-Syncretic- Autonomic Family- Conjugal- Consanguine - Trusty- Domestic- Atomistic- Glued Together Family- Super Trader Family- Despotism Family- Causes Of Disintegration – Industrialization- Scientific Knowledge – Vanishing Of Morality- Family Planning- Education- Urbanization –Mercantilism - Conjugal- Filial & Traditional Bonds.

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Introduction

Family is an important social institution. It is the base of society. In ancient period the Statehood or state emerged from the very base of the family. The early state or city state emerged comprising of a good number of families then the state or nation emerged comprising of good number of city state. Then it can be said that a nation state emerged from the zygote of the family. (Family- city state- state or nation state). This family, the base of state now a day's going to a total jeopardy because of various causes. The discussion confined within Indian family system, reference of western traditional family system not to be mentioned. In my discussion I would like to confine my analysis within the traditional pattern of Indian family on the basis of new concept.

Aim of the Study

Many scholarly works have done on the family system of India from ancient to modern period. Quite a good number of works throw light on the causes of disintegration of traditional family system of modern India –meant post independent India or post colonial period India. Post independent India bears the colonial legacy and the structural change in the traditional family system occurred due to various causes. In this work I would like to explore the changing structure of family system and its concept, origin and pattern and try to dissect various causes which are active behind the disintegration of traditional family system of India. In this matter most previous work dealt with the traditional Hindu family and a

small number work flash light on the Muslim family as well as other religious groups of India. It is to be noted that most of the work dealt with the upper class and creamy portion of the society. Hence my aim is to decipher the cause of disintegration of the lower class or subaltern class family of modern India as well as the upper class also. I think this humble attempt may fulfill a gap in the contemporary socio – historiography of modern India.

Definition of Family

The family is not a mere association but also an institutional complex or system of institution. The family, especially the nuclear family of individual family is the most basic social group and of primary importance in the socialization of the young. It consists ordinarily of a man & woman permanently United with one or more children. Sometimes the parents of husband or wife live together also, in some societies even servants were admitted as members of the household. Hence its name family, from famulus, is meaning a servant. This the simplest form of the family but it also exists under more complex forms. (P. Gisberts, Fundamentals of society p.65)

According to Mclver “the family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation & upbringing of children.

B. Malinowski writes the typical family, a group consisting of mother, father, & their progeny is found in all communities , savage barbarians & civilized : everywhere it plays an important role & influenced the whole extent of social organization and culture.....It is undeniable fact that the family is universal & sociologically more important than the clan which is the evolution of humanity is preceded and outlasted.

The family is in the way a biological unit having a common dwelling place for its members. It implies an institutionalized sex relationship regulating the relation between husband and wife & a system of nomenclature and reckoning descent which forbids marriage within certain degrees. (Helen Basonquet, The Family : London, Macmillan , 1915)

One of the most striking features of the family is that its functions as an economic unit both for production and consumption. The family is not only confined to provide for the material needs of the offspring's but also to inculcate in them the ideas, ways and customs of the social groups; it is the most effective agency for the transmission of the cultural heritage from generation to generation. In order to perform its social functions it has number of customs and institutions such as courtship, betrothal and above all marriage. . Although the family is one of the most limited groups of society, its institutional value and its influence as a socializing agency are hardly equaled by any other groups or institution. The family is a remarkable institution and a complex one. Indeed so complex that much of economic theory precedes as if no such thing exists. (Amartya Sen, Economics and the Family, article in Family, Kinship and Marriage in India)

Origin of the Family

It is necessary to discuss the origin of the family before entering into its nature or character. Some early anthropologist as L.H. Morgan, J.L. Lubbock, J.G. Frazer and more recently Briffault relying on the now discredited unilinear evolutionary theory, held that at the begining of the human society there was neither family nor marriage but only a kind of unregulated animal like sexual promiscuity or at most a state in which a group of men has promiscuous relation with a group of women with no stable relation among them. After a long time to establish the offspring father's identity marriage system emerged and after that family emerged.(Marx and Angels, selected works, VOL-5) . Obviously there was psychological and physiological urges .The people get married due to the sex impulse, parental affection, the wish to transmit one's name and property to posterity, the need for economic security and co-operation to guarantee help and friendship for old age and to have a partner in life with whom one may share life's joys and sorrows, success and failure.

Thus the family in the smallest and most intimate group of society where the most profound carvings of mankind for unity and love are fully satisfied. The above mentioned urges and carvings that bring husband and wife together are strengthened by the psychological and physiological function of the both sexes with which they complement each other. (P. Gisbert, Fundamental of Sociology, Macmillan, 2010)

We may conclude that family emerges as soon as the above mentioned needs and carvings are felt in mankind or if we may be pardoned a tautological expression, when man becomes man. Whether this origination of the family should be called “; emergence” or” beginning” is purely a verbal question. (Gisbert, 2010)

Types of Family

After the previous discussion about the origin of the family it is still may be asked what the original or primeval forms was which the family assumed when it began to exist – whether it was Patriarchal, Matriarchal, Monogamous or polygamous etc. Bachofen and Briffault held that after a state of proximity or semi promiscuity, owing only to the mother's need for economic and social protection matriarchal families arose. On the other hand Westermarck following the Darwin's lead held that the men's possessiveness and assertion of property rights led first to the Constitution of the monogamous types of family in which the husband authority was predominant.

K.P. Chattopadhyay has given three types of family – simple, complex and compound. (Quoted by Ram Ahuja , Indian Social System), on the basis of holding the authority the families are classified as Husband dominant , wife dominant , and equalitarian family. This equalitarian family where husband and wife make most of the decision jointly is called syncretic family and the one in which equal number of separate decision are assigned to both partners is called autonomic family. Burgess and Locke had

classified families as Institutional and companionship on the basis of the behavior of the individuals. On the basis of the kinship ties the families have been classified conjugal and consanguine. In the former the priority is given to marital ties and in the latter to bloodties. Zimmerman has classified families as trusty, domestic, and atomistic (American style). The traditional classification of families that the family may be monogamous or polygamous. The former is composed of a man and woman living together and the latter either of a man living together with many women (polygamy) or of women more than one man (Polyandry).

If the leadership of the family is in the hands of the husband it is called father rights family or patriarchal, when the authority of the family is in the hands of the mother or any special function, such as descent or property, is reckoned through her, it is called matriarchal or mother right family. The most important types of family is conjugal family or nuclear family and joint family or traditional Indian family. Besides these, there are various types of family exist in India – family or orientation and family of procreation. According to the dwelling system the family may be classified as Neolocal residence, patrilocal residence and matrilocal residence. Amartya Sen on the basis of economic decision and economic processes function divided family into three categories- 1. The glued together family means there are no individual decision, individual utility etc, but only there are family decision and family welfare. 2. Super –trader family – individuals are assumed to be relentlessly pursuing their individual utilities, and in doing this they enter into trades at implicit prices resulting in marriages and the working of the family. Conceptualizing marriage as a “two-person firm with either member being the entrepreneur who hires the other and received residual profit can perhaps be said to be a rather simple view of a very complex relationship. 3. The despotic family—means a despotic head of the family takes all decisions and others just obey. The family behavior would then be just a reflection of the head’s choice function.

Causes of Disintegration

Now I would like to shift my focus to the causes of disintegration of joint or traditional family structure of India. One striking feature of Individual family is instability. Normally it never covers the whole life of a person. It usually begins when the partners are adult, in changes when the son becomes emancipated; it ends with the deaths of one of the parties. Before discussing the causes of disintegration of joint family we have to discuss the matter – what joint family meant? The concept of jointness in the term of joint family has varied with different scholars. Iravati Karve regards “co-residentiality” as most important in jointness. Others regard co-residentiality and commensality as essential ingredients of jointness. T.N. Madan, F.G. Bailey give importance to joint ownership of property or co-percenary. I. P. Desai gives importance to fulfillment of obligation towards kin. Karve has given five characteristics of traditional (Joint) family: Common residence, common kitchen, common property, common family worship

and some kinship relationship. On this basis she defines joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food, cooked at one hearth, hold property in common, who participated in common family worship and who are related to each other as some particular types of kindred. I.P. Desai thinks that when two families having kinship are living separately but function under one authority it will be a joint family. He takes three criteria for joint family. Ram Krishna Mukherjee while giving five types of relations – conjugal, parental – filial, intersibling, lineal and affinal, has mentioned that joint family is one which consists of one or more of the first three types of relation and either lineal and or affinal relationship among the members.

The modern Indian family disintegrated due to various causes. It may be said that modern Indian society is also affected by many changes originating in the west especially industrialism with the concomitant growth of scientific knowledge and extension of communications. Owing to the inrush of people from the village to the cities that traditional Hindu joint family is disintegrating, this is also appropriate for the disintegration of the joint family belongs to other religious groups- like as Muslim, Jains, and Sikhs etc. Disintegration created there by a number of psychological, social and economical problems of growing importance.

Industrialization has contributed much to family disorganization. As the result most of the important ties that bind all family members together to an agricultural society begin to loosen. Again the worker unaccustomed to work live in the factory also becomes disorganized and in such a condition is not able to enjoy the richness of family. This condition effects is emotion also: leading him to seek pleasure through unnatural forces like alcohol, prostitution etc. Factory occupation had made the members of the same family economically independent. The joint family, so common in India, is gradually disappeared.

Traditional morality is vanishing and nothing seems to be there to take its place. Due to the vanishing of morality joint family is disintegrating. Due to family planning campaign there are reduction in birth rate is achieved by India. It is needed for the progress for the country but this also caused in the breaking of joint family in modern India.

K.M. Kapadia opined that the Hindu succession Act 1956, while providing for an overdue improvement in the condition of women, will accelerate the pace of disintegration of the joint family structure and give rise to many problems which must be faced and solved by intelligent co-operation of rulers and social scientists aided by an enlighten public opinion. (K.M. Kapadia, Marriage and family in India, Bombay 1968).

The traditional joint family is not going to die soon. K.M. Kapadia also felt that the general assumption that the joint family is dying out is invalid. It is strong not only in semi-Industrial town but even among the communities concentrated in the big cities. On the other hand Aileen Ross viewed that five most important factors affects family structure, these are 1. Marriage of a son and entering of a daughter – in-law

in the family. 2. Demise of the senior male /female members. 3. Getting a high status work assignment in other place. 4. Jeopardizing of economic stability in the family. 5. Conflict among brothers, severance of sibling ties and diverting of a man's loyalties from lineal ties to conjugal ties.

Besides these factors we may point out various forces of change in family structure

Education

Education is affected family in more than one way it brought changes in the attitudes, beliefs, values & ideologies of the people & created and aroused the individualistic feelings.

Urbanization

Urbanization in another factor that has affected the family the urban living, weakens joint family patterns and strengthen nuclear families. Cities provides opportunities to females as for gainful employment and when women starts earnings she seeks freedom and tries to break away more and more from her husband's family of orientation.

Industrialization

Industrialization got under way in India in last quarter of nineteenth century and first half of the twentieth century cities grow around the new industries. Industrialization has brought the economic and socio cultural changes in our society in general and family in particular .

Change in Marriage system

Change in age of marriage, freedom in mate selection and change in attitude towards marriage have also affected our family system. Children who marry at the late age neither obey the parental authority nor perceived the eldest male as the main person in decision making. thus the traditional Hindu family has witnessed sudden changes due to education, modernization, industrialization, and mercantilism (S,L. Doshi, Post modern perspective on Indian society ,2010)

Whenever we discuss about the joint or traditional family structure we never referred to the Muslims, Jains, or Sikhs. We just confined ourselves to the Hindu family structure. Some sociologist mention about Muslims, Jains, and Sikhs (K.M. Kapadia and I.P. Desai) but they only restrict to the high class or caste they only confined to the Hindu high caste . They do not discuss the subaltern class and their family forms. The family of subaltern class disintegrated mainly due to economic causes. Regular income for livelihood of its members never been sufficient for a large number of joint family members. So it disintegrated gradually. It mainly be referred to the family whose family members economic activities related to wage labour or petty mercantile activities or those who have small amount of land.

Having examined the nature direction and factors of change in family system , we may conclude that though the traditional type of jointness (inheritance in residence, functioning property) in Indian family is yielding place to as a cultural objective will continue to exist. The Indian joint family has moved through three main stages. First stages was represented by traditional (joint) family that family was

a unit of production. It continued till the 19th century. The second stage family began with the individual revolution in the end of nineteenth century and reached its peak in the fourth and fifth decades of the twentieth century. The third stage family – a fission dependent family has emerged after 1960's.

The present Indian family is not isolated nuclear family. It forms an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationship. The conjugal, filial, & fraternal bonds continue to remain strengthened in our society.

Conclusion

Having examined the nature, direction and factors of change in traditional family system, we may conclude that though the traditional type of jointness (jointness in residence, functioning and property) in Indian family yielding place to as a cultural objective, will continue to exist. The Indian joint family has moved through three stages. 1ST stage was represented by traditional (joint) family that family was a unit of production. It continued till 19th century .the 2nd stage family began with industrial revolution in the end of the 19th century and raised peak in the fourth and fifth decades of the 20th century. The 3rd stage family – a fission dependent family has emerged after 1960s. The present Indian family is not isolated nuclear family. It forms an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationship. The conjugal, filial and fraternal bonds continue to remain strengthened in our society. Though the traditional or joint family began to disintegrate due to various causes discussed about, there is a psychological and economic bondages may live separate, and occasionally they thronged together in the time of various religious festivals and marriage ceremony etc. the old style family in the sense of numerous families living together is much rarer now. We may set that the jointness of family is not disappearing now and that stage can never be envisaged in India when the joint family will be lost in the mental horizon of people. Only the "cutting off "point of jointness is changing. Instead of large joint families we will have only locally functioning effective small joint family of two generations or so. The present day isolated nuclear family is not structurally isolated because it forms an integral part of a wider system of kinship relationships. The social relationship between members of families is based on binding obligation and emotional support.

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