

## Topic: Urbanization and Its Effect on Joint Family System In India

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*Abstract*— Social change has a direct impact on the basic structure and functions of the social institutions. Technology is considered as a powerful tool of social change. It has drastically changed the way of life. It has also institutionalized the functioning of the social institutions. The institutions of family, religion, morality, marriage, state, property have been altered. Modern technology has also shifted the industry from the household. As a result, some radical changes have been witnessed in the family organization. It is found that the urbanization in society is responsible for structural changes in the pattern of family as whole and occurrences such as other agencies of socialization have stolen many functions of the family, the marriage contract is not as a sacred one but a social contract. Consequently, divorces and separation are on the increase, no doubt, the technology has elevated the social status of women in the family. But at the same time it has put the fabric of social relationships at stake. Much distress has been witnessed in the social relationships between husband and wife.

*Keywords*- *Social change, family, urbanization, migration, technology.*

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### I. A GLIMPSE OF THE ORIGIN OF URBANIZATION

The term urbanization has become an integral part of modern existence. However, urbanization has a long history behind. If we trace the history of urbanization three distinct periods emerge prominently. They are preurban, preindustrial urban and industrial urban. In the lengthy preurban period, no one was urban and there were no cities. In the preindustrial urban period, less than 3 per cent of the world's population was urban. In the industrial urban period, the percentage of people living in cities increased rapidly which resulted in the increase of number of cities and so did the number of cities. It accounts for the world's total population since 10,000 B.C. with estimates of urban component of total population. The longest period of world history was the preurban. This period began when human kind was evolutionarily complete, around 50,000 B.C. It ended in approximately 4000 B.C., when the first cities appeared in southern Mesopotamia, a riverine region in modern Iraq. The preurban period, therefore, encompassed the first 46,000 years of human history. The next epoch is the preindustrial urban. This epoch begins in 4000 B.C. with the creation of the world's first cities. It ends in A.D. 1750 with the Industrial Revolution in Europe. In this regard relevant here are the remarks of John Durand, who comments that "By 1800, has been estimated, only 3 per cent of the world's people were urban. The world's total population increased from 60 to 978 million in this period, and the urban population increased from nothing to approximately 29 million"[1]. Ivan Light has made an interesting remark which says that, "Although the absolute growth of the world's population was much larger than the absolute growth of cities, the rate of growth of cities was much more rapid than the growth of world population. Nonetheless the rate of change was

leisurely"[2]. It has been observed that, Urbanization in India has been relatively slow over the past forty or fifty years as compared with many other developing countries. The majority of regions in India had settled cultivation for long. Josef Gugler in "The urban transformation of developing world" comments that "The spatial distribution and number of settlements reflect this long history. The principal function of most small towns that of serving the rural surroundings as market and service centers. Thus, their number and spatial distribution reflect the magnitude of demand"[3].

### II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Urbanization has far reaching effects on the various aspects of modern life. However, in the paper we will limit ourselves to the effect of urbanization on the joint family structure of India. It has been observed that urbanization affects not only the family structure but also intra and inter family relations, as well as the functions the family performs. With urbanization, there is a disruption of the bonds of community and the migrant faces the problem to replace old relationships with new ones and to find a satisfactory means of continuing relationship with those left behind. Several empirical studies of urban families conducted by scholars like I.P. Desai, Kapadia and Aileen Ross, have pointed out that urban joint family is being gradually replaced by nuclear family, the size of the family is shrinking, and kinship relationship is confined to two or three generations only. The study of 157 Hindu families belonging to middle and upper classes in Bangalore found that 1. About 60 percent of the families are nuclear 2. The trend today is towards a break with the traditional joint family form into the nuclear family form into the nuclear family unit 3. Small joint family is now the most typical form

of family life in urban India. 4. Relations with one's distant kin are weakening or breaking. Sylvia Vatuk maintains that "the ideal of family "jointness" is still upheld although living separate" [4]. The extended family acts as a ceremonial unit and close ties with the members of agnatic extended family are maintained. Also, larger kinship clusters including groups of bilaterally and a finally related household within the same or closely adjacent mohallas exist. There is a tendency towards bilateral kinship in urban areas. Vatuk mentions the increasing tendencies toward individualizing the marital bond and decline of practices such as levirate widow inheritance, widow remarriage, marriage by exchange, polygyny etc. The impact of urbanization is also seen in the urban pattern of increasingly homogenized values and ways of behaving. Thus, gradual modification of the family structure in urban India is taking place such as diminishing size of the family, reduction in functions of family, emphasis on conjugal relationship etc. Kinship is an important principle of social organization in cities and there is structural congruity between joint family on one hand and requirements of industrial and urban life on the other. Milton Singer in his study "nineteen families of outstanding business leaders in Madras, it has argued that a modified version of traditional Indian joint family is consistent with urban and industrial setting"[5]. He distinguished three kinds of situations of social change in rural areas resulting from urbanization: 1. in villages from where a large number of people have sought employment in far off cities, urban employment becomes a symbol of higher social prestige. 2. in villages situated near an industrial town with a sizable number of emigrants working in towns and cities, face the problems of housing ,marketing and social ordering. 3. the growth of metropolitan cities accounts for the third type of urban impact on the surrounding villages. As the city expands, some villages become the rural pockets in the city areas. Hence the villagers participate directly in the economic, political and social activities, and cultural life of the city. Social change as a concept for comprehending a continual dynamic in social units became salient during the French revolution and the industrial revolution in England, both periods were of extraordinary dynamism. "Comprehensive change became normal, and, accordingly, social philosophers and later sociologists gradually replaced the older ideas of natural constants and the contractual constructions of natural and rational order with conceptions of social change, even though precise formulations were slow to appear. For these thinkers social change was "a property of social order, known as change" according to Luhmann.[6].

### III. EFFECTS OF URBANIZATION ON FAMILY AS SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Over a period of last so many years, some radical changes have been observed in the family organization. The modern way of life has changed the theory of old family system and pattern of life has been replaced. Joint family system is old system, and has been replaced in nuclear family system. Old patterns like marriage rituals and socialization patterns are endowed with formal type of rituals and ceremonies. In a joint family, the child gets multiple parents and many adult figures for his or her identification. In these families, children are overprotected and sheltered and, as a result, non-self segregation is hampered. In a nuclear family, the child has a

limited set of adult models to emulate. A.C. Sinha remarked "As a result, he or she develops a strong sense of personal bond with the parents, with a greater scope of developing clear-cut self identity" [7]. Children brought up in single parent families have only one adult member in the family and often lack kinship and community support. These children develop early independence with added responsibilities. A majority of the single parent families being the poorest of the poor cannot adequately meet their children's needs. A large number of children in institutions and on streets come from single parent families. Thus, to enhance the impact of child development, direct work with children is not adequate. The family life and the family's environment also have to be enriched. A strong family unit would promote child development and prevent child destitution.

### IV. APPROACHES TO FUNCTION OF FAMILIES

#### A. The Universal-Functions Approach

As per the views regarding the universal functions approach, sociologists formulate that in all societies the family is organized to perform certain functions for the society. A function is defined as an activity that is imperative if the society is to continue to exist. The family performs these functions because it is the most efficient organization developed to undertake them. Each role (the organization of activities by an individual) is conceptualized around specific functions. Moreover, each role implies a reciprocal role; for example the sexual functions of marriage reside both in the husband's role and in the reciprocating wife's role. To identify each function with a role it is necessary to regard not simply the functions but the roles themselves as universal. The specific content of the role may vary, but the formal aspects must be universal. Thus, Bernard Farber in his book "Kinship and family Organization" comments that "although the particular rights and obligations of husband and wife differ from one society to the next, the essential character of sexual access is seen as universal" [8].

#### B. The Structural Approach

The structural view of the family encompasses a greater scope of family roles in its definition. The structural approach is concerned more with kinship relations (i.e. those between all individuals related by birth or marriage) than with the nuclear family itself. The structural approach begins with the premise that in all societies there are grandparents, uncles and aunts, fathers and mothers, husbands and wives, nieces and nephews, siblings and sons and daughters [9].

### V. URBANIZATION AND THE RESULTANT CHANGING FACE OF JOINT FAMILIES

Keeping in view the concept of social change in India, it is accepted notion that the urban areas will change more rapidly than the villages and that the cities will act as catalysts, introducing changes in rural areas, perhaps more slowly, but nonetheless inevitably. The first part of this notion may be true, and changes are more rapid in the urban areas, there is considerable slippage between urban based changes and the

more stable rural areas. In part, this is a simple function of numbers. The forces of change which may be potent when viewed from the city quickly lose their impact when spread over the vast number of villages that have to be affected. But the great thinker Roy Turner makes a relevant remark that "more than this, there are buffers which attenuate and divert this impact as it moves against the grain of traditional urban-rural relationships"[10]. Among many families today education is perceived as a major vehicle for ensuring the long term welfare and economic security of the collective family unit and as a means by which family members can fulfill their obligations both as elders and to elders. These collective family goals are often described in general terms as a concern for family well being and an obligation to see that old members are "well taken care of" and younger members "well placed" or "well settled". Being "well taken care of" involves more than economic security; and being "well placed" and "well settled" can refer to having achieved a "good marriage". Nonetheless, in the Indian economic and educational context, education is increasingly perceived as a crucial route to economic security to a "good job" that will put one in a position to "take care of" family members. Post independence India give emphasis on literacy and education, and on science and technology, and a "good job" has increasingly associated with formal education and government job sector.

## VI. CONCLUSION

It may be concluded that there is a huge and direct impact of social change on the fundamental structure and the way of functioning of social institutions. The way of life has been highly changed and affected and we see that technology is considered as a powerful tool of social change. It has drastically changed the way of life. It has also institutionalized the functioning of the social institutions. The institutions of family, religion, morality, marriage, state, property have been changed. Modern technology has also shifted the industry from the household. As a result, some radical changes have been witnessed in the family organization.

It is found that the urbanization in society is responsible for structural changes in the pattern of family as whole and observations are as follows-

1. In the first place various agencies of socialization have stolen many functions of the family.
2. Secondly it may be concluded that the marriage is considered not as a sacred one but a social contract. It has been found that, divorces and separation are on the increase.
3. Much distress has been witnessed in the social relationships between husband and wife. No doubt, the technology has elevated the social status of women in the family. But at the same time it has put the fabric of social relationships at stake.
4. One of the starking changes which has been observed that religion has also lost ground. People are becoming more secular, rational and scientific but less religious in their outlook.

Some inventions have also weakened the very roots of the religion.

5. Rampant increase of criminal activities and state authority has also become weaker.
6. Most importantly it is observed that, nuclear family is considered as a direct outcome of social change.

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