

Relevance of Family

This question is concerned with the future of family as an institution, in general and the future of joint family, in particular. As the survival of family as an institution is concerned, it may be discussed in terms of four factors affecting the family :

Technological Advancement: access to such conveniences as electricity, piped water in homes, intricate home appliances like gas and refrigerator, telephone, buses and other vehicles have all changed common man's living and raised his standard of life. Effects of the industrial-technological changes on family are quite evident, like those of productive function, abandonment of self-sufficiency in family economy, occupational and population mobility, weakening of kinship ties, and so forth;

Population Explosion: shift from agriculture to manufacturing and service, migration from rural to urban areas, decrease in birth and death rates, increase in average expectation of life and availability of elderly persons in family, replacement of early marriages by post-puberty and late marriages, etc., have created problems and readjustment, changes in power structure, desire for smaller families and so on;

Democratic Society: ideals of democracy have filtered down to the level of family living. Demand of rights by women, emancipation of children from patriarch's authority, willingness to approach decision making through democratic process, and change from families to individualism may be described as important trends in Family;

Secular Outlook: there is a shift away from religious values to rational values. Changes in wife's attitude towards husband, demand for divorce on maladjustment, children's reluctance to support parents in old age, elimination of family worship, are all the result of rational thinking and deviation from moral and religious norms.

As regards the survival of joint family, many studies have proved that joint family will never be completely nuclearised in our society. The two structures, joint and nuclear

will continue to survive. Only the nature of jointness will change from residential to functional one and the size of joint family will shrink to two or three generations.

Dominant trends in the Indian family in the last few decades :

Increasing importance of nuclear family.

Transference of some functions (e.g., educational recreational protective, etc.) to some other institutions.

Fundamental change in family age structure, i.e., proportionately fewer children to care for and proportionately more elderly persons surviving. This has created the necessity of transferring support functions from the family to the state and to private insurance companies. This has affected the family power structure too.

Freedom to women due to their education and increasing economic independence.

Declining reliance on children upon family controls.

Changing values of youth.

Though they have respect for and fear of parents yet they want parental support for achieving their individuals' interests.

Liberalization of attitudes and practices towards sex.

Change from pre-puberty to post-puberty marriages.

Decreasing family size.

These characteristics of the present-day Indian family point out change in structure and family ties.

These only trends are ongoing processes. They have not come to a stop. Nevertheless, it is possible to

get a fair idea of what the family will be like in the future.