Abstract

"Emerging Role of Daughters in the Context of New Challenges and Opportunities of Maintaining Family System"

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My paper is based upon a long term study of the role of educated working women in the maintenance and revitalisation of the institution of family in India in the urban settings in the era of modernisation. The institution of family has been stressed due to the pressures of nuclearisation and/or downward mobility in urban India. It is more pronounced among the lower-middle and middle classes where the women belonging to these sections are making large scale entry into the spheres of modern education and age employment. It has affected the norms about marriage and family in many ways for women including increase in the age at marriage and remaining unmarried due to the imperatives of career or family responsibilities.

But my study has resulted into the conclusion that there is increasing visibility of 'daughter supported families' where the working daughters are performing a) central, b) crucial, and c) useful role in maintenance of the family system inspite of their remaining unmarried. This is a significant change where failure of patrilineality is duly compensated by the constructive role of unmarried working daughters in the continuity of family system.
FAMILY SCHOLARS COLLOQUIUM

"PROTECTING AND STRENGTHENING THE FAMILY: CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES"

DAY TWO: PLENARY SESSION 3

PAPER 9

EMERGING ROLE OF DAUGHTERS IN THE CONTEXT OF NEW CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF MAINTAINING FAMILY SYSTEM

BY

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Role of Daughters in the Context of New Challenges and Opportunities of Maintaining Family System: Some Indian Case Studies

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Family System in Changing India

- Prevalence of Patrilineal System
  1. Children take identity from the father
  2. Property inherited by male heirs
  3. Decision making controlled by the patriarch
  4. Domestic in charge- the eldest female member
  5. Strict subordination of daughter in laws

Dimensions of Changes in Family

- Near extinction of ideal joint family
- Increasing number of extended and nuclear families
- Emergence of single parent families
- One third of the households headed by females
- Several single women households in urban areas
Reasons for emergence of Daughter maintained Families

- Failure of patrilineality – Death of male head, separation of sons from parents after marriage etc.
- Unanticipated downward mobility – economic strain, deaths, health problems, migration etc.
- Sense of dutifulness among daughters

Three Types of Roles of Daughters in maintaining family system

- Center of the family
- Critical role in the family
- Significant resource person of the family
Thank You
Emerging Role of Working Daughters in the Context of New Challenges and Opportunities of Maintaining Family System: Some Indian Case Studies

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I. INTRODUCTION

This is a paper about the emerging role of educated and employed daughters in the context of new challenges and opportunities of maintaining family system in India. It is based upon a long-term study of families maintained by women teachers of college and universities of Varanasi age-old seat of Indian culture and civilization on the banks of river Ganga.

The paper is arranged in four parts to present the conceptual and historical context of the family and daughters of families in the changing India, increasing educational and occupational status of women of modern India and the case studies of daughter supported families. The study underlines that there is a new role of educated working daughters in the revitalization of their families of "orientation". They are found to be playing i) central ii) critical or iii) significant role in maintaining the family system in the face of crisis due to process of modernization causing failure of a patrilineal order or downward social mobility.

It is a new paradigm. It deserves closer attention and appreciation as it has impact upon the Indian norms about marriage and family. It is causing increase in the age at marriage. It is also found to be creating pressure upon the daughters for remaining unmarried due to the imperatives of family responsibilities.

In sociological community, family is defined by the social functions it is expected to perform: a) reproducing and socializing the young, b) regulating sexual behaviour, c) acting as a major focus of productive work, d) protecting children and providing emotional comfort and support for adults and e) serving as a source of ascribed status such as gender, caste, ethnicity and race. Although the shape of the family institutions varies enormously from one society or historical period to another but basic family functions appear to be quite constant and nearly universal.4

It is further noted that each human adult in every human society belongs to at least two nuclear families- a) family of orientation in which the person was born and reared and which includes the mother, father, brothers and sisters, and b) family of

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iii) A very crucial feature of patriliny is related to the pattern of residence. Patrilineal/patrilocal joint family is the ideal type in India. Such a joint family consists of three generations of male patrikins and their wives and children. They share many responsibilities and obligations. There is a male head of the family who performs various rites and ceremonies on behalf of the family. The decision making process is controlled by the patriarch in consultation with other male members. The domestic responsibilities are in charge of the eldest female member.

iv) This kind of family system is inflicted by a variety of problems. Dowry harassment, stigma on separation and divorce, meager maintenance, tussle over custody of children, and day to day violence both (physical and mental) are some of the significant problems due to the patriarchal values and norms in Indian families.

Such a situation has caused a number of changes in the recent decades in conjunction with over all thrust for modernization in Indian society and culture. First of all, the ideal joint family is getting out of existence. It is only visible in upper castes, in business communities and in the peasant proper class of rural areas. Otherwise most joint families are two generational and there is a development cycle in family living around the significance of extended families.

Secondly, there is emergence of single parent families where mother and children or father and children stay together. This is attributed to the rapidly changing economy, transformed marital relations and growth of individualism.

Thirdly, there is growing member of female headed families particularly due to job related migration or chronic unemployment of men in the family. It has been estimated that nearly one third of the households in India are female headed. In fact households where a single woman lives alone in urban areas are not rare anymore.

Thus families in Indian society are getting more and more exposed to waves of changes caused by the togetherness of industrialization, modernization and democratization. They are promoting a new set of values around the primacy of individualism. In case of families there is thrust towards nuclearisation- a household constituted of husband, wife and unmarried children. But it has not followed the trajectory of Westernization in the context of family arrangements. Because even if the
Let us have a glance at the changing educational orientation and levels of Indian women since independence (see Table 1 and 2).

**Table-1**

**NUMBER OF GIRLS PER 100 BOYS ENROLLED IN SCHOOLS AND COLLEGES IN INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Primary (I-V)</th>
<th>Middle (VI-VIII)</th>
<th>Secondary (IX-XI)</th>
<th>Colleges and Universities for General Education</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>50 (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001 (p)</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>58 (a)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Note: Secondary classes includes IX – X classes only

(a) Excludes professional, technical and special courses

(p) Provisional

This table shows remarkable progress of environment for girls in the last fifty years at all educational levels. Their increased presence in college and university is of great significance for our analysis.

**Table-2**

**ENROLMENT TREND OF FEMALES (PER HUNDRED MALES) IN UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IN MAJOR DISCIPLINES OF EDUCATION IN INDIA**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Arts</th>
<th>Science</th>
<th>Commerce</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Engineering/Tech.</th>
<th>Medicine(1)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1950-51</td>
<td>15.4</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>0.5</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>0.3</td>
<td>18.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960-61</td>
<td>22.3</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>56.6</td>
<td>2.2</td>
<td>29.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1970-71</td>
<td>50.2</td>
<td>21.2</td>
<td>2.8</td>
<td>52.8</td>
<td>1.1</td>
<td>26.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980-81</td>
<td>59.7</td>
<td>38.9</td>
<td>18.5</td>
<td>98.8</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990-91 (p)</td>
<td>65.5</td>
<td>58.3</td>
<td>31.6</td>
<td>79.2 (a)</td>
<td>12.2 (a)</td>
<td>52.1 (a)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000-2001 (p)</td>
<td>61.2</td>
<td>61.4</td>
<td>52.3</td>
<td>74.8</td>
<td>28.7</td>
<td>68.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>8. Education &amp; Research</th>
<th>23,22,000</th>
<th>1.9</th>
<th>32,90,000</th>
<th>2.7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9. Personal services (domestic)</td>
<td>44,22,000</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>39,25,000</td>
<td>3.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The facts presented in the table suggested that there is appreciable increase of women employment in education and research (from 1.9 to 2.7 percent) and retail/ trade (from 2.6 to 3.4 percent) in the recent years. There is decline in the fields of agriculture, livestock and textile sectors.

In short visible section of women of India has entered a new age due to significant expansion of opportunities of higher education and salaried jobs. These two together have contributed towards her coming forward to offer support for maintaining or revitalizing her family of origin and orientation. It is in contradiction to the tradition of her marginality and invisibility in India family system.

IV. EXAMPLES OF THREE TYPES OF ROLES OF DAUGHTERS IN MAINTAINING FAMILY SYSTEM- CENTRAL, CRITICAL AND SIGNIFICANT

This study has observed three kinds of daughter-supported families in Varanasi. In the first category the educated working daughter is the substantial ‘provider’ or ‘center’ of the family. Here patrilineality is found to have failed due to absence of any male head for a variety of reasons. We can call them as families based upon central role of daughter. In the second category, the well-educated employed daughters are the most critical component for the continuity and sustainance of family. These are instances of downward mobility due to economic strain, health problems, death or similar crises. In the third category, which is much larger than the first two, the educated working daughters are seen as ‘significant’ in terms of their role and functions in the family.

Now we can have a closer look at these three types of un-conventional family settings where the role of daughters is no more insignificant or invisible, with the help of two case studies from each of these categories. So that we can know about the factors which are contributing in the making of such families. We can also get some idea about
b) *Family with Central Role of Daughters: Example-2*

The second example selected for this paper comes from a family of Bangali Brahmin migrants. Nandini (name changed) an unmarried college teacher is the head of a household, which has a widowed mother and younger brother and his wife. Her two elder sisters are married but she decided to remain unmarried, as she had to look after her widowed mother and younger brother who was a victim of traumatic experience of being kidnapped in childhood.

Nandini lost her father while she was studying in college. Her mother supported her in completing her postgraduate degree with the family resources. She soon got a good job of teaching. She took responsibilities of her widowed mother and younger brother. The brother was victim of kidnapping at the age of 10 and remained in captivity of the kidnappers for several years. Somehow he was able to escape from captivity and returned home. But the trauma of this brutalizing experience made him incapable of perusing higher education. Nandini has taken care of his mother and brother without any significant contribution from the other two sisters.
d) Family with Critical role of Daughter, Example- 2

In the second case of families with critical role of daughters is totally different from the first case. Here the daughter is not only married but has several siblings as well as her own children. Sushma (name changed) was third daughter of her parents. She studied up to Ph.D. and is now head of her academic unit in the university system. She belongs to the Kayastha caste and was married through ‘arrange marriage’. Her husband is a financial expert. She has a daughter and a son who are studying in college. But she has become the caretaker of her mother since the passing away of her father several years ago. Mother of Sushma lived with the daughter for nearly ten years. Later she moved into a near by apartment as children of Sushma grew up into adolescents. But Sushma continues to be the care taker of her mother in many ways (diagram- 4)

Diagram- 4 Family with Critical role of Daughter: Example- 2

e) Family with Significant role of daughter, Example- 1

This category of families is much more frequent in comparison of the previous two categories. In the first example of this type we find an educated unmarried university
middle class in Varanasi, which has been part of the city elite from last few generations. Sujata (name changed) was an outstanding student since her primary school days. She was also topper of her classes in college and university. Obviously she was appointed lecturer in one of the most prestigious college of Banaras Hindu University soon after her M.A. at the age of 25.

Her younger brother was a moderate student. He has been helping his father in family business after completing college. He is married and has a son. His wife is a housewife. But Sujata occupies a place of significance in family affairs due to her intellectual abilities and outstanding personality. She was favourite of her parents who have ignored her remaining unmarried and give her place of pride in all family matters. She is also role model of her nephew who is being groomed by Sujata since childhood (diagram- 6).

Diagram-6 Family with Significance role of Daughter: Example- 2

V. TOWARDS SOME CONCLUSIONS

This paper has attempted to present profile of the changing role of daughters in maintaining and strengthening family system in India. Getting opportunity of higher education and remunerative employment has created a new capacity among the Indian women to step in roles of ‘family provider’ in the recent decades.

Such families are growing due to increasing incidence of a) failures of patrilineality, and b) unexpected downward mobility of family of origin. There are also instances of daughters providing support to their families of origin due to sense of