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# Globalization and Indian Family-Continuity and Change: A Sociological Analysis

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**ABSTRACT:** The different aspects of globalisation – economic, political, social and cultural have important implications for human life, including the family life. Increasing mobility of younger generation in search of new employment and educational opportunities allegedly weakened the family relations. Another striking impact is a gradual change took place in the family structure from joint / extended families to nuclear family pattern. traditional authority structure i.e. head of the family i.e. father / grandfather/karta started losing his authority to the breadwinner of the family. Even within the nuclear family one can witness the changing marital roles and distributions of power. Total subordination of women to men and strict disciplinarian / hitlarian role of father towards children are also changing. Younger generation, particularly those with higher education and jobs, no longer believe in total surrender of their individual interests to family interest. The individualism is increasing even within the family structure. The increasing costs of education, health services and new job opportunities opened up for the women outside the house once again brought the role of family into question

**KEYWORDS:** globalization, family structure, Indian, generation, continuity, change, education, health

## I. INTRODUCTION

Family is a primary social group that came into existence to satisfy the need for protection, sexual urge and economic desires. Family system can be seen as an economic provision to satisfy needs, emotional basis, as an influential group and as an instrument of social regulation. Marriage is an institution in India<sup>1</sup>. Various types of marriages are followed in our country monogamy being followed at large. As the society has advanced marriage has gone through various changes, while some things remain constant. Even values attached to it have changed tremendously. The family system can be seen as an economic provision, as an emotional basis to satisfy needs, as an influential group, and as a means of social regulation. An important feature of the Indian family system is the existence of the joint family system. It exhibits characteristics such as vastness in size, joint property ownership, shared residence, practice of shared religion, etc.

In a tradition-oriented society, marriage is such a religious and social institution that along with giving any woman and man the right to live together, it also provides some important duties to both. Different types of marriages are largely followed in our country. As society has advanced, marriage has gone through various changes, while some things remain constant. Even the values associated with it have undergone an unprecedented change.

Globalization has led to greater mobility of people, and greater interaction between people of different cultures<sup>2</sup>, thereby affecting the values and culture of the people. For example, “live-in relationships” in metro cities are a new trend in pre-marriage, so that better decisions can be taken while choosing a partner. Increasing mobility of younger generation in search of new employment and educational opportunities has weakened the family relations. This has affected the earlier idealized notion of ‘family’, as the caring and nurturing unit for children, the sick and elderly<sup>3</sup>. It has also led to increase in female headed family units in rural areas, because males often migrate in search of work. Younger generation, particularly those with higher education and jobs, no longer believe in sacrificing individual interest to family interests. This is reflected in changes in marriage system. Since women are now more educated and financially independent, they have an important role in household decisions. Here the impact of globalization can be seen in the form of flourishing of IT related jobs. Women constitute a major part of this sector. Well-employed women in urban areas face increasing pressure to handle the double duty of household chores along with earning a livelihood. Marital relations and parent-child relations- Married men and women are living separately in different places because of their employment. Single parents are also found in the society. There has been a remarkable change not only in the marital relationship but also in the parent-child relationship. In most working couple families, parents are unable to devote time to meet and interact with their children, as night shifts are common in BPO, KPO and call center jobs.<sup>4</sup>



Selection of life partner: Earlier it was the prerogative of the parents or guardians. Under the influence of liberal values, individuals have begun to choose their own mates according to their likes and dislikes. A new trend is emerging in the process of partner selection in which social media dating sites are being widely used to find compatible partners. Marriage is not compulsory: some men and women do not believe in ancient religious values, and therefore do not consider marriage necessary. Earlier marriage was considered a duty for a man to lead a full life. Inter-caste marriages: In the past, inter-caste marriages were prohibited. Now it is legally permitted. Co-education, female education and the growth of the democratic ideal of equality and liberty are considered strong factors of inter-caste matrimony.<sup>5</sup> Change in the Purpose of Marriage: The main object of Hindu marriage was religion. In recent years, there has been a change in the order of the purposes of marriage, with individuals marrying as a search for a sensible mate to satisfy physical and emotional needs. Provisions for Divorce: The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 introduced a significant change in the institution of Hindu marriage by allowing divorce in certain circumstances.<sup>6</sup>

Marriage among Hindus is not merely a social contract. It is still a sacrament for Hindus. Mutual loyalty and devotion to the partner are considered the essence of marriage even today. Social evils like child marriage, dowry system, and domestic violence are still prevalent. Marriages in India are still regarded (especially in urban India) as a phenomenon reflecting the social status of families. Joyous firing and unnecessary extravagance are often seen in lavish weddings in India. The LGBTQ community, divorcees, single mothers, etc., are still viewed as low in society.

To cope up with the changes brought by globalisation and other changes, it is the responsibility of every citizen to impart with our Indian Value system to our young ones & kids the importance of Indian culture, joint family and its values so that our next generations may be saved from some negative effects of globalization while at the same time benefit from positive values of modernization. It can be concluded that every step towards economic, political and cultural modernization taken by the state in India should be responded by the people with an increased sense of self-consciousness and awareness of identity.<sup>7</sup> The term 'globalisation' is a buzzword emerged in the 1990s and refers to a trend and process of variety of political, economic and socio-cultural consequences, resulting from technological changes that are currently transforming the world. Many commentators however focus upon economic aspects of globalisation. Sociologists feel that though the economic content of globalisation cannot be neglected but its socio-cultural dimensions also requires emphasis. Sociologists argue that globalisation refers to both the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole<sup>8</sup>

## II. DISCUSSION

Family is the vital primary group of all forms of human groups. The word 'family' has been derived from Roman term 'famulus' which means 'servant'. According to Mac Iver, 'family is a group defined by a sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children.' Parker and Anderson defines family as a 'Socially organised unit of people related to each other by kinship, marital and legal ties. For Arnold and Green, it is an institutionalized social group charged with duty of population replacement. American Bureau of Census defined 'family as a group of two or more persons related by blood, marriage or adoptions and residing together.' Such persons are considered as members of one family.<sup>9</sup>

Family being a primary social group came into existence in order to satisfy the need for protection, sexual urge and economic desires. It is not of a sudden origin but evolved from times and passed through certain stages. Mating relationship, form of marriage, system of nomenclature, common habitation, economic provision to satisfy needs, emotional basis, universality, limited in size, influential group and as an instrument of social regulation are considered as salient features of family. Most striking feature of Indian family system is the existence of joint family system. In a joint family not only parents and children but their brothers and sisters also live in the common household. Sometimes it may include ascendants and collaterals up to many generations. The joint family in India exhibits certain features like largeness in size, owning of joint property, sharing of common residence, practising of common religion and mutual rights and obligations.<sup>10</sup>

Today, globalisation is a buzzword which everyone talks of as per his or her need. The term 'globalisation' acquired a contextual meaning and projected as a powerful process of growth that has potential of all round development of human beings. The different aspects of globalisation – economic, political, social and cultural have important implications for human life, including the family life. In a globalised world, the economy is supposed to be characterized by open, liberal, free market and free trade with few or no regulatory barriers. Therefore, all the developing countries are in a race to increase their share in world trade. Greater mobility takes place in economic capital and materials, when trade and business of a country increases. However, this factum of mobility is not confined





to economic capital but also extend to human capital which leads to change in values and culture. Changes in human values and institutions (including the family) occurs when there is scope for greater mobility of people and more interactions among people of different cultures. The role of mass media and communication technology cannot be ignored in changing the socio – cultural values. The world is shrinking to a global village and its people are becoming closer and closer. Thus globalisation has a profound influence on all walks of human life including personal and family life.<sup>11</sup>

In this paper, I have attempted to explore the consequences of globalisation on the institution of family in India. This paper will deal with the fast changing modern families in the urban centers of India. In the past few decades, industrialization, urbanization, globalisation and rapid growth of information technology have produced myriad challenges and made a powerful impact on different segments of societies everywhere. Since globalisation has not only economic aspect but also social cultural and political implications, any of its outcome has to be assessed in terms of how it is influencing the relationships and cultural life in a society. Traditionally, in India, the basic unit of society was not individual but the joint family. Ever since independence, Indian Society has undergone and continues to undergo great change in every walk of life. By enacting number of laws an attempt is made to change social, working and living conditions of people. The impact of globalisation on Indian family can be viewed in two different ways. Some argues that in the era of economic restructuring the institution of family is emerging as a much stronger institution than ever before; others argue that family is becoming progressively weak due to globalisation and individualism is growing up. Peadar Kirby, who refers family as a social asset opines that far from being able to protect vulnerable people against risk, families themselves are experiencing considerable stress and requires assistance.<sup>12</sup>

Increasing mobility of younger generation in search of new employment and educational opportunities allegedly weakened the family relations. The family bondings and ties started loosening due to physical distance as it rendered impracticable for members of family to come together as often as earlier. This affected the earlier idealized notion of ‘family’ as the caring and nurturing unit for children, the sick and elderly. Another striking impact is a gradual change took place in the family structure from joint / extended families to nuclear family pattern. The small or nuclear families almost all have replaced the joint family. One can hardly find any joint family in the urban India. The traditional authority structure i.e. head of the family i.e. father / grandfather/karta started losing his authority to the bread winner of the family. Even within the nuclear family one can witness the changing marital roles and distributions of power. Total subordination of women to men and strict disciplinarian / hitlarian role of father towards children are also changing. Younger generation, particularly those with higher education and jobs, are no longer believe in total surrender of their individual interests to family interest. The individualism is increasing even within the family structure. The increasing costs of education, health services and new job opportunities opened up for the women outside the house once again brought the role of family into question.<sup>13</sup>

Change is a social phenomenon and no society can remain static. Society changes according to time, wishes and needs of its subjects. Speed and extent of change differs from Society to society. Currently, India is one of the rapidly changing societies and appears to be in forefront to follow and adopt western styles of family life. The role of family which earlier used to occupy ziant size in a man’s life now started shrinking. In view of increasing materialism, consumerism, younger generations are leading entirely a different way of life. In the process of finding their partners / mates, younger generations are depending mostly on internet marriage sites like ‘Shadi.com, Bharat Matrimony.’ Family involvement in finding a groom / bride is reduced to nominal. Apart from regular festivals, new occasion like ‘Valentine’s day’, ‘Mothers day’, Father’s day’ are emerging. Weekend parties, kitty parties, visiting pubs and discos almost became a very natural thing. More and more job opportunities created through BPOs, KPOs and Call Centers have facilitated this freedom of enjoyment.

The ever increasing higher education and job opportunities opened up due to globalisation have largely influenced the Indian families particularly in urban metros. Going to America / London / Australia either for higher studies or for employment became a norm. It is also not uncommon for a boy or girl who went to abroad (either for higher studies or for job) to marry a foreigner and settle down there. Even most of married men and women are going to foreign countries by leaving their spouses, parents and kids in India. This has contributed to a fundamental change in the nation of ‘ideal traditional joint family concept. Not only a structural but also functional transformation of family system took place. Marriages are no more made in heaven but on internet.<sup>14</sup> Married men and women are staying separately at far off places on account of their jobs which are providing lucrative pay packets and financial security. Apart from this, single living, single parents (person who had children beyond wed lock) and living together without any formal marriage are also found in the society. Not only the conjugal relationships but also the parent – children relationships has also undergone a tremendous change. In most of the working – couple families, parents are not able to devote time



to meet and interact with their children. Working in night-shifts became a norm in BPO, KPO and call centre jobs. By the time parents reach their homes, children are either fast asleep or already left for their schools. Behavioural problems are cropping-up among the children due to lack of interaction and proper guidance by parents. It is often said that as we send out children to crèches they in turn send us to old age homes. The pattern of change that took place in family dining is also worth observing. Neither children nor parents are interested in having traditional break-fast items like Idli/Dosa/Chapatti/Roti/Parantha on account of paucity of time. Most of the children are interested in having junk foods like pizzas, burgers, chips, wafers and snacks. The change in eating habits are making the younger generation prone to obesity and other health problems. At one point of time, eating outside was considered as a taboo which now became a regular practice. Most of the urban families hang out at restaurants and fast food centers like pizza Hut, Mc Donalds, KFC, atleast once a week. Having dinner while watching Television or chatting on computer became a very common thing in most of the households.<sup>15</sup>

The institution of family is undergoing dramatic change in India. In Southern States like Kerala, Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra, it is a common feature that families send their son or daughter to foreign countries for advanced studies as a mode of investment. Once the boy / girl completes their studies and gets job, they start sending money to their homes in India which is often used in education or career development of siblings or relatives with these remittances of money, family in India also enjoys a spacious house, luxury cars and heavy bank balances. Benfeldt once pointed out that ‘most depressing aspect of globalisation theory is that human beings are on the whole ignored. Globalisation transformed man as materialistic and self-centered. Economic risks generate various forms of social risks such as unemployment and poverty and financial crisis. Despite of increase in material wealth and living standards, life is becoming a daily struggle due to high competition. Family who earlier used to take care of its vulnerable members is no more in a position to serve. Advantage of family and its values as prevailing in India can not be ignored. At the same time, acceptance or rejection of traditional values of hierarchy depends on the experiences shared by each family.<sup>16</sup>

### III.RESULTS

Factors aiding globalization:-

- Technology – Has reduced the speed of communication manifolds. The phenomenon of social media in the recent world has made distance insignificant.
- LPG Reforms: The 1991 reforms in India have led to greater economic liberalisation which has in turn increased India’s interaction with the rest of the world.
- Faster Transportation: Improved transport, making global travel easier. For example, there has been a rapid growth in air-travel, enabling greater movement of people and goods across the globe.
- Rise of WTO and multilateral organisations: The formation of WTO in 1994 led to reduction in tariffs and non-tariff barriers across the world. It also led to the increase in the free trade agreements among various countries.
- Improved mobility of capital: there has been a general reduction in capital barriers, making it easier for capital to flow between different economies. This has increased the ability for firms to receive finance. It has also increased the global interconnectedness of global financial markets.
- Rise of MNCs: Multinational corporations operating in different geographies have led to a diffusion of best practices. MNCs source resources from around the globe and sell their products in global markets leading to greater local interaction.
- Above factors have helped in economic liberalization and globalization and have facilitated the world in becoming a “global village”.<sup>17</sup>

It is a process of increasing global interdependence and interconnectedness that lead toward growing cultural standardization and uniformization. Family structure: Joint family has been adversely affected due to globalization. There has been an increase in nuclear families. This can be clearly manifested in the increasing number of old age homes that are present now. Food: due to opening up of food joints like McDonalds, KFC across the country, there has been a homogenization of food available across the country, but there has also been heterogenization in food. Old restaurants are now replaced by Mc. Donalds. Fast food and Chinese dishes have replaced juice corners and Parathas. Borrowing of money has become more acceptable now as compared to the past. Taking loans is very common due to increasing access to financial institutions. In place of old cinema halls, multiplex theatres are coming up. Use of English has increased manifold in urban areas, this has led to a homogenization in language across the country, but the rural areas have been less affected by it. Value system – increasing homogeneity of world values like rationalization,



free market competition, commodification and democratic or human rights and above all a global culture. Stress and insecurity because of cut throat competition.<sup>18</sup>

Emergence and spread of fundamentalism. Self-selected culture: Here, people choose to form groups with like-minded persons who wish to have an identity that is untainted by the global culture and its values. The values of the global culture, which are based on individualism, free market economics, and democracy and include freedom, of choice, individual rights, openness to change, and tolerance of differences are part of “western values.”

Spread of emerging adulthood: The timing of transitions to adult roles such as work, marriage and parenthood are occurring at later stages in most parts of the world as the need for preparing for jobs in an economy that is highly technological and information based is slowly extending from the late teens to the mid-twenties. Additionally, as the traditional hierarchies of authority weaken and break down under the pressure of globalization, the youth are forced to develop control over their own lives including marriage and parenthood. For young people in developing countries, emerging adulthood exists only for the wealthier segment of society, mainly in urban areas, whereas the rural poor have no emerging adulthood and may even have no adolescence because they begin adult-like work at an early age and begin relatively early.<sup>19</sup>

Identity Confusion: The individuals from non-western cultures experience it as a response to globalization. While people may adapt to changes and develop bicultural or hybrid, multicultural identities, some may find it difficult to adapt to rapid changes. Since ancient times, the joint family system has been one of the chief characteristics of the Indian social system in general and tribal social structure in particular. Recently the joint family pattern throughout India has been showing a declining tendency. The diversity in family forms has given way to the dominance of nuclear families in globalized India.<sup>23</sup>

Globalization has led to large scale migration and urbanization since it becomes difficult to maintain a joint family system because of the high cost of living. Some argue that in the era of economic restructuring the institution of the family is emerging as a much stronger institution than ever before; others argue that family is becoming progressively weak due to globalization and individualism is growing up. Family involvement in finding a groom/bride is reduced to nominal. Apart from regular festivals, new occasions like ‘Valentine’s Day’, ‘Mother’s Day’, ‘Father’s Day’ is Weekend parties, kitty parties, visiting pubs and discos almost became a very natural thing. The pattern of change in family dining is also worth observing. Having dinner while watching Television or chatting on the computer became a very common thing in most of the households. The proportion of dual-earning couples (DEC) is also substantially growing. It has enormously altered the traditional and functional role of women, family planning while distressing family dynamics and affecting children and the elderly at home.<sup>20</sup>

#### IV. CONCLUSIONS

Impact of globalization

Social impact: It leads to a decrease in standards of living as it will impact exports and economic growth impacting welfare of the poor, vulnerable sections and their standard of life.

Political impact: It would affect polity leading to instability in the political framework of countries due to increase in prices and cost of living may lead to civil Uprisings.<sup>22</sup>

Impact on technology: These tendencies limit technological advancement of the world as whole and of developing countries in particular. The limited knowledge sharing, lack of flow of technology to developing countries limit advancement in science.

Impact on women employment: It would impact women empowerment efforts as it will impact women movements across the globe. The lack of cooperation among nations will reduce opportunities for women across the world.<sup>21</sup>

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