

Social Changes and The Breakdown of Family Relationships

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Abstract: *At some point of time in its development, Society was proud of its great institutions of learning and culture, starting with the extended Family and neighborhood. Since the Industrial Revolution, there have been tremendous structural changes and adjustments in society. Due to dispersion of population as a result of industrial locations and livelihood based on industry, the joint family has broken down to smaller size units of husband wife and may be one or two children. There have been changes in the structure of industry itself. Distance Learning, Digital Proliferation, Disconnection with society, E-Learning, E-Recruitment, the mobile telephone, internet and the growing virtual reality has made society topsyturvy. The growing disenchantment with group activity and learning has made way for individualized modes. While a judgment cannot be passed on as to whether this trend is good or bad for society, we need to recognize the impact of these developments in society and Institutions formed by society. This research paper will try to analyze these developments and come up with some recommendations for consideration.*

Keywords: *Environmental changes in society and learning, virtual vanishing of extended family ties, proliferation of E-learning and apps.*

I. INTRODUCTION

We are not new to changes in business and social environments. Societal environment has a profound influence on social institutions. The present article will analyze the changes happening in society and its impact on business and social environment. Research has now established a clear link between the breakdown of the family and the major problems plaguing our society. Consider the following facts: Divorce is the leading cause of childhood depression. (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development).75% of adolescent patients at chemical abuse centers are from single-parent families. (Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA).63% of youth suicides are single-parent children. (Center for Disease Control, Atlanta, GA).70% of teen-age pregnancies are single-parent children. ("Children in Need: Investment Strategies for the Educationally Disadvantaged" - Committee for Economic Development).75% of juveniles in youth correction facilities are from single-parent families. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, 1988).Children of divorce are 5 times more likely to be suspended from school; 3 times as likely to need psychological counseling; 2 times as likely to repeat a grade; are absent from school more, late to school more often; show more health problems.(Dr. Gene Brody - Study of Competence in Children and Families; Gamely,

Newburgh, NY).Some of us may contend that these developments pertain to USA ; but with our society and children aping the western culture, are we far behind?

In modern times Princess Diana has always believed in the family and the values of family relationships. See Figure 1, the pictorial representation by an artist. As I write this paper , the Times of India is carrying very disturbing news of American senior citizens trying to make a good company of like minded senior citizens for social entertainment as well as to make up for broken marriage arrangements while fighting divorce cases and settling the alimony battle!

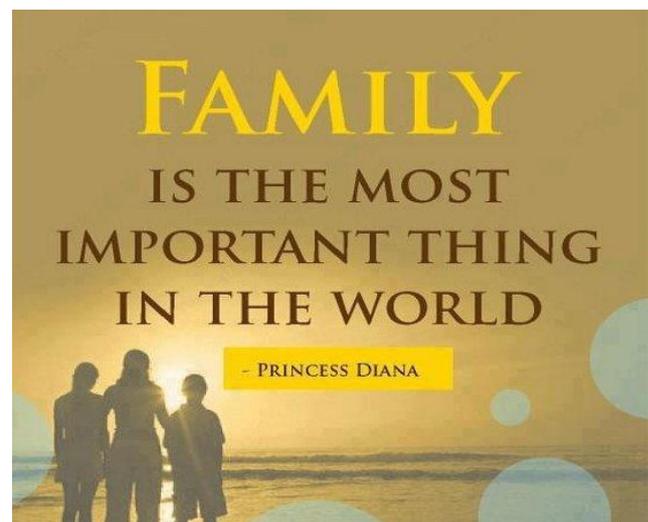


Figure 1: Reminder from Princess Diana

II. OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

If there is one thing that is constant in the business environment that is the 'Change' happening continuously. Environmental changes create opportunities as well as hurdles for the business. The success of a business will depend on how creatively it overcomes the impact of changes and readjusts its strategy. Social Changes are no different. The changes happen because of the necessities of human settlements to continue to develop and prosper. Some of the social changes are easy to understand like geographic dispersion of population because of the industrial location and the job markets. However these changes make some profound impact on society in the way they live, support families, educate children and entertain themselves in spare time. The purpose of this research article is to find out Cause and Effects of these

developments. Following are the specific Objectives identified for the purpose of this research paper.

1. A review of past and current business environment causing Social changes
2. Understanding Impact of these changes on business and society
3. How society has coped with these developments
4. Current trends in changes and the societal response
5. Futuristic scenario and suggestions
6. Recommendation on how societies can cope with these developments

Social changes are reflected in all activities of the society and the environment. A large volume of literature is available in the published media and the electronic media and web pages. For understanding the growing trends and influence of web, electronic and the mobile media it is everywhere to see. But one needs to spend some time in understanding the developments and trends. This has been done carefully and I hope the findings and the general information available through this research paper will prompt further research and thinking on this interesting subject.

III. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The family in India is often understood as an ideal homogenous unit with strong coping mechanisms. It is a basic, cohesive, and integral unit of the larger social systems. Moreover, families in a large and culturally diverse country such as India have plurality of forms that vary with class, ethnicity, and individual choices. Its members are bound by interpersonal relationships in a wider network of role and social relations. It is considered a link between community and change (Tata Institute of Social Sciences, TISS, 1993). The family is the basic and important unit of society because of the role it plays in generation of human capital resources and the power that is vested in it to influence individual, household, and community behavior (Siam, 1993). It is, therefore, a basic unit of study in most social sciences disciplines, such as sociology, psychology, economics, anthropology, social psychiatry, social work or human development.

The family is the first line of defense especially for children and a major factor in their survival, health, education, development, and protection. It is also a major source of nurturance, emotional bonding and socialization, and a link between continuity and change. It has the major potential to provide stability and support when there are problems. Human development can, thus, be enhanced by enriching family life (Desai, 1995a). Families in India are undergoing vast changes like increasing divorce and

separation rates, domestic violence, inter-generational conflicts, social problems of drug abuse, juvenile delinquency etc. These changes indicate the inability to cope with the pressures of the modern life. Yet, the majority of people seem to have survived and are able to modify, adjust and adapt to changing social norms, values and structures, and have demonstrated a unique strength in keeping together despite the growing stress and strain. In recent decades family studies have undergone several developments. Family studies in India are viewed within the institutional framework of particular society. In each society, families vary in their extent of adjustment to accept norms owing to the family interaction pattern and external forces. The present article reviews the rapidly changing family scenario. Research studies on the family conducted in the past few decades in India have focused on various dimensions of family life (that is, multiple forms, structure, size, changing functions, and individual roles). Such studies suffer from a lack of applied value and multidisciplinary approach. The following review reflects these concerns by focusing on the researches conducted on the various aspects.

I am really amused at seeing the Face book clipping given below. (Figure2). The advertisement seems to invite one and all and make tall claims of authentic relationships. Face book profiles, on which or for which the younger generation is spending so much time says that the enemies of the persons make the best use of it!

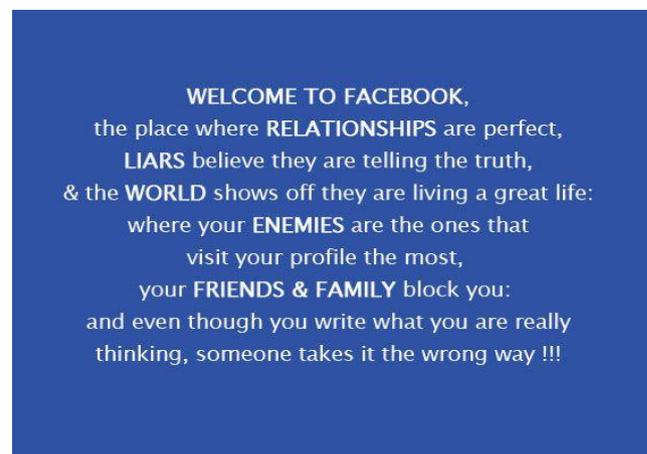


Figure 2: A Quote from Face book: quotezf.blogspot.com

Dr. Patrick Fagan, a family therapist and former deputy assistant secretary of Health and Human Services who is currently serving as William H. G. FitzGerald Fellow in family issues at The Heritage Foundation has done extensive research on the causes of crime in America. In brief, Dr. Fagan's conclusion about Family breakdown in the USA is: 'The root cause of violent crime thus is found in failed intimate relationships of love in marriage and in the family. The breakdown of stable communities flows directly from this failure. In contrast, addressing the root causes require an understanding of the crucial elements of

supportive family and community life. First in importance and influence is the basic marriage commitment, It is of vital importance and is starkly evident in the catastrophic impact by its absence. Second is the relationship of love between parents and children, a love expressed primarily in supervision. But today affectionate parental supervision is considered taboo. Third, stemming from the first and second, is the child's ability to relate to other children. Fourth, the backbone of strong neighborly relationship is friendship and cooperation between families.'

Where are the family values? Who, if any, is monitoring and guiding the youngsters in the family particularly those in their impressionable age group and easily influenced by the so called social platforms for expression.



Figure 3: Is this what you want or a real family?

Another example from the web pages is seen in Figure 3. People, middle aged ones, will be shocked to know that these are the scenes (from tomorrow's India?), which are really seen and depicted in other advanced countries; our children are aping and gaping to reach one day, and consider that as the ultimate destination and attainment!

As Freud's ideas gained popularity they gave rise to the notion that sexual repression is unhealthy and that morality is artificial. Such notions are at the root of the sexual revolution of the 1960's, the sexual liberation movements as well as many of the ideas which determine the bias of sex education and school policy to this day. In a more general sense the pervasive influence of the popular concepts of Freud created a general climate in which it is easy for anyone to rationalize the immorality and infidelity which lead to teen pregnancy, and family breakdown.

There have been tremendous influences by Institutions like Educational Centers, Legal systems and the growth of the litigations in society (Specially USA), Legislature and courts, Universities and colleges and other institutions of higher learning. With the growth in education, and the digital systems and the media like the electronic media and the ever dynamic developments in hand held electronic devices, the society has turned the corner and seems to be

disconnected even in the large family. While great institutions of learning and performing arts have been established, social class separation of society to benefit from such institutions and even to enter and participate has become skewed! Though there is growing disenchantment with such institutions and their role in society, they have continued to exert their influence.

The Institutionalization of Secular Relativistic Ideas

One needs to take a brief look at how "modern" ideas have influenced the major institutions of 20th century America and other developed countries and have helped to create a moral and cultural climate which has contributed to the breakdown of the family in the last three decades of this century. The university has come to play a central role in 20th century. Our teachers, our journalists, our policy makers, our lawyers, our writers, and our bureaucrats are all university educated. The 20th century University has emphasized a scientific, empirical approach not only in the hard sciences but in the social sciences as well. University education has embraced the secular ideas of modernism. Whereas, in the 18th and 19th century our most important universities were founded initially as seminaries and theology was seen as the queen of the sciences, gradually the situation changed and the sciences and the social sciences became dominant with government funding for social and scientific research. University students learned to view the universe through a modernist viewpoint emphasizing relative values and man's secular nature. Needless to say such ideas influenced their personal morality. Moreover, graduates have carried these ideas with them into their work in education, media, and public policy.

The legal system has also been impacted. Not only has our legislative and administrative policy been heavily influenced by secular, relativistic ideas; moreover, judges have gradually assumed the role of policy makers influenced by modern social theory. Holmes had defined an incredible amount of power that judges wielded in deciding cases and shaping social policy. In practice, after he was named to the Supreme Court (USA) where he served for several decades, Holmes was careful not to abuse that power and paid close attention to legislative intent. However, subsequent judges were less reticent and from the 1930's through the 1970's we saw the growth of schools of thought such as legal realism and judicial activism in which judges increasingly came to see their role as arbitrators of social policy, and their ideas of social policy were based directly upon modernist secular ideas.

Likewise, the past generation of journalists in both electronic and print media has come to define a role for themselves as shapers of policy as much as seeking to objectively report fact. Even when not engaging in "advocacy journalism," news coverage has been influenced

by a secular, relativist viewpoint. This has been documented in numerous studies of members of the media. The entertainment industry, including novels, music, and the film industry, has likewise popularized the ideas of relativism, secularism, sexual freedom, and alternative lifestyles helping to make these ideas pervasive in our culture.

Finally, as mass marketing developed, Madison Avenue embraced Freud's theory of sexuality as a means of selling products. "Sex sells" has become a universal maxim, and Americans have been bombarded by millions of sexually suggestive images. What has been the result of these developments on American culture. Our children grow up in secular schools in which they learn that values are relative, they are animals, and they cannot be expected to control their sexual desires. We give them condoms and wish them good luck. They go on to university, where freed from parental restraint they are further reinforced in these ideas. Our perception of the world through the media is filtered through a secular relativistic viewpoint and we are bombarded by advertising and the entertainment media with a sympathetic viewing of permissive attitudes and alternative lifestyles. The values of modernism, generated in the 19th century, gaining popularity with the intelligentsia in the early part of this century, and bore fruit in the 1960's and 70's. The sexual revolution of the 1960's was a direct attack on traditional notions of morality, marriage, and family. A generation later, we are realizing the devastating effects of that assault in the myriad social problems of today.

In a culture which emphasizes gratification over self-control and morality is viewed as a matter of personal opinion, is it any wonder that families are breaking down and domestic violence and crime are on the rise. There is no doubt that the science has provided incredible benefits for mankind. Transportation and communications are bringing the world together. Technology has created a wealth of material comforts. But what does it profit a man if he gains the whole world but loses his soul. The social sciences in their turn have provided us with a vast amount of information and insight into human nature and valuable techniques with which to study the economy, society, and even the human mind. Yet at the same time the flawed secular and relativist bias of modern secularism has undermined the very principles which are necessary for the maintenance of a stable society.

Such developments in the western countries had impact on Indian society and culture. The same underlying reasons were responsible for such developments in India also. Due to industrialization and establishment of industries in locations distant from home the large and extended families became nucleus families. With the elimination of extended families and establishment of small and unitary

families the family ties started breaking up. The unitary families started adopting western values and slowly forgot family ties and the educational and social systems that developed in cities changed the outlook of the next generation families. The children of the new generation are out of touch with family traditions and values and their relations with elders became strained. They prefer to remain locked to their mobiles and other electronic apps. This trend further accelerates with the development of newer applications and the trend became irreversible. The new generation of teenagers become totally disconnected with the elder generation and their education on world realities become remote through mobiles and applications. They live in a virtual world of their own fantasies. These children have lost interest in strenuous academic studies and are satisfied with tutorials and coaching centers.

These social changes have the same effect as in western countries. With husband wife both working their children do not have the family support as in extended and large families. Their uncles and aunties become strangers and their advices intolerable. Dependence on advices through internets and web pages is common and they may soon turn into human robots. This culture almost is getting established in middle and rich class families. Many middle class youngsters though dissatisfied with these developments, have to fall in line due to peer pressure and lack of alternatives.

The British enacted social legislations, particularly for preventing child marriages, sati, infanticide, and for encouraging widow remarriages, etc. The Government of India passed the Hindu Marriage Act in 1955 and the Hindu Succession Act in 1956. Legislation also was enacted to discourage child labor. There is now stringent legislation against the institution of dowry. According to the Constitution of India, untouchability is a criminal offence. The legislation for giving fair wages to wage-earners and to eliminate the intermediaries and the institution of zamindars have helped poor workers in towns and villages to get minimum wages. Despite these healthy developments in the post-independence period, the concentration of economic power in the hands of a few families and individuals has increased. The poor are not yet getting their due share. Their living conditions are quite appalling. The poor are, even today, victims of the dictates of the rich upper caste and class landlords. Dowry is still a serious evil, particularly in towns. Social consciousness about these problems is still lacking. Religion, ethnicity and caste are considered important factors in elections. Much reliance is placed upon one's caste members to win an election. Factional disputes originate from alliances based on caste, religion and community-based affiliations. Even urban and educated people are not free from these problems.

India's diversity has inspired many writers to pen their perceptions of the country's culture. These writings paint a complex and often conflicting picture of the culture of India. India is one of the ethnically and religiously diverse countries in the world. However, despite its vast heterogeneous composition, the creation of some sort of typical or shared Indian culture is the result of some inherent internal forces- such as a robust Constitution, universal adult franchise, flexible federal structure, secular educational policy etc.

According to [Amartya Sen](#), the India born Nobel Laureate in Economics, the culture of modern India is a complex blend of its historical traditions, influences from the effects of colonialism over centuries and current Western culture – both collaterally and dialectically. There is a considerable inclination in the Western countries to distance and highlight the differences in Indian culture from the mainstream of Western traditions, rather than discover and show similarities. Western writers and media usually miss, in important ways, crucial aspects of Indian culture and traditions. The deep-seated heterogeneity of Indian traditions, in different parts of India, is neglected in these descriptions of India. The curatorial approach, one inspired by systematic curiosity for the cultural diversity of India within India, is mostly absent.

In India traditionally the Family has been the basis of integrating the aspirations of the members in spite of the ideological and other differences due to cultural invasion and modernization of education and industry. Modernization has led to dislocation of families and splitting the cohesive groups on account of vocational distances due to industrial constraints. This has led to shrinking family sizes to suit occupations and locations. Progressively the generation of children have lost touch with extended family members and have been influenced by modern gadgets for communication and entertainment. Western ways have disjointed elder members of the family and children have become less tolerant of the older generation. Money has become the chief motivation for all activities, the power of politics and politicians have bulldozed all institutions. Parents have become insensitive to obesity in children and their disinterest in studies and in fact the parents have lost control of their children and their future!

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

It is difficult to admit; but easy to comprehend how family relationships have been strained. A comprehensive review of current business and social environment has been done in the above pages. The article has specifically focused on changes in social environment. Several changes have been considered and only a few significant ones have been quoted. It is not that some of the other points missed out are insignificant, but considering the space and volume

constraints only a few have been taken to illustrate. Main social changes which have impacted society and their ways of living have been considered like the spread of industries and education. Occupational differences, unitary families and adoption of western education and ways of dressing and social etiquette and the proliferation of technology and particularly the mobile and internet technologies and their impact on society have been outlined. The root cause of social changes and how the mankind have adopted and found solutions have also been outlined.

Social changes and occupational constraints have moved families apart. The children and grand children have no contact with family members and in time lose their family identities. Interestingly, one needs to know if the younger members of the family want to establish contact with other family members. Earlier family was the support mechanism for any emergencies. But today it is difficult to contact family members in times of need!

This disconnection with other family members is not going to narrow as we see from the growing tendencies of the younger generation to be self centered and not concerned about the welfare of society. The attitude seems to be 'I', 'Me' and 'Myself'. With communication facilities through the medium of internet and mobiles the younger generation is confident of conquering the world! The present day parents have no time to deal with the children and their role seems to be to provide economic assistance till they become independent.

Society has coped with these developments because they have no other go or at least they have not looked back to see if there is need for course correction! The biggest beneficiary in the circumstances are the marketing companies who have exploited the print, net and web and mobile media to the hilt. So, it is difficult for society to rewind the trend but society can at least review the speed of change and identify coping mechanisms. Current trends seem to indicate wide disparities between reality and the expected. The disinterest of youngsters to traditional methods of education and employment has to be corrected with modern systems and techniques needed to cope. Social response can be effective only if it meets with current requirement and aspirations of the young. Great effort is needed from society, starting from the recognition that such a need exists!

The future is always an extension of the present. As you sow, so you reap. Our educational and cultural systems need to be seriously looked into. In the USA and other advanced nations one trend that is observed is the 'reinvention' and the new found interest in the 'Family'. One can often hear the word he is family or she is family; but the real need is to recognize who is family. Family ties need to be reinforced and children need to be given an opportunity to decide what is best for them instead of prescribing a

course. Prescription is only an attempt at cure; it does not cure by itself. Society needs to identify and really spend sometime for retrospection of their progress and redirect the necessary course corrections if required. There is a wide spread attitude of disenchantment and dissolution which needs to be replaced by genuine attempt at problem identification and solving.

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