

# SOME RECENT CHANGES IN THE INDIAN FAMILY AND THEIR IMPLICATIONS FOR SOCIALISATION\*

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The family in India has shown unique adaptability in the context of all-round social change. With industrialisation, urbanisation and socio-economic changes, its structure, role and inter-relationships within it have altered, though its basic elements have tended to endure. The Indian family is in a transitional phase. The paper outlines these changes and the consequent modifications in socialisation practices. It is contended that these changes have made the child more vulnerable to mental disturbances.)

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## *Importance of Family*

The family has a key role to play in the life of the child who is born in it. It nurtures and helps him to develop as a suitable member of society. It is the first unit in which the child has continuous contact with other human beings. Interacting with it, he learns various skills and develops value systems appropriate to his society. The family is the first agency through which culture operates on the individual. The family is moulded by the culture, and, at the same time, it moulds the culture. D'Souza (1972, : 16) rightly points out that the family is not only a product of social factors, but is itself a significant and dynamic force in the creation of culture, social character and social development. Thus, it is the cradle of future society and also the hub of social life for most people. Apart from being the transmitter of culture, it determines the quality of the next generation and lays the foundation of the child's personality, his emotional stability and mental health. As Kardiner and Linton (1939) point out, it is in the family that definite ground work is laid of the basic personality structure. Analysing the role of the family in mental illness, Khatri (1965) observes that it provides the scaffolding for positive mental health and/or vulnerability to mental disturbance in later life.

In India, as is also true of most Asian and African cultures, the family is the most important institution that has survived through the ages. India has a great heritage of stable family life and structure which has been able to withstand all sorts of vicissitudes over the centuries. As Wadia (1966 : 6)

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points out, even in the midst of dire calamities, the family structure, and the sense of family responsibilities, have not broken down but have remained as sustaining influences. As an institution, it has shown marvellous adaptability in meeting the new demands of a changing environment. If one looks at the new pattern of family structure and interactions that are developing contemporaneously in India and other Asian countries, one is impressed by the adaptive nature of the family as an institution. In spite of some resistance, it is undergoing transformation, however slow it may be, which is adjustive to the new demands of the changing society. In this process, though the family is changing, certain basic elements have tended to persevere and endure.

### *Background of Overall Social Change*

To understand the changes that are taking place in the family, one has to view the phenomenon against the general backdrop of large-scale and rapid changes that are taking place in the developing countries. Most of these countries are in a hurry. They are eager to catch up, in the course of a generation or less, with the level of socio-economic development that, took the West several generations to bring about. The processes of Socio-cultural and individual transformations that started in the West with the downfall of the Roman Empire, the Reformation, breakdown of feudalism, the French and Russian revolutions, the agricultural and industrial revolutions, the radical changes in the lifestyle brought about through scientific and technological innovations, have taken many centuries to come about.

In Asian countries, these changes are being enacted at about the same time and not necessarily in an orderly sequence. The process involves not only telescoping or a "temporal compression" of changes within the span of a generation, but is also cacophonous in character (Sinha, 1982). These two features, in conjunction, have produced highly unsettling conditions for both the society and the individual. It is against this unstable background that the changes that are taking place in the family have to be understood. Their nature can best be characterized as involving structural and attitudinal dimensions which have resulted in altered interrelationships among the members constituting the family, changes in family obligations and decision-making, as well as modifications in the socialisation processes.

### *Factors Affecting Changes in the Family*

Industrialisation, urbanisation and migration of population from villages to the cities, general spread of education, especially among women, changes in occupational structures, conferment of political and property rights, modification in the legal status of women and their taking up of various occupations, and the general weakening of caste as a social force, are some of the main factors behind the transformations that are taking place in the Indian family. As Sinha (1972) has observed, with modernisation and the social changes that are taking place in the country, the structure and role of the family have altered, and

interrelationships within it have been radically transformed. Growth of industrialisation has radically altered the employment structure with the possibility of individuals going beyond their caste and family occupations. It has also led to the concentration of population in some centres, development of new cities and townships, and migration of rural people to these places in search of employment. Migration has inevitably led to separation from the family and created a situation in which individuals have begun to resent income sharing with other members of the family. A complementary factor that has led to the weakening of the joint family is the family feud, property divisions and various laws which has made it often profitable, at least economically, to live separately. Uprooting of population due to migration has also generated new values and rejection of many traditional values of which the joint family had been the repository.

As such, urbanisation has been one of the strongest factors in the transformation of the joint family that is recently taking place. Mandelbaum (1970) has rightly contended that the joint family is of rural affiliation. Kapadia (1966) has observed conspicuous weakening of joint families in the city environment. Dube (1958) has observed rapid decline in kinship orientation and increase in interest-orientation in individuals. In his study of Shamirpet village, joint families characterised the family structure, and the extended family was urban in character.

Gore (1965) observed strains in the extended family system and remarked that such debilitation was partially due to industrialised economy, urban areas dissolving the bonds between the occupational and kinship systems, different economic pursuits within the family and the liberalising influence of education. Thus, city influence, the development of industrialisation and the assimilation of Western ideas have diminished family togetherness. Traditional values have declined considerably! Gore (1968) has remarked during his study of the business community of Aggarwals of Delhi that "filial solidarity is gaining at the expense of conservative ideas of fraternal cohesion. Closer bonds between spouses are also becoming more prevalent. Women are further acquiring higher status in the family." He found that his sample of 494 families still largely conformed to the pattern of joint family living in behaviour, role perception and attitudes. Within the overall pattern of conformity, urban residence and education had introduced certain measures of variation. They had become overtly conscious of the difficulties of joint family living, and displayed a tendency to verbal non-conformity in replies to attitudinal questions. But, at the same time, they asserted traditional patterns of behaviour in the acceptance of familial obligations, and limitations of the decision-making role of the individual parent in the family.

Kapadia (1966) also noted an expressed desire on the part of individuals to leave joint households and establish nuclear units, though such a desire was not unequivocal. As he remarks:

Although the younger generation often complains of the suffocating atmosphere of the joint family, at the same time it appears to be conscious of certain benefits derived from joint living: economic help, refuge in many crises situations, proper upbringing of young children, restraining influences on clashes between husband and wife. In short, the joint family is still capable of meeting certain needs of its members.

Many people are still not prepared psychologically to completely break away from the joint family. Such dissatisfaction, as exists, is not so much against the system itself as against the atmosphere generated by the behaviour pattern of certain members of the family. In other words, the Indian family is in a *traditional* phase. Though the joint family system seems to be on the way out, the Indian family is far from becoming completely nuclear. It is true that the kind of economic and emotional security that the joint family provided to its members is gradually being lost. But the individuals appear to be reluctant to give up the advantages of joint living.

The spread of education, openness to new ideas from the West, especially about equality, women's rights, and the general processes of modernisation, have all contributed to transformation in the Indian family. Economic pressure has not only led to the uprooting of individuals from their families in search of employment, it has also made it more acceptable for women to enter the labour market. Taking to menial and agricultural jobs has been quite prevalent among women and lower classes. The spread of higher education among women, and economic pressure to maintain a style of living, have goaded many women belonging to the middle and upper class families to join various professions. They have entered administrative and foreign services and have been elected to the legislature and parliament as well as holding many official positions of importance. It has resulted in a radical change in the individual status of women who had been purely subservient and dependent in the traditional family system. As Promilla Kapur (1970) has pointed out, men's attitude towards their spouses joining various occupations has changed. Women, because of their changed economic status, have inevitably begun to have a say in decision-making, and enjoy, at least partially, the income earned by them. The male attitude to the same has not correspondingly altered. There is considerable ambivalence in this regard. Kapur (1970) remarks that :

they like their wives to take up jobs but dislike them to change at all as far as their attitude towards their role and status at home is concerned, and dislike their traditional responsibilities being neglected which results from their preoccupation with out-of-home vocations. Their attitude towards their wives is found to be ambivalent.

The above would indicate that the social forces unleashed, as a part of large-scale changes that are taking place in the country, have radically altered the position of women in the Indian family system. From a position of perpetual tutelage

as envisaged by Manu, the law-giver of Hindu society, wherein the woman was to depend on her father in childhood, on her husband in young age and on her sons in old age, she has now a position of relative independence which has been greatly accelerated by certain legislations enacted since Independence. With the passing of the Hindu Succession Act (1956), the Special Marriage Act (1954) and the Hindu Marriage Act (1955), and other similar legislations which collectively formed what has been called the Hindu Code Bill, discrimination on the ground of sex has been forbidden and women have been given equal status with men in matters of inheritance, political status and employment.

It is, however, to be noted that there is a distinct gap between the legal rights and social attitudes which stand in the way of actual emancipation of women. Kapur (1970) points out that women's roles and relationships have changed and are changing, but there is still a big gap between her legal, political, economic rights and privileges and *actual* rights and privileges that she enjoys and utilizes. Society's attitude in general has not changed significantly towards women's role and status. Since consequential changes in the attitude of men have not occurred, it has become a frequent source of conflict and marital maladjustment. Individual case studies have revealed the presence of role conflicts, tensions and anxiety among women who are in employment, specially from the middle and higher classes.

#### *Transitional Phase of the Indian Family*

The changes that have occurred indicate that the Indian family system is in a transitional stage. Many studies have emphasised the 'limited changes' that have taken place in the Indian family. Sinha (1972) made a comparative analysis of older and younger generations in matters of family orientation, as reflected in terms of expressed closeness or proximity to the family in matters of monetary assistance, psychological valence and general orientation towards sharing of house, neighbourhood, entertainment and so on. It was observed that though the younger generation had comparatively narrow views of the family, confining it largely to parents and siblings, they were still positively disposed towards 'close relations' and 'other relations' who were quite frequently considered as essential elements of the family. Of course, the frequency of such an attitude was higher amongst members of the older generation. A large proportion of the younger generation was found unwilling to give up the economic and psychological advantages which the joint family provided, and displayed considerable dependence towards not only parents and siblings but also towards 'other relations'.

It is, therefore, apparent that, structurally, some changes are taking place in the family but corresponding attitudinal changes are lagging behind. In fact, as Gore (1968) points out, only "limited" changes have occurred. We are in a phase where the structurally extended family is tending towards the nuclear but functionally maintaining its jointness. It appears that the 'ideal' type has

been internalised by most Indians, affecting their behaviour, attitudes, family interactions and style of life. Gupta (1978 : 73) observes that the new nuclear family type does not really exist as a separate entity but is a sector of the continuous extended family arrangement. )

The Indian family has displayed a unique adjustive character. Many had felt that, beset by the powerful forces of social change taking place all around, the Indian family system, would explode when put under the Scotch tartan rug of different colours representing variegated changes taking place in society. Unlike the chameleon, the Indian family seems to have survived and adapted itself to the changes, and the kind of breakdown implied in the analogy has not occurred.

### *Nature and Direction of Changes*

In a vast country like India, though there is great diversity in the pattern of family structure, one can broadly discern in all types of families, similar patterning of relationships characterised by dominance—submission, expectations of role positions, hierarchies, similarity in child-rearing practices, and a kind of commitment to the ideal type of joint family with consequent familistic orientation and lack of concern for individuality. The most characteristic feature of the traditional Hindu society is the existence of the joint family which can be characterised as being one in which patrilineally related family members (as in North India) stay with their spouses and children, and in matrilineally related families (as it prevails in some parts of South India) daughters continue to stay with their mothers and inherit property while their husbands are brought to stay with them. (The main areas in which changes have occurred are from joint to nuclear family unit, alterations in family obligations, hierarchy, power structure and decision-making, familial interrelationships, attitudinal and value changes, and difference in child-rearing and socialisation practices.

The most significant change is from the joint to the nuclear family units. Though it is hard to define these in very precise terms, it can be said that the two belong to the same continuum with the traditional family at one end and the nuclear family at the other. If we view the Indian scene, it becomes apparent that most families fall somewhere in the middle, and the term "extended family" to refer to them seems most appropriate (Ramanujan, 1972). Though people like living in small nuclear families, and maintain economic independence, they relinquish many of the values related to the status of individual members and child-rearing, and, by and large maintain a strong family orientation. Many people are not prepared psychologically to break away (Kapadia, 1966).

Structurally, some changes are taking place but without corresponding attitudinal transformation. The tolerance of a joint family for deviation and eccentricities in one of its family members in this regard is indeed astonishing. Due to economic necessity and personal reasons, there is a tendency to

establish nuclear units. But economic factors have not been significant enough to break up a joint family (Kapadia, 1966 : 320). What is more important is that even if, structurally, the joint family breaks into nuclear units, functionally all the members of the family maintain 'jointness' in terms of family loyalty. On special occasions like birth, marriage, death or religious functions, the whole family gets together. Even financial and other obligations are often shared by all according to their varying capacities. Ramanujan (1972) observes that "there is a strong emotional involvement with the family of origin even after separation".

Bisht and Sinha (1981) have outlined the dominant interactional patterns in joint and nuclear families, and have indicated the crucial differences as well as the changes that are taking place. According to *dharma*, traditionally the individual has to accept an assigned role in the family hierarchy and fulfil his obligations. Dutiful behaviour and filial piety are inculcated. Individual aspirations and striving towards personal attainments had little scope. The structure was entirely hierarchical with the eldest member occupying the dominant position and enjoying a corresponding status, which was largely determined by age and not the generation to which he belonged. The locus of power and authority vested in him and he was the sole decision-maker and had command over the rest of the family. In this three-generation structure the child was expected to be obedient, respectful to elders, and his goals were set by the family. He had little say in decisions which were made for him. Emphasis was upon subordination to authority, and his autonomy and independence were restricted.

Children in traditional families were severely disciplined (Whiting, 1961), parental behaviour was autocratic and authoritarian (Elder and Bowerman, 1963), and liberty was not tolerated. For its stability, premium was placed on strict conformity to family ideals and norms, and continued interdependence between members was fostered as well as autonomous development was inhibited. The freedom to take initiative was very limited, and the child was prevented from forming a sharply differentiated impression of himself. There was no separation from the family, very limited self-non-self differentiation and limited individuation in the strict sense of the term. The child remained an integral part of the 'collective' which was the family. Because of the large number of members that constituted the traditional family, he was lost and he had a dominating feeling of being "just one of the group" (Gore, 1978).

Having a large number of relatives, he had many adult figures for his identification. Not only his mother, but other members had a vital role in bringing him up. He passed through many hands and encountered many faces which acted in *loco parentis*, thereby providing multiple role models before him. This led to more diffused and less individuated conception of self (Clausen, 1966). He related himself to many adults who represented sources of the authority and gratification in varying-degrees (Gore, 1978) preventin the

development of a well-articulated and clearcut image of himself. In a joint family, infant indulgence was high (Whiting 1961), Children were over-protected and sheltered, and were dependent on the mother, and separation was discouraged. As a result, self-non-self segregation was again hampered.

The father-child relationship was very restraining and the father had a limited affective role (Gore, 1978). Tenderness and affection were seldom expressed, specially before elders. There was frequently an element of formality in action and speech in father-child relationships. Expressive overt behaviour tended to be restrained, and interrelationships became stylised in certain ways. Carstairs (1958) points out that the father did *not* like fondling his child even when he was alone with him lest *he* might get into the habit of running to his knees in the bazaar, or in the presence of his parents, which would not look very proper. Thus, the father-child relationship was highly restrained in large families and there was a kind of *psychological absence* of the father which made the child more dependent upon the mother.

The nuclear family is a two generation structure in which the child encounters only his immediate relations. As the family universe is small and he has a limited set of adult models to emulate, he develops a strong sense of personal bond with the parents and there is greater concentration and intensity in parent-child interaction. There is consequently greater scope for developing clearcut self-identity. Being more readily accessible, the father assumes a greater disciplinary role, though the amount of discipline is much less than what is observed in traditional, joint families. The child has also greater autonomy and is allowed more initiative. The atmosphere is more permissive and there is much less demand for conformity to family norms. If, in a nuclear family, the father is engaged in his own vocation and the mother has also taken up a job, the parents have limited socialising roles simply because they do not have the time. The child is consequently left to the care of domestic help or is put in day-care schools and nurseries from an early age. This certainly helps early separation of the child, greater individuation, development of autonomous functioning and independence. He does not develop the kind of conformist attitude to traditional family norms. Because of the limited role of the parents, the child goes out of his family early and becomes a member of peer groups in the community. In fact, with the weakening of the joint family and the development of a more nuclear structure, there is a distinct relinquishing of the socialisation role by the family, which educational institutions are expected to perform. Peer groups naturally come in a big way in the process of socialisation.

In terms of structure and interactions, the main direction of change in the family system is from highly hierarchical to less hierarchical structure, and from multiple adult models to fewer adult models, from greater infant indulgence to lesser infant indulgence, from authoritarian structure and use of severe child-rearing methods to more permissive and less harsh methods, from emphasis on

conformity to greater freedom, from de-emphasis on autonomy or separation to greater emphasis on autonomy and individuation. In child-rearing the change has been from the father's limited role and mother's dominant role to both the parents sharing such a role and sharing of power in varying degrees.

The transformations which the family has undergone in India is best reflected in the changes of the position of the male and female in the family, the pattern of mate selection, marriage relationships and parental functions. The birth of the male child is frequently greeted with acclaim and regarded as an event of signal importance for the family. On the other hand, the advent of a female child is at least 'silently' resented and is very rarely an occasion for rejoicing. The male child is regarded essential for the well-being and salvation of the parents while the female child is considered 'an alien property' to be given away in marriage. Therefore, there is difference in the treatment of boys and girls by parents and other members of the family. The son is fondled by the mother or her surrogates. He receives a favoured treatment throughout, and is frequently provided with better food and clothing. Right from birth, he is regarded as an asset and has the responsibility of performing death rites which are considered essential for the salvation of the departed. There is continuous ministrations to his needs and prolonged breast-feeding which fosters the development of basic trust, dependency, a sense of security, positive self-image and the capacity to receive and give affection and a conception of the world as good.

Such a 'favoured' treatment does not fall to the lot of the female child who is brought up in an environment that tends to develop in her envy, jealousy, a negative self-image and a conception of the world as being basically unfair. She has a feeling of perpetual dependency and has an idea that life is not going to be happy for her, as illustrated in the line from the *Ramayana* that "the dependent cannot be happy even in his dream". As she grows older her personal mobility is strictly restricted, and is progressively inducted into domestic work and into the role of a family woman. Fed with religious concepts, she is taught to regard her future husband as God and is exposed to the cultural ideal of *Sati*, symbolising life-long sacrifice and complete submergence of individuality in the family. Gratifying the need of her husband, at all costs and time, is emphasised and there is pressure for complete conformity to the standard imposed by the family tradition.

When married, her role as a daughter-in-law is also one of subservience and neglect, and she is dominated by other elder females in the family. There is, however, some enhancement of her status with the birth of a son. "It is only with motherhood that she comes into her own as a woman, and can make a place for herself in the family, in the community and in the life-cycle", (Kakar, 1978). On the other hand, if she is childless, she is despised and there is complete loss of status when widowed. Widowhood means relinquishing of ornaments and she is compelled to wear a widow's dress for the rest of her

life. She is even regarded as the bearer of ill-luck and is avoided. She is expected to avoid festive occasions and not show any signs of joy. In some cases, at least implicitly, she is considered responsible for the death of her husband. As a widow, she is quite frequently ill-treated and becomes the scapegoat for family frustrations.

The difference in the male-female position in the family is gradually disappearing. Birth of a child of either sex is beginning to be warmly accepted. In families with educated members, domination over the daughter-in-law is less and the husband is often found to take her side in disputes with the in-laws. He interacts freely with his wife even in the presence of other members of the family. In fact, the husband-wife relationship is increasingly assuming greater importance and often prevails over parent-child relationship.

In the phase of transition, most of these features have altered. Not only are children valued more, irrespective of sex, there is also greater equality in treatment meted out to sons and daughters and the female child no longer is considered a property to be given out. With the increasing tendency on the part of the newly married couples to establish an independent household of their own, socialisation is ceasing to be a concern mainly of mothers or of other members of the family, but is becoming increasingly a concern of both parents. Affection towards children is now publicly expressed, and the birth of a child of either sex is warmly accepted. Girls are now receiving education and both married and unmarried women are increasingly taking up jobs. Inter-sex mixing is being accepted, though we are still far away from the stage of dating. The age of marriage of the girl has gone up. Widowhood is no longer a stage of perpetual condemnation. She could now wear normal dress, seek employment, and is not considered inauspicious on festive occasions nor responsible for the death of her husband. Even widow remarriages are no longer unknown. With these changes, at least in the family of the educated and among those who consider themselves 'modern', the treatment meted out to members of the family are marked by less discrimination. Of course, in the transitional phase there is often a subtle lingering of old values as reflected in unconsciously treating the male child somewhat favourably.

The pattern of mate selection has also undergone a rapid change. Previously, marriages were arranged by elders. Marital transactions were economically and socially oriented. The family goal was prominent and personal considerations were only secondary. It was not important whether the couple knew each other in advance, so long as the family line and family traditions could be maintained. The new style of arranged marriage is emerging with 'arranged accidental meetings'. 'Seeing sessions' are becoming more common where the couple meet each other. Caste, status and similar factors are being relegated, and material considerations and family accomplishment, especially of the bride and bridegroom, are coming in. There is no longer unquestioned acceptance

by the young of the choice of mate made by the parents. Now, there is an increasing role of the bridegroom in the matter of choice. Sometimes he even has the veto which was earlier the sole prerogative of the parents. There is a general direction of moving towards the Western style in marital choice, from unquestioning acceptance of the parents' choice by the couple to parental choice but veto by the young, choice by the young with parental veto, and finally, the choice by the young and unquestioning acceptance by the parents, as it normally happens in the West. The change is also reflected in the fact that, sometimes, marriages have begun to take place outside the caste, something which was unheard of before. All these indicate that the role of the family in mate selection has been relegated to the background, and there is increasing involvement of young people themselves in the process.

Considerations of endogamy, family status and dowry are gradually being replaced by personal happiness, level of education, physical attractiveness and personality characteristics, especially of the girls. As Khatri (1970) points out, there is an emergent trend of selection of the marriage partner by the person concerned, based on love, and with or without the consent of the family elders.

As for the marriage relationship, the traditional marriage was almost entirely familiar, which is now changing in the direction of emphasising personal goals. In the East, marriage was considered more as a duty to be performed so that family lineage could be maintained. Personal fulfilment or happiness were regarded as extra bonuses to be hoped for but not always achieved. There was clear hierarchy in marital relationships with the husband as the undisputed boss and the wife showing complete subservience. There was also strict separation in the functions of the couple, the man's sphere being outside the home with the woman's inside the home. The sharp division of functions prevented conflict. Now, the changes are in the direction of sharing of functions, and if the wife happens to be adding to the family income, she tends to assert herself (Kapur, 1970). Change has occurred in the sense that partnership and interpersonal involvement are no longer seen as dangers to family stability but as means to mutual fulfilment and happiness.

(Parental functions have considerably altered over these years. Parents used to operate as if the child was like moulding clay which required to be shaped by the parents and other significant members of the family into the form prescribed by the culture. This was done largely through persuasion and group pressure. Obedience and piety were considered essential virtues, and devotion and sacrifice were expected of children. These characteristics were essential for maintaining the hierarchical nature of the family. Children were expected, according to their birth-order, to accept unquestioningly their appointed place and roles. The life-style of a child was determined by his family, and he was reared to be a conformist, to accept his lot, to obey orders, and to do what was enjoined. The family served the culture by producing the kind of people that were required.

Now all these are in a state of flux. With the advent of education, travel, communication and influence from the West, all these have been challenged and increasing emphasis is being put on personal freedom, autonomy and self-determination. Unquestioning obedience, and dependency in children, are considered factors which ill-equip the child to meet the new challenge of changing the social order. The need to stand on his own, and make decisions, is being emphasised. New goals to make himself self-reliant is accepted, at least on its face value, though not always practised, creating thereby a source of conflict in family interrelationships.)

### *Changes and their Implications for Socialisation*

The above discussion brings out the silent changes that the family has undergone under the pressure of social change. Their implications in the development of the personality of the child have also been indicated. Some points which are salient and have vital implications for socialisation, are discussed at some length. Firstly, in the transitional phase, the norms and practices of the family have undergone changes though traditional values have lingered. As a result, the child often experiences unstable and contradictory patterns of child-rearing. Such an ambiguity generates in him conflict and anxiety. As Sinha (1962) in his paper on cultural factors in the emergence of anxiety points out, parental behaviour has become inconsistent, sporadic and unreliable. Such inconsistencies in child-rearing generate anxiety. This is also exemplified in the way punishment has been used in socialising the child. The traditional adage is that "up to the age of five, the child should be shown affection; for ten years after that punishment was to be used, and when he attains adulthood, he should be treated as a friend". In fact, Saraswati, Takkarand Kaur (1979) have indicated that beating and physical punishment were frequently resorted to as forms of power assertion in working class families, while scolding and threats were more prevalent among middle and upper middle class families. Under the Western influence, use of physical punishment in disciplining the child has been decried, though the older tradition has not been given up completely. Such a situation often produces ambiguities in expectation with consequent repercussions in the psychological growth of the child.

'Another aspect of change in child-rearing relates to toilet training and feeding schedules. In the joint family set-up, a lot of permissiveness in this respect prevailed in the early stages. However, as he grew older, the symbiosis with the mother is suddenly terminated, sometimes by the application of bitter paste to the mother's nipples, and he is slowly inducted to the world of men with prescriptions. Such sudden weaning and dethronement by a new sibling laid the foundation for distrust and ambivalence and inculcated a sense of insecurity and anxiety.

Under the impact of Western ideas, there is stricter toilet training and adherence to early weaning, and feeding schedules are creeping in. In this transitional

phase, however, the new methods of child training are not fully accepted and are often ridiculed by members of the older generation. The shift from permissiveness to stricter control has obvious repercussions on personality development. Asthana (1956) points out that "a shift from the permissiveness of early childhood to a rigid social code, with a decrease in affection experienced by the adolescent, might lead to insecurity and anxiety in him".'

In traditional families, the mother did not exercise the role of a primary disciplinarian, which was done by the grandparents or elderly uncles and aunts. In the transition to the nuclear type of families, the role now devolves on parents, especially the mother, when the child is young, and later on the father. This is of signal importance in the process of socialisation. Firstly, the mother who is primarily concerned with affection, takes on an authority role. Thus, an individual child begins to perceive his mother, not only as the chief source of affection but also of authority. It is obvious that when the same figure becomes the source of both of these almost antagonistic effects, a conflict in the mind of the child becomes inevitable, predisposing him to anxiety (Sinha, 1962). It is to be noted that, mythologically, the goddess Kali who is normally portrayed as fierce, powerful and violent, is also considered a benign mother. The mother in the family has similarly combined both loving and disciplining functions with consequent psychological repercussions on the growing child.

Because both parents work, it appears that parents nowadays are relegating to a considerable extent their socialising role. Moreover, in traditional families, grandparents and elder relations greatly helped in bringing up the child and also inculcated in him traditional and social values through stories and other practices. A son looked to his father for instruction in his adult role, and learned as much by imitation as by precept. With the family getting to be more nuclear, the socialising role is no longer performed, and is being taken over by peer groups. In fact, the contemporary society displays the development of peer group culture, which is assuming in increasing measure the socialising function that the family seems to be relinquishing.

In a joint family, with the main model for identification being the mother in early childhood, but as he grows old different male members of the family become the role models for emulation. They are many and diffused. In such an environment of multiple mothering and fathering, as Mead (1951) points out, not only our identifications multiply, but a diffused dependence results with some flattening of affect.

As the family is getting transformed, the models to be emulated get restricted and the child's identification is less likely to be diffused.

There are, however, findings (Sinha, 1979) to indicate that the youth of today do not have clearcut role-models, and very seldom show identification with parents, nor with outstanding figures from mythology, history or the world of science and learning. The transitional type of family of today obviously

is not fulfilling its socialising role in this sphere. The young no longer find a stable model among the parents and elders to emulate. Firstly, the parents in this changed environment, because of various reasons, have ceased to play a significant role in providing models for conduct and life-goals to the young. Secondly, they themselves are often perceived as presenting an ambiguous facet. It is suggested that:

elders of today when they were themselves young, could easily identify and find role models among the older generation of that time because the latter belonged to a more stable society and presented figures which were not torn by contradictions. But this is no longer the case... (Sinha, 1979, p. 63-64).

Due to various contradictions and conflicts which have beset them in a fast changing world, the older generation of today, which should have provided guidelines of conduct it had in its own time, has failed to provide stable models free from ambiguity and contradictions. In analysing values and role-models among the Indian youth, Sinha (1977) found this reflected in value ambiguities and diffused, unstable and heterogeneous role-models adopted by Indian youth. It is regarded as a kind of 'role-refusal' on the part of the young, reflecting a kind of identity confusion.

In the joint family, no conscious effort was made to segregate children from adults. The child was free to witness adults interacting with one another in varying moods and tempers, thereby learning a great deal about the elders and their own roles just by observing and listening. The remarks made by an Indian observer, as quoted by Murphy (1953), brings out the point clearly: "You bring up your children; we live with ours". As the family is creeping more towards a nuclear structure, inculcation of norms and values through collective living is no longer possible.

Lastly, values were transmitted, and a lot of socialisation was achieved, through the many family ceremonies and rituals that took place at various stages of the child's life (Kakar, 1978). Of the many rituals, *Upanayana* (the sacred-thread ceremony) for boys, and *Kanyadana* (giving away of the bride in marriage) for girls, had signal importance and gave ritual reassurance to the child's belongingness to the family, consolidated his family ties, and put him within the larger ambit of society. In modern times, these ceremonies have lost their importance, and the family has not found appropriate replacements for inculcating social and community values. The unsettled conditions that are being witnessed in society provide evidence for this.

Thus the Indian family in this transitional stage is neither presenting stable values to the growing child nor clearcut norms, practices and experiences of the nuclear families of the West. As observed by Khatri (1962, 1970), the transition and change have increased the vulnerability to mental health disturbance, and can be considered (Sinha, 1979) to underlie the tensions among contemporary youth in India.

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