

## **RESEMBLANCE OF MODERN TRENDS IN JAPANESE AND PAKISTANI URBAN FAMILIES**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*Family as a basic unit of society holds an important place in every society, comprising of a mother, father and one or more children. It is an adaptive institution, not fixed forever but enduring in response to the changing demands of life. The Japanese family in postwar period and the Pakistani family after 1960s rapid economic development have undergone a remarkable change reflecting the political, economic and social transformation. The family in both Japan and Pakistan began to take on modern form, functions and characteristics in the high growth period of the 1960s and from that time on the number of employed worker household rose rapidly reaching to majority in both countries. Simultaneously, the households became smaller i.e. nuclear families – also a modern characteristic. This paper highlights some of the features of Japanese family system transforming from traditional to modern resembling much with the same trend in urban areas of Pakistan.*

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### **INTRODUCTION**

The main family law of Japan the Civil Code, which was adopted in the Meiji Era (1868-1912). During this period, Japan embarked on modernization and the family system was institutionalized. It was based on the pattern of succession prescribed by Confucianism and long practiced by Samurai families (GoJ 2007). The ideal was direct descent in an extended family to preserve the existence of family. The system was known as patriarchal; where the eldest male member of the family was the head of the family and the eldest son inherited all the family's assets. Every person in the family was listed in the family register to which he or she belonged and the same last name was used as that of the family head. The head of the family had a considerable authority (Wm. Theodore de Bary *et.al.* 2005). For instance, his willingness was necessary in matters of marriages and divorces.

The patriarch and his eldest son were given special preference; on the other hand, other family members had fixed roles to play according to their age and sex. Correspondingly, family laws in Pakistan were promulgated in 1960s setting the modern trend in all aspects of the family structure in Pakistan.

As in Pakistan, in traditional family system after marriage, in Japan, the bride joined the family of the groom, where she was expected to adjust herself to the family's ways. She was not just responsible for bearing and rearing of children and serving her husband but also to attend to the needs of her parent-in-law and her status was even lower than that of her husband's sisters. As only men had parental authority, unlike in Pakistan, a divorced woman in Japan had no right to take her children along with her. The woman's inferiority was also visible in financial matters as she had no right to buy, manage or sell any kind of property. Despite the glaring inequities of this family system, most Japanese did not even have any objection.

## **METHODOLOGY**

So far very few research attempts have been made in relevance to the above topic, while the available research material pertaining to the topic is scanty. Existing literature available is being discussed and explored. With the help of secondary sources, a clear picture of the transformed and modern Japanese family and its resemblance with urban family system in Pakistan is highlighted.

## **ASSUMING NEW TRENDS**

In 1946, after the defeat in World War II, a new constitution was implemented in Japan which stressed respect and equality of the individual irrespective of gender and class. The new code became effective in 1947. Initially the impact of this reform on the family structure was not great. However, after few years the family system slowly but surely assumed its present modernized form. Thus, in the 1960s, the old family system ended.

The socio-economic changes and post war reforms had a far reaching impact on the family system which began to modernize with functional characteristics. Since then the number of employed workers households rose sharply until they were in majority. The family became a smaller unit i.e. a single family pattern which is a modern characteristic.

The data for household shows how remarkable this development was in 1920, when at the time of the first National Census the Japanese household averaged 4.89 people (Cabinet Bureau of Statistics of Japan 1930), and this figure of around five stayed fairly constant throughout the 1930s and 1940s (Ministry of Internal Affairs and Communications 2012). The fall began in 1950s, from a figure of 4.89 people in 1955, to 4.0 in 1965 and to just 3 in the 1980s. By 2002 it had fallen to 2.98 (*Ibid.*). This reduction is due to both a fall in the number of children per household and a rise in the number of nuclear families.

According to the Meiji Civil Code the prewar Japanese family was based on a unique direct lineal family system but with the introduction of new civil code and as a result of the high economic growth the number of nuclear families with fewer children increased. This family mode was suitable to employed worker household. The typical Japanese family today is nuclear family living in a small apartment in an urban area. The same trend is witnessed in the major cities of Pakistan.

In the urban centres of both countries, usually the father commutes to his job, comes home late at night after socializing at a bar with his colleagues. The wife's time is spent taking care of the children and looking after the house, paying special attention to her children's educational needs and creating a nurturing environment for the whole family.

General social change, inspiring postwar legal reforms and western democracy greatly influenced the family system. Children now benefit equally from their parents status erasing the traditional difference between eldest and younger sons and between sons and daughters. The eldest sons having lost their privileged position are

no more expected to live with and take care of their parents. Women are now less restricted to the home, they are free to pursue education, jobs and hobbies and have the right to initiate divorce. The trend of arranged marriage has almost diminished. The children marry according to their choices and the discussions about marriage are usually friendly discussion between parents and children.

### **SOCIAL AND LEGAL CHANGE**

The new constitution of 1947 specifically forbade discrimination in economic, political or social relations because of race, creed, sex, social status or family origin having parralen in the constitutional framework of Pakistan. The civil code provisions regarding family relations were fully revised to results a marked improvement in the legal status of women in family life.

According to the old Civil Code of July 1898, marriage was based on the approval of the head of the family, i.e. a man under the 30 years of age and a woman less than 25 years of age had to obtain the consent of their parents to enter into matrimony (GoJ 2007). But under the revised Civil Code of 1947 the old legal system was abolished and adults, i.e. 20 years and above were allowed to marry on mutual consent. The new Civil Code has also established the principle of equality between husband and wife.

The main character of the pre-war family system was the succession to the household by the eldest son or the legally adopted son as the sole heir at law denying the younger sons and the daughters the right of inheritance. The present Civil Code has abolished the system of succession and instead property is inherited collectively i.e. one-third by the spouse and two thirds by all the children in equal shares irrespective of sex. As regards parental power, it is exercised jointly by both the parents as a matter of principle.

This revised Civil Code after the war reflects a disapproval of the legal dominance of the family over the individual. According to Article 24 of the Constitution the equality and dignity of the

individual is more important than anything. Similarly, under article 25 of the Constitution of Pakistan, 1973, all citizens are entitled to equal protection of law and no discrimination on the basis of sex, rather State shall make special provisions for the protection of women and children.

The term head of the family is abolished and when a marriage is registered, a new husband and wife family register is set up. Legally, this means the rejection of the old direct lineage family stem resulting in the end of the headship of family. Along with the establishment of the wife's right to such an inheritance there is provision for an equal division of property among children. These new laws are a symbol of revolution in Japanese family system.

Women who are housewives and who do not have to work for financial reasons enjoy taking different lessons with their friends, joining various types of short courses and currently preferring tennis lessons to the traditional hobbies of tea ceremony or flower arrangement. Many women want to work in order to earn and to increase their families' ability to pay for better housing, children education or weddings etc. Better educated women want to work so as to utilize their training and to pursue their careers. This is common practice in the urban families of Pakistan too.

Strong moral feelings are involved in attitudes towards working women. Since high value is placed on a woman's loyalty and devotion to her family, she receives social appreciation if her working is clearly for the welfare of the family. Most of the women who work alongside with their husbands in family business show unquestionable loyalty to their family. Such working women are often busier than their husbands because they also have a full load of household to attend to.

The urban middle class family is a dominant type and the model for all Japan middle class ideals with its standards of living penetrating to rural areas as well as the cities. The Japanese life style has changed from a rural agrarian village centered way of life

to an urban industrial life style where social life is focused on nuclear family and the work place.

In feudal Japan, a marriage was not between two individuals, it was a family affair. In the early postwar period, arranged marriages were the source of mate selection and in the mid 1950s, 73% of marriages in urban areas and 86% in rural areas were still arranged (Shoji 1991:9). But presently the number of love marriages is increasing rapidly. Similar phenomenon is observed in the families living in major cities of Pakistan (Zadeh 2003). In Japan, the marriageable age is now usually around 25 or younger for women and around 26 or older for men. Things have changed within the marriage relationship in both the urban sectors of Japan and Pakistan. The growing number of nuclear families, the accessibility of education for women and the increasing number of working women have affected the nature of family life. Husband and wife relationship is important than any other relationship. Majority of younger generation now want to have more companionable and romantic marriage than their parents had. After a year or two, most couples settle into a pattern of social world and a clear cut division of labour. The husband's life is busy in work place, he has long working hours. The husband is responsible for outside work, whereas the home is clearly the wife's sphere of control. The mothers are responsible for rearing and education of children. Motherhood and the careful nurturing of children are valued as extremely important in Japan more than in any country of the world. A mother is expected to provide all the physical and emotional care for her children and to be available to her family the whole time. The father is less involved in day-to-day matters, but he represents an important model of proper behavior for his child and upholds standards of living performance in the outside world. The mother spends much time on child's education for his or her success and better future. She is totally responsible for the rearing of children. In Japan only 12% of workers' households, couples cooperate in bringing up their children, whereas wives have primary responsibility for child care in 83% of such household (Clement 1987:176).

## **CONCLUSION**

In traditional setup of both Japan and Pakistan, the family system was a joint family, where the eldest male member was the head of the family and was called the Patriarchal family. All decisions regarding family matters were taken by him in the interest of the family. But after the U.S occupation and the implementation of new constitution in Japan, the family shifted to nuclear family system comprising only the parents and their children. Previously, housewives used to spend an enormous amount of time and energy looking after the house. Neither cooking, laundry nor house cleaning was mechanized. After the war however the volume of household chores declined drastically. The reason for this was a reduction in the average size of the family, especially the number of children and expansion of facilities such as water, gas and electric supply. Similar trend has taken roots in major cities of Pakistan after the galloping economic growth of 1960s – a decade of development.

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