

# **Impact of Social Change upon Family as Social Institution with Special Focus on Pakistan: A Sociological Analysis**

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## ***Abstract***

*Family is considered as the oldest social institution in the world. As an institution it performs many important functions and valuable tasks. It provides bedrock for its members. Family as a social institution has directly or indirectly got affected due to the rapid social changes. Technology which is considered as the basic factor of social change has made important changes in the family structure and organization. Nuclear family has replaced joint family system. Schools and other agencies like baby homes have stolen the basic functions of family. Industrialization and urbanization have weakened the basic fabric of relationships. People rush to work in industries than the agriculture. Pakistan is one of the countries of the world where family as a social institution has got a new shape with new assignments. As a result, general masses are migrating from rural areas to the urban. Feudalistic approach of life where females used to be dealt as secondary in social status has vanished to certain extent. This paper will try to analyze the factors of social change and its overall sociological impact upon family. The main focus will remain on Pakistan, however, theories and literature included in this paper is of general nature.*

## **Introduction**

Social change has a direct impact on the basic structure and functions of the social institutions. Technology is considered as a powerful tool of social change. Technology has totally changed the style of living. Meanwhile, the effect of technology is apparent on all the social institutions. In sociology, there are five social institutions. They are family, economy, religion, state, and education. Family is the oldest

and important institution. Technology has also altered the family economic system. Now many economic functions of family are being performed by industry. Therefore, the status and functions of the family are vehemently changed altogether with other important functions. In sociologically language it has been named as ‘social impact of technology’ (Ralph, 2007). Likewise, socialization and training to new siblings has also been shifted to schools. Marriage which used to be considered as a sacred one has been coined with a social contract. It is tangible and may be terminated at any time.

Sociologists are agreed with the notion that status of women is elevated with introduction of technology. It has put women in huge numbers in productive activities. In olden days such fields were not considered suitable for women. On the contrary, social relationship of husband and wife has got a new direction. The slogan of equality and equity has created stress between husband and wife. The disturbance within the family is quite vivid and understandable. Religion is also on the back seat. Families try to be secular and forward in their inward and outward outlook. Such a race has left religion as just token of faith. Even some technological inventions have tried to rationalize that religion is no more a social phenomenon but just a personal affair. Joint family system has vanished and replaced by nuclear. Nuclear family is considered as a direct outcome of social change. It generally is based on three things. They are the emotional attachment between spouses, maternal love, and a firm belief that the relationships between the family members are closer and affirmative than the rest of world (Elkind 1992).

### **Theoretical Background**

Theories related to social change and family system are presented in the following paragraphs. These are: The Functionalist Theory, The Conflict Theory, Theory of Modernity and Modernization.

### **The Functionalist Theory**

Functionalism is the oldest, and still the dominant, theoretical perception. This perception is built upon double weights: appliance of the scientific method to the objective world and use of a comparison between the individual being and society. Functionalist approach focuses on the international level issues disturbing income inequality.

Particularly, functionalists are concerned in employment opportunities and the pay gap between individuals (Davis, 1945).

The functionalist theory highlights the basic functions of the society. It, therefore, has asserted that these basic functions are limited and universal and out of them a variety of structures have arisen to carry out these basic functions. According to this perspective “social change involves structural change and not a change in the basic functions of social systems (Ronald, 1976: 21)”.

The most influential American structural functionalist theorist is Talcum Parsons. He has analyzed the processes and structures that contribute to the stability of social system. He outlined basic four functions that are necessary and need to be filled for the subsistence of any social and non-social system. The first function is that system must adapt to its social environment. The second function is to attain a goal that is to mobilize and allocate the social roles and scarce resources in order to satisfy individual and collective needs. The third one is integration imperative that harmonizes the various structures and their associated activities, norms, goals, and values. The last function is to reduce tension and the institutions that are charged to fulfill this function are family, school and other social control agents.

From the functionalist court comes a positive and negative point of view. Both points of view see the modern technology and social change as intertwined and integrated process. According to this theory the incidence of social change is normal function of the society. If there is no change in the society then society will lose its importance. The very basic function of the society is to meet the needs of modern technological advances for the betterment of its members. As a result, social changes are basic functions of the society. All the social institutions including family, therefore, need to be changed as per rate and speed of social changes. Otherwise, they will cease automatically to perform their regular functions.

### **The Conflict Theory**

Conflict theory is another important sociological perspective on social change. Conflict theory is another important sociological perspective on social change. It is deeply rooted in the philosophy of Karl Marx (1818-1883), the great revolutionist, philosopher, and a sociologist as well. Marxist approach is a revolutionary approach quite distinct than

traditional way of looking things. All conflict theorists do not see things as seen by functionalist theorists. They opine and consider social movements and social unrest as the basic ingredient. To them society is the group of people fighting for their personal vested interests. Therefore, conflict is natural and can not be avoidable (James, 1993).

Karl Marx (1978) equated with all the prevalent clash and unrest as the result of industrialization. To him industrialization promotes exploitation where stronger takes hold of the weaker. In the same way family is considered by this school of thought as assembling of people with the purpose of fulfilling the economic and social interests of those who are unable make their own.

Conflict theory argues that social change is usually favourable to industrialized society. It is antagonistic to agrarian and traditional societies. It breeds tussle and keeps one institution against the other. Economic betterment when happens not equal for everyone then lust for money increases. As a result, joint family system is going to be vanished for the money minting pursuits.

### **Theory of Modernity and Modernization**

This theory is considered as one of the most conspicuous perspective on social change (Haferkamp and Smelser, 1992). The term 'modernity' has been related to the meaning and significance of social changes that took place in Europe in nineteenth century as a result of industrialization, urbanization, and political democracy. It was coincided to capture these changes in progress by contrasting the 'modern' with 'traditional'. This is mostly clear among nineteen century theorists of modernity. At that time the theorists were quite optimistic in character and based on the ideas of progress. They discussed thoroughly the role of societies moving from one stage to the other i.e. from traditional to modern.

Almost all the theorists explained the changes that took place in Western societies. Later on, they were found attentive to the study of other underdeveloped and backward societies. That took place when the sociological research extended its concern beyond the Western society to study other societies, especially the Third World. Therefore, the term modernity has been defined as the movement from the peripheries to the core of modern society. It has been described as the

effort of the underdeveloped societies to catch up with the leading most developed countries (Sztompka, 1994).

According to this theory old family system and pattern of life has been replaced and changed with the modern way of life. Joint family system is old system, therefore, replaced in nuclear family system. Old patterns like marriage rituals and socialization patterns are endowed with formal type of rituals and ceremonies.

### **Different Approaches Regarding Social Change and Family**

Social change is such an important phenomenon that sociologists and other theorists can not put it sidelined. In recent days it has drawn attention of all the social scientists due to its importance and complexity. However, the technique and eye to see things varies from one theorist to the other. Giesen is of the view that even social change appeared in different phases with different faces but basic framework and fabric is of same nature. Social order and social change are mostly two sides of same coin. Therefore, social change is the integral part of social order (Luhmann 1984, 471).

In recent years, various theories of social change are being generalized to compare changes of present and past. Hermann Strasser and Susan C. Randall (1981:16) have beautifully well-defined different types and attributes of social change. They are: "magnitude of change, time span, direction, rate of change, amount of violence involved".

Adam Smith and Herbert Spencer in his theories put all weight on structural differentiation. Karl Marx and Emile Durkheim emphasized on the economic system based on the equal division of labour. Marx is the very essence stressed on conflict and unrest due to unequal distribution of wealth and resources. That situation causes or leads to bring changes in the society. Durkheim on the contrary believes in the integration of society. The gist of these approaches is enlisted as under:

### **Ferdinand Toennies: The Loss of Community**

Ferdinand Toennies, a world renowned sociologist and a classic writer in his book *Gemeinschaft and Gesellschaft* emphasized on the concept of modernization and innovation. The loss of community is his slogan which is due to technology and industrialization. Society in general

has become self-centered. The concept of community has vanished. In big cities people shun away with their traditional 'folkways and mores'. The family as an institution has got a negative impact. As an institution it has ceased performing the function of collectivism supporting the elders or physically handicapped. The main focus of family is on husband, wife, and children than anyone else.

### **Emile Durkheim: The Division of Labour**

*Durkheim's (1858-1917)* emphasized on the solidarity than communal integrity. According to him technology promotes mechanical and mundane type of solidarity. Although he has a different eye to see things but in its essence his ideas are closer to the concept of modernization and innovation as advocated by Ferdinand Toennies. He is of the opinion that social change is positive but aloof of altruism. Change is feared as anomic with little relevance to morality and religion. According to him change in the family pushes it towards less religious but more secularized.

### **Max Weber: Rationalization**

Max Weber coincided social change with modernity and secularism. These two terms are closely intertwined with each other. At the same time, it has put family as an institution in pressure shunning with traditional functions which are more related with simplicity and spirituality. If all is rationalized then according to Weber informal social control can not be reinforced. As a result, society in general and family in particular will be just puppets without proper social control mechanisms.

### **Review of Related Literature**

Godwin (1972) in a book captioned "Change and Continuity" has beautifully portrayed the life, social organization of village, marriage patterns, community brotherhood, and traditional village characteristics and attitudes with key focus on Indian villages. He noted little changes in the occupation of cultivation, with all the techniques and instruments traditionally utilized. The same also applies to clothing, although some changes do seem to have occurred. Godwin reported that as regards the leadership structure in the villages, there seems to have been little radical changes. But what little

changes did occur were along traditional lines. The writer has further noted that as regards traditional village attitudes and characteristics, the changes that have occurred have also been in the nature both of displacement-addition and of reinforcement-reformation, though the relative weightage would seem to be more in favour of the latter than of the former. In the end, Goodwin found some radical changes in family life patterns. He noted that profound changes seem to have taken place and still to be taking place due to the forces of modernization and technological inventions.

Szymon Chodak (1973) in a book captioned "Societal Development" has critically analyzed the various theories and approaches of development. The book is too old but it provides a solid ground towards the development and social change. The book has also forecasted some technological revolutions which in the present circumstances come to be true. The author of the book has presented a revolutionary idea of development with the inceptions of rapid social changes due to urbanization and industrialization. The theories he has analyzed are quite pertinent to the impact of technology in developing and changing the values and norms of the society.

Freestone (1974) in a book entitled "The South-east Asian Village: A Geographic, Social and Economic Study" has emphasized the importance of village as a social and economic unit in South-east Asia. According to him the rural community in villages is the most significant unit so far as the great mass of population is concerned. Those communities are widespread and deeply rooted traditions of democratic election to village offices, of communal planting, ploughing, planting, and harvesting, of land tenure, and of mutual aid among the members of the community. To support his ideas he has presented the data of nine countries including Malaysia. He has also presented the pictures of some of the villages showing the family, communal, social, and religious life of the people. He held the opinion that technology has lesser impact in changing the social life of village people because of adherent and blind faith in out-dated folkways and mores of the people.

Hans-Dieter (1977) in a paper captioned "The Challenge of Diversity: Basic Concepts and Theories in the Study of South-East Asian Societies" presented at the Conference on Southeast Asian Studies at Kota Kinabalu, Malaysia reported an extreme social,

cultural, and political diversity of the area. He found dual societies, rural societies, loosely structured social systems, and involution in South-East Asia. In the end he realizes that an in-depth field research is still an important task for South-East Asian sociologists. He opined that a rethinking of basic theoretical issues is certainly necessary to enable a thorough analysis of long-term trends in social change and development in South-East Asia.

Rao Manohar (1987) in a book namely “Social Movements and Social Transformation” has made an attempt to analyze the social movements within the framework of the sociology of social movements. The study of social movements logically belongs to the realm of social process. He has mentioned that ideology is an important component of all social movements. However, the social movements among the backward classes developed a protest ideology, based on their conditions and perceptions of relative deprivation. He is of the opinion that protest ideology, based on relative deprivation, helps establishing the identity and draw boundaries between the protesting and dominant groups.

Gupta (1992) in a book captioned “Social Stratification” noted the rapid emergence of industrial labour force in South Asia with special focus on India. According to the author although there is complete agreement on the view that in India especially unemployment is widespread, there has been almost equally uniform agreement among industrialists, officials, and scholars that industrial development is seriously hampered due to the difficulty of mobilizing a stable, disciplined labour force of adequate size. The writer recommends that in order to discuss the supply of labour, it will be useful briefly to consider the rural sector seriously from which the majority of the work force initially comes.

Zainah Anwar (2001) in her research article captioned “The Struggle for Women’s Rights within the Religious Framework: The Experience of Sisters in Islam” mentioned that social change is one of the biggest challenges of modern scientific age. Her main focus of study is social change and women in Islam. Islam as a religious of peace fundamentally is a religion that elevated the status of women in all spheres of life.

Sumaya Mohammad (2003) in a PhD thesis entitled “Islamic Concept of Social Change: A Preliminary Study” conducted in



International Islamic University Malaysia has presented a thorough analysis of social change in the religious context. She has cited different verses from Holy Quran and also put forth some strong arguments with the help of Hadith. Some of conclusions from her thesis are as under:

1. Generally change is a universal, unavoidable, irreversible and is a necessary phenomenon. Change is everywhere and happens all the time. It is unavoidable in the sense that it imposes itself upon us. It occurs whether we like it or not. Change is endemic; therefore all societies have to change. Those that do not will disappear.
2. Islam has a unique vision about social change, which is not found in other ideologies and religions. Islam agrees with the necessity, unavoidability, irreversibility and universality of change. Therefore, it advocates the necessity of changing human societies particularly Muslim in accordance with Shari'ah requirements.
3. The theories offered by Western sociologists are generally materialistic in nature. The reason is that these theories were formulated to oppose religion in general as well as Christianity in particular, which was against change.

### **Sociology of Social Change and Family System in Pakistan**

Pakistan is developing countries of the world. Majority of people in Pakistan are settled in rural areas. Rural societies are considered traditional societies. The village is the most important unit in the rural set-up. Simplicity, honesty, and homogeneity are considered as the basic hallmark of the rural society. Rural society has own characteristics. It is isolated with limited boundaries. It is small in size. The members of family have group consciousness and have personal and direct relationships.

Among the social institutions the family is the most important social institution in the rural set-up. It plays a decisive role in the material and cultural life of the people. In Pakistan, the family system is traditional in its very essence. Family in Pakistan is well knitted with greater social control over its members. The family as an institution is the full-fledged with all the functions and responsibilities.

Due to the caste and kinship joint family system is considered as the ideal one where patriarchal type of power prevails. Father is considered as the head of the family. Joint family comprises on father, mother, children, grand father and mother. Generally they live with other members having the same caste, or some remote blood relationship. Cousin marriage is most common in Pakistan. However, in recent days due to the industrialization and urbanization the drastic changes in family system are observed in most part of the country. Nuclear family system is going to replace joint family system as is happening all over the world.

Generally it is believed that in Pakistan people prefer monogamous marriages. There are strong norms which are compulsory for women to follow to safeguard their sexual fidelity. As the society is traditional, therefore, the land is considered the most precious. Son preference or having more male members is highly desired. According to a survey sixty percent of all marriages in Pakistan are between cousins (DHSL/Institute of Population Studies 1992).

Social values and cultural norms are deeply rooted in Pakistan. Review of literature suggests that all traditional societies of the world are strong supporter of their cultural norms values. It is also noteworthy that there is a close relationship between culture and family's social norms and values (LeVine 1974; Wenke 1984; LeVine, Miller, and West 1988).

Modernization is defined with different angles. As a process it is considered just as phenomenon of adopting modern style of life with different ideology and thinking. As a world phenomenon it is changing traditional way of living life. It includes the changes in eating habits, wearing a modern dress, and sometimes blindly following the western way of life (Robert, 2008). Social change by adopting science and technology for getting modernized is another explanation of modernity.

There is a sharp contrast and differences over the definition of modern family between the sociologists of the West and this part of the world. As per approach of Western sociologists modern family is the family where mate selection and even resorting to premarital pregnancy is acceptable (Dizard and Gadlin 1990, 5-24). Whereas, in Pakistani local context modern family means the family where all the

technological appliances are available and so on used. In Pakistani culture premarital sex is not permissible at any cost. It is totally formidable and punishable.

Social change is although positive but at the same time it has also marred moral values of family as an institution. Family cooperation is losing ground (Dizard and Gadlin, 1990). Social respect of elders has lessened to some extent in Pakistan. Sociologically speaking, discomfort and distress is vehemently observed everywhere within the family. There is a huge gap between material and non-material culture of family. William Ogburn called it 'cultural lag'.

In Pakistan electronic media has glamorized the concept of marriage. It has changed the family in its very essence. Arrange marriages are on sharp decline. Love marriages are on the increase. Clashes on property are common. Parents are not looked after and cared as they used to be when joint family system was common. Cousin marriages are common in villages but in urban areas the marriage bond has weakened to certain extent.

### **Technologies and the Family**

In Pakistan as in the rest of world social change made the life quite easy and comfortable. It has revolutionized almost all spheres of life. Family has also got new dimensions and directions. In villages, family has got a new way of living life and doing things. Agricultural revolution has introduced the tractors, threshers, and other heavy machines which have tripled the agricultural production. Roads, schools, and telecommunication network has modernized the village families to certain extent.

Satellite channels are considered as the engines of social change. It has globalized the world. It has also brought closer the traditional culture with modern culture. Likewise, it has lessened the gap between urban and rural culture. The facilities available in cities are also being used in rural areas depending upon the purchasing power of the people.

Technology has also some negative impact especially on the institution of family. Cooperation among family members is going to be declined. Cultural rituals and religious rejoicings are the telling of the old age. Marriage system is of new nature. Festivals are on the

decline. Mundane and mechanic type of life is also galloping the rural culture as it has played havoc with urban culture. Marriages are becoming tangible with frequent scuffles between husband and wife on petty matters. Old people are not reverend with the same zeal as they used to be in old ages.

In urban areas especially health facilities are available at doorsteps. Many new inventions especially contraceptive use has increased substantially. It has less endangered the life of females who used to remain sick due to the frequent pregnancies. Washing machines, microwave ovens, dishwashers, sewing machines, and other appliances has totally changed the family life. Now women are opting for workforce because they have ample time spared from household chores.

### **Changing Socialization Patterns**

In Pakistan babies are lavished with considerable care. Most of them are born in hospitals especially in cities. Even though midwives still provide their services in more remote rural areas. Careful prohibitions are rigidly followed for both the infant and the mother, according to the various cultural customs. New mothers wear special clothes, eat foods to supplement their strength, and refrain from performing tasks that might bring bad luck to their babies. Grandmothers often live with their new grandchildren for the first few months of their new life. Mothers and grandmothers are still considered the most important agents of the socialization.

The use of contraceptives helps the parents to keep the number of children as low as they desire. Even then in Pakistani society contraceptive use is less practiced. In villages where the majority of population lives the birth of child especially male is warmly welcomed. Sons in the family are considered as asset for the whole tribe.

Child rearing practices and educational experiences sustain the differences among the population. In Pakistan mostly children learn the importance of age hierarchy, especially the proper use of titles to address their elders. The family also teaches that kin are the appropriate source of friendly companionship. The frequent presence of siblings and cousins provides familiarity with the extended family and a preferred source of playmates. In turn, many families teach that strangers are a source of suspicion. The school experience reinforces

the ethnic differences in the population, since the schools are divided into separate system with different local languages as the medium instruction.

Schools have got the different type of assignments which are considered as the part of the socialization. The widely use of computers and other modern equipments serve the socialization in a distinctive style. Most of the schools help female students to come out of the inferiority complex. Modern technology especially computers have eased the life in schools. The females are considered physically less strong than their males. Therefore, computers have helped the females to attain the benefit at optimum level. The reason is that computers do not need physical power to operate but of the mental readiness.

Generally Pakistani society adopts the different socialization patterns for boys and girls. Boys since the very inception are involved in such tasks and assignments which are considered as the important and productive. They usually play games, have freedom to go anywhere and mostly help their fathers to supplement the income. On the other hand girls are socialized as docile and fragile. They are socialized to be submissive, obedient, and symbols of sacrifice. Girls are usually involved in performing household chores. As a result, girls since the very beginning assume secondary type of status within the family and outside the family.

### **Local Customs and Social Status of Women in Pakistan**

Technological inventions have little impact on the changing social status of the Pakistani women. Local customs, traditions and tribal laws play a role in determining the status of women in Pakistan. Majority of the people are still staunch supporters of their respective cultures. Even female education is not favoured in many parts of the country.

Pakistani society remains patriarchal in nature. The socio-cultural traditions define the role of a woman — as mother, wife, sister, and daughter. In rural settings the importance of constructive role of women in the social system is not generally recognized. The dominance of tribal codes and customs, and Indo-British judicial traditions has possibly created an atmosphere of disgrace and distrust. Even in cities with the usage of microwave ovens, fridges, televisions, and washing machines no impact has been witnessed on the general

psychology of menfolk. Women are harassed in industries and the workplace where males are allowed to work with women. As a general rule women are encouraged and suggested to work in those places where men have lesser chances to have the easy access.

The assertive role of males in Pakistani rural society generally relegates women to a somewhat lower status. This lower status in turn unconsciously causes lower social status. In the long run, it may even result in the denial of certain rights for the weaker sex. This highlights that the women face myriad socio-cultural problems. A woman has to strive hard to maintain her individuality.

Lower social status is inevitable because of the biological division of labour. Men generally are considered physically stronger and have certain abilities and interests. Whereas, women as the only sex able to bear and nurse children, have their own abilities and interests. Therefore, according to Talcott Parsons (1995), given their biological attributes, men find themselves more suited in instrumental (goal – oriented) tasks and women to expressive (emotionally oriented) tasks. In the home, husbands perform such instrumental tasks as providing economic support and making the most important decisions for the family, while wives perform such expressive tasks as nurturing children and providing emotional support for all family members. The division of the labour by gender ensures that important societal tasks — such as procreation and the socialization of the children — are fulfilled and that the family is socially and economically stable.

Similarly, according to Parsons, in the work place, women do expressive work and men do instrumental work. Women cluster in occupations that require expressive work, such as elementary school teacher, nurse, and secretary because of their interests and abilities. Women also are concentrated in specific specialties within professions such as law and medicine because of their attitude for expressive work and their desire to spend more time.

### **Conclusion**

Social change has far reaching effects. It has changed almost all of spheres of life. It has both desired and undesired consequences. It is also controversial. People adopt and accept the fruits and

consequences of social change as per their ethnocentric lenses. Pakistan is no exception. Social change has changed the social institutions especially family. Joint family system in Pakistan is losing its ground. Socialization patterns are getting change. Emotional attachment within the family members has lessened to certain extent. Due to the better economic benefits in urban areas migration to cities is on the increase. Electronic media has glamorized the concept and functions of marriage. At the same time social change has also left positive effects on family as a social institution in Pakistan. Females are aware of their rights. Industrialization and urbanization has eased and totally ushered a new family life.

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