CHAPTER III.

CHANGES IN THE TRADITIONAL JOINT FAMILY WHICH INFLUENCED THE POSITION OF WOMEN.

The world is composed of two species - the man and woman, who are distinctive with reference to each other and in many respects similar when we view them in the context of the living species. We find from the World Census Reports that women form a little more than one half of the population. Understanding of one half of the population gives us the pointers for the comprehension of the problems of the whole society because women are part and parcel of the total society, who are constry influenced by men viz. father, husband and sons and in turn influence them.

As an eminent sociologist Hob-House\(^1\) had pointed out in unequivocal terms that the position of women in a given society is the sure
index of the development of the country, to which they belong. For example, we find in traditional countries the women are treated as mere chattels with no freedom of movement, speech and action. They are controlled by the male members of the household. Even in households where the head of the family is a man younger than some of the female members in the family (like mother and elder sisters) the authority of the head of the family is rarely questioned.

In the traditional patriarchal joint family the eldest male member is the head of the family, who ruled the house like a monarch. The pattern maintenance is so much emphasised, there is no individuality for any other member in the household. The personality system is subordinated to the structural system of the joint family. In this type of family even the male members, except for the head of the family had no independence. So we can very well imagine the still inferior position of women. Women were appreciated only for their role as the mothers of the male children. The position of the female members is that of a subordinate member of the household. In the
agricultural economy of our Indian Society little importance is given to the education of women. Even if they had the necessary know-how of the rudiments of education these were so shlepshod that with the knowledge they could not take up a job outside the family setup and earn remuneration. In the lower classes the women used to help their husbands in the fields and also used to work in the house to raise the family. They were considered as useful members of the family. In the middle classes, their reference groups were the rich people, who had no necessity to do any work. Even though the middle classes would least afford to keep their women idle, the ideal of the leisured lady with beauty came in the way of her getting any employment outside the house. The dependency pattern of the women is so much emphasised in our Dharmashastras that the people had no other way than to accept it as a normative order. According to Manu "a girl before marriage is totally dependent on the father and after marriage on her husband and in the event of her husband’s death, she is dependent on her male children. Even the Shastrakaras went to the extent of extolling that the
women had no other duty or dharma than to obey the male members of the household. In the traditional society the achieved status has no importance because a person when born is given an ascribed status both in the house and outside it as a member of such and such family. The women beyond the four walls of her house felt utterly vocationless. With the advent of British rule there was a general awakening which led to the realization of the need of education both for men and women. As the conditions changed from decade to decade in the present century the giving of education to women is not questioned in the urban areas. More and more girls are given the facility to have higher education. With the rise in the cost of living some women are forced to take up employment outside their houses and utilise their education to an extent. As in every case there is still the time lag wherein the people are not yet fully convinced of the importance and need of women's employment outside the house for economic consideration.

In this chapter the under-mentioned two hypotheses are tested. (1) The nature of the family has an impact on the position of women. (2) The
educated and/or employed woman change the pattern of the joint (traditional) Hindu family.

In order to find out the changes occurring in the family pattern an ideal typical joint family is described below.

**CHANGING PATTERN OF THE TRADITIONAL HINDU JOINT FAMILY.**

In olden days life in India was centred around the village and even the towns and cities retained the rural character. To enumerate the changes occurring in the traditional joint family a brief enumeration of the characteristics of the joint family is necessary. The traditional joint family persisted through centuries in India and some of the main characteristics have crystalized. As has been defined by (Mrs.) Irawati Karve,² a joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in

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common family worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred". I.P. Desai also includes common income as well as property and also stresses mutual rights and obligations.3 B.R. Agarwala says, "members of the joint family are under the authority of the elders in matters of family and religion, joint investment of capital, joint enjoyment of profits and of incoming birth, marriage and death expenses from the joint funds".4 Agarwala feels that it is not essential for members of a joint family to live in one place and eat in a common kitchen. The above mentioned three definitions emphasises one characteristic or other of the joint family. So we can get an ideal typical picture of the traditional large joint Hindu family can be drawn up from these definitions of the three eminent Sociologists.


Aileen D. Ross defines "The traditional large joint family household was composed of a number of separate family living under one roof, sometimes called the Great House. Each family unit might have one or two rooms for personal use, but the whole family shared a common room for worship, a common kitchen and meals were eaten together in a common dining hall"\(^5\).

**THE AUTHORITY STRUCTURE.**

The wife of the family used to be the mistress of the house who used to give orders and allot work to all the women in the house. The joint hearth is strictly adhered to and the women used to take food after the male members have finished eating, thereby showing their inferior position in the family.

The property was held in common even though there was provision for division of the property under legal authority, still the members

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5. Aileen D. Ross - The Hindu Family in its Urban Setting (India, Oxford University Press, Indian Branch), p.9
rarely had the audacity to challenge the authority of the head of the family. The women were not entitled to property but they were provided with board-lodgings only. The closest tie of the joint family is the fact of joint worship of gods by the whole family. "The large joint family is family-centred characterised by intimacy, mutuality of interest and strong primary group controls and mutual assistance in time of need. In it family tradition and pride are strong and individuals are dominated by the opinions of the larger group. Such a family can only remain stable when a number of generations succeed each other in the same locality, occupation and social class. It is a system which strongly limits social mobility and social change because it binds the individual to others on the basis of birth, forces him to contribute to the support of a large group of members independently of their ability, introduces nepotism into both business and politics and assumes control of the younger generation by the elders." 6

Caste and rural villages bound the individual effectively to his family. Even religious worship is controlled by the head of the family. Older women in the family helped the younger generation in times of crises—Even loss of a parent or spouse never affected the life of the children. Each member is allotted certain duties and rights which were the guidelines for the behaviour of the members without any tolerance or deviance. This evidently led to the rigidity of the household in their expected roles for which the individuals were given the security of the household.

When new type of roles (student & employee) for women are introduced the rigid family system feels the stresses and strains as there is no built-in mechanism to absorb the rapid changes. So there is the eternal and perpetual mother-in-law and daughter-in-law tug of war. Especially among women who were not given freedom to move outside the house as they had to live day-in and day-out within the boundaries of the four walls, the conflicts were very great. The children also were also under the strains because it was difficult to agree to the rigid rules of the joint family. The
conformity was not difficult for docile members of the traditional joint families, but for dominant children it was impossible to live even in those days.

THE FACTORS WHICH LED TO THE CHANGE IN THE FAMILY SYSTEM.

With the advent of the British rule, the new technological advances upset the former relatively stable Indian Society. The new technological knowledge introduced in India in the 20th Century led to the new types of economic and industrial organization, new modes of communications, and a new type of urban life. According to Crane, "The rapid growth of cities at the beginning of the twentieth Century, a trend which was accelerated by migration from rural areas as the result of World War II led to serious changes in the Social life". 7 Kingsley Davis notes that there


Crane shows that whereas in 1921 only some 11% of the population was urban, it increased to 13% in 1941 and to 17% in 1951 and 25% in 1961. Between 1921 and 1941 the total urban population grew by 33.5% while in the most recent decades its rate of growth is even rapid. Thus there is a strong trend toward urbanisation, of which the most recent decade has seen the greatest development".
is no sign yet that the rate of urbanization will sláken for the world as a whole, "the human species is moving rapidly in the direction of an almost exclusively urban existence". Moreover, Davis estimates that, although the highest levels of urbanization are now found in the countries of northwestern Europe, and in the regions where descendants of these people have settled, their rate of increase is beginning to slow down, while the rate of urbanization of the under-developed countries is increasing. In India, the fastest urbanization has occurred since 1941. According to him, "urbanization represents a revolutionary

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One reason for this is that the social structure of the city is distinctly different from that of the simple village. "The continuance of urbanization in the world does not mean the persistence of something that remains the same in detail. A city of a million inhabitants today is not the sort of place that a city of the same number was in 1900 or 1850. Moreover, with the emergence of giant cities of five to fifteen million, something new has been added. Such cities are creatures of the Twentieth Century. Their sheer quantitative difference means of qualitative change as well. This discussion comes from Davis "Origin and Growth of Urbanization", pp.429-437.
change in the whole pattern of social life. It itself a product of basic economy and technological developments, it tends in turn; once it comes into being to effect every aspect of existence. Therefore, the old patterns of life developed in simple agriculturally based societies will never return."
Due to this, the old type of traditional joint families is broken down in urban centres and it is unlikely that they make their appearance again.

M.N. Srinivas has pointed out basic change in family pattern. According to Srinivas\(^9\) "For industrialization does not merely refer to the use of large and complicated machinery and urbanization does not only mean a great concentration of human beings in small areas, they both require certain types of socio-economic relationships and a weltanschurmg which are in conflict with the social system which obtained in Pre-British India".

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Social contracts are more important in urban areas than rural localities. New social contacts are formed in cities because the population is cosmopolitan in nature with various occupational choices, which favour vertical and horizontal mobility. The city life encourages people to have new ambition and aspirations. The individual finds scope to have a choice in his profession which is not possible in a joint family.

More and more people are moving to cities in search of jobs or for education. The small land holdings of the joint family in villages are not sufficient to give adequate employment for the entire family. People after shifting to the cities generally start their own individual families known as the nuclear families. In Western Society the nuclear family consists of husband, wife and unmarried children. But in India the structure of the families in cities is different from the Western nuclear family. In India the structure of the families in cities is different such that besides husband and wife and unmarried children, we find married children, parents of the head of the family or some nephews and nieces. So the family type is
not strictly joint family type or the nuclear family of the western type but a combination of both. According to many sociologists, even the members of the nuclear family still possess the roots in their joint family in the village. B.R. Agarwala pointed out in his essay on 'Joint Family', that the boys in the city mostly go to the joint family to arrange for them, brides in their native place. There is joint participation in festivals, marriages, etc. People in the cities do send money to the joint family even though they live their separate existence in the city. The employed people after retirement prefer to settle in their native villages. In India, at present the distant relatives are not given importance but the immediate cousins and the uncles are consulted in most of the major issues like celebration of marriage of daughters and sons etc.

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FACTORS WHICH TEND TO BREAK-DOWN THE JOINT FAMILY
SYSTEM.

The causes which led to the breakdown of the traditional joint family are: (1) The advent of technological development, which gave scope for members to seek employment which is different from the traditional occupation and to form nuclear families in cities. (2) The quarrels between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law and between co-sister's-in-laws lead to the splitting of the joint family (3) The joint family property is so small that it could not provide for the maintenance of numerous members (4) New occupational avenues were created during the World War II and after the Independence, which made it possible for members to get new jobs (5) Cities are providing higher education, so the ambitious parents are sending children to the cities to have higher education and better employment. (6) Urbanization emphasises individuality and privacy, which are not possible in joint family living. (7) The various facilities of provident fund, free medical treatment, the easy loans provided by the Government and the giving of pension for children and widows led to the slackening of the dependence of members on the
joint family which eventually led to the dissociation of members from the joint family.

Although the structural climate is ripe for the formation of nuclear type of families in urban areas, the cultural climate has still retained the nature of joint family. So the Indian family in the urban setting is neither joint nor nuclear.

The central problem of the study in this chapter is how far there is a change from traditional to modern family with special reference to the changing position of women caused by the above changes in the family pattern due to urbanization, modernization and industrialization.

From the data obtained from personal interviews a typology of classification of families is given below. The families are divided into four categories. All the families can be classified into one of the four types.

CLASSIFICATION OF FAMILIES IN THE SAMPLE.

As has been already pointed out various factors influenced the breaking up of the traditional joint families and the emerging pattern of the family
is not that of the western nuclear type of family, but a different type of nuclear family has emerged which is unique in some respects and is the typical urban family in India.

The four-fold classification of families is as follows:

(A) The traditional type of joint family.

(B) The small modern joint family in urban areas.

(C) The nuclear family.

(D) The nuclear family with adherents.

The characteristic features of these family features are enumerated below.

**TYPE 'A' FAMILY OR THE TRADITIONAL JOINT FAMILY.**

This type of family structure is explained before in detail. This type of family life provides the individual family members with a secure environment which can fulfil not only his survival but also his religious and recreational needs.

This type of family is composed of three or more generations living together in the same house, working in the same kitchen, joint owning property
in common and pooling income for common spending. For e.g. a typical joint family may include ego, her husband, her father-in-law, mother-in-law, her sons and their wives and children and brothers of her husband and their families. The head of the family is the father-in-law of the ego. These families may also include visiting relatives who may stay for more than a year. Such kind of families are not very much prevalent in urban cities to a greater extent.

TYPE 'B' FAMILY OR MODERN JOINT FAMILY.

The small joint family by definition of Aileen D. Ross, "composes of a household in which parents live with their married children and other unmarried children or two brothers living together with their wives and children". 

This form may not be permanent as the earning members may move when transferred or unmarried ones may move to their

separate individual establishments. The income of the earning members is not pooled together, but the expenses for running the household are shared by the earning members. After the contribution for household is given away, the remaining money may be spent by the person for the needs of his particular family. Even though joint cooking and joint staying is there, joint expenses for everything are not there. There is some freedom for the earning members to stay in the joint family and also freedom of choice of occupation. This type of families are found in larger numbers in cities. In this regard, the preference of the members to stay in this type of joint family are quite revealing. One graduate respondent said, "it is difficult to find accommodation in city, so we are living with my husband's brother's house". Another said, "it is economically advantageous for both the families", so we stay together. Another lady said, "since I am employed my mother-in-law is an asset in the house. She loves my children, so no problem for me". One lady said, "there is no compulsion to stay in the joint family, because of its advantages we stay together". This new type of joint family is
advantageous to both the families and there is no compulsion from any side. This is seen from the table given below. This type is not like the traditional joint family with the patriarch as the head of the house, who controlled everything.

**TYPE 'C' FAMILY OR THE NUCLEAR FAMILY.**

This type of family is composed of two generations usually the parents and the unmarried children. This type of family is found in greater abundance in Western countries. In India also in large cities and towns we find this type of families more common than in villages. We can get the views of the women belonging to this type of family from their replies regarding the family pattern they are exposed to. One respondent said, "since we are both educated, we do not like meddling elders in our family". "As my mother-in-law is illiterate, and wants to wield power which I resent". The children are spoiled by the illiterate mother-in-law, so we separated". There is more freedom for both of us (husband and wife) so we prefer nuclear family only". The replies of these educated women
show clearly that they prefer nuclear family because of autonomy of the members. Another respondent said, "In a combined family it is impossible to get companionship and equality between partners".

**TYPE 'D' FAMILY OR THE NUCLEAR FAMILY WITH ADHERENTS.**

The nuclear family with dependents or adherents consists of ego and wife and their children and one or more dependents. The latter may be father of ego or mother or brothers, nieces and nephews etc. The dependents mean here the person or persons who are not contributing monetarily to the household. In India we come across many families of this type in cities because the family members do not completely break away from their parent families. The number of members coming from the village somehow is accommodated. The replies from this group of respondents are quite revealing. "My brother-in-law, who is studying in Engineering College is staying with us. We cannot refuse him to stay with us and also what would the neighbours say, if we asked him to stay in hostel." "My father-in-law has no where to go, since his wife
died”. “Duty bound we have to keep brother-in-law’s son, because his father is staying in the village”.

These found types of families are found in the cities. The number of the type of family the respondents belonged to is given below in a tabulated form.

**TABLE I.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>S.No.</th>
<th>Type of family</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Type A Family</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Type B Family</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>34.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Type C Family</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>32.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Type D Family</td>
<td>162</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>506</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is clear that the type of family emerging as a norm is not completely nuclear like the Western nuclear families. Out of 506 only 165 are living in nuclear families i.e., only 32.6% belong to the Western type of nuclear family, whereas 34.6% belong to the new type of joint family known as the type 'B'
family in our typology. However, there are 32% of the nuclear families peculiarly Indian type, wherein we find there are some dependents or adherents.

The analysis clearly shows the full fledged joint families satisfying all the conditions given above (Type A) are fast disappearing from the cities, that still we find a few of them only proves the exception to the rule. However, the nuclear family (Type C) of the Western style also are in the minority only, because the kinship ties are still strong and even if they are not so, still they have a pull towards the joint family so that some relatives are always accommodated whether or not they monetarily contribute to the host family's earnings.

The impact of educated women on the structure of the family is analysed. The educated women showed preference for nuclear family, because they emphasise the equality of partners, which is possible only in nuclear type of families (seen in Chapter on Equality). Here in the sample 63% belonged either to nuclear family (Type C) or nuclear family (Type D). So in the families where women are educated and employed there is marked preference for Type C or Type D family.
In the joint family, as the respondents expressed, "the women cannot take up employment outside for economic gain or independence, because of the fear of the patriarch - that his authority may be questioned by these women, so they are prevented from taking jobs. The educated women on the other hand try to have their nuclear family so that they can get employment outside and better their economic conditions. Even in the joint families of the second type, there are many women working and earning money, but they expressed that if there are some other ladies not earning in the house, conflicts always arise over the performance of household duties because there is no patriarchal authority in this type of family to assign the work to various members. But due to mutual advantage, this type of family is still existing in the society. This type of family is not permanent. It may break into a nuclear family at any moment. In the nuclear family wherein both husband and wife are employed, the women felt this type of family is more conducive to the perfect division of labour at home and office. So the educated employed women in the sample prefer
nuclear families. But even then, some women expressed that they felt the need for some workers in times of sickness in the family. In India, still people look after the relatives if possible and keep with them nephews or nieces or other dependent relatives for education or otherwise in their houses thereby discharging a fraction of an obligation to their original families.

A major change which has come about due to the shift from joint family system to nuclear family system is that the two sexes are no longer segregated. In the semi-joint families of Type B, the economic insecurity or necessity might have forced the daughters and sons to remain in the joint family even after marriage and desireous of setting up of separate homes of their own. I.P. Desai 12 suggests "that families sometimes stay together because there is nothing to be divided except the ancestral debt".

Economic factors have probably been the main determinant of the increasing number of family separations. There is no family property and no interest in pooling their individual incomes which led to the break down of joint family property. Stresses and strains developed in the family because some members may be earning more than the other members due to different occupations. So the persons who earn more may wish to lead a more comfortable life only with the members of their nuclear family. The family property used to be an unifying force, with the dwindling of it and the incapacity of the estate maintaining the whole family led to the breakdown of joint family.

The Hindu Inheritance Bill gave women a legal share in the family property, this also in a minor extent affected the family system which led to the breaking up of joint family because there is no customary obligation of a brother towards sisters and the widows of their dead brothers as they are given a share in the family property wherever it existed. Some respondents in the nuclear family said, "Why should we take care of sisters-in-law, because
they took the share of the property of father-in-law".
The quarrels between co-wives due to the unequal
contribution of the brothers lead to serious stresses
which resulted in the breakdown of the joint family
which have been influenced by ambitions and acquiring
of a high standard of living.

Another cause is that the education,
employment and late marriages of the women led to the
preference and insistence on nuclear families by these
women. The more mature women of present day questioned
the dictates of their mother's-in-law and refused to
obey them.

The preference for nuclear family by women
is the greatest change which has far greater impact
on the other institutions like family, marriage and
kinship. This change of family system affected all
the relational bonds of the members of the family.

The unmarried girls still stay with their
parents because they are afraid of the censure of
the society. The unmarried girls even though they
are discriminated against (See Chapter IV) by the
parents in treatment still stick to the family
because they are afraid of breaking away from the
family. It is unusual for a woman to live alone in
India even though they may crave for independence because of the fear of public opinion which keeps them with their families. Some of the girls in the sample clearly expressed their desire to stay separately but they would not do so because there are no proper arrangements for them to live independently (like Youth Hostels). As women living separately in a house is the butt of ridicule by the whole society, they stay in the new type of joint family.

Thus the nature of the family has an impact on the position of women. In joint family there is no scope for employment or equality for women along with men. Pattern maintenance which is the central core of joint family system is impossible if women gain economic independence, so they were not allow to take up outside employment.

Since women started earning money they changed the pattern of family to nuclear type. In this type of family equality between partners is possible Kinship rather than education or employment of women is important in joint family, the present change of family system affected all the relational bonds of the members of the family. Because of the change of family type the girls had to seek outside
friendships for their recreational needs. The preference of cross cousin marriages are also becoming out-dated. The new type of love marriages and preference of outside friendships is dealt with in Chapter IV in detail.

The nature of the family has an impact on the position of women (seen in Chapter IV, V, VI). The education and employment of women to an extent changed the pattern of family. The women because of their insistence on equality contributed to an extent to the preference of nuclear family in urban areas.