

# The Reflective Dimensions of Human Life: Family and Marriage as Social Institutions

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## 1. Introduction

Before we go into the details of family and marriage, we are required to know about the native of family system which I have given in the introductory chapter of the basis of social life. Thought, reason constitutes the glory of humanity. From it spring the magnificent of achievements in culture and civilization that mark the source of human history. Reflection is the power to ask and answer questions to set and solve problems it is the capacity to be curious about ourselves and our environment. The answers we give must, however be consistent, answers to all possible questions and a logical interaction of all possible answers an exhaustive harmonious and systematic view of the world. Out of the respective capacity of the human mind, science as well as philosophy are born. In this sense science and philosophy as white head says are merely different aspects of one great enterprise of the human mind. "They cooperate the task of raising humanity above the general level of human life".<sup>1</sup>

In this general characterization of science and philosophy are not discriminated. Perhaps the work curiosity seems too trivial to express the inn motive which has driven mankind onward towards the solution of the Eternal Puzzle. But in a wider and deeper sense 'curiosity' means "the craving of reason that the facts discriminated in experience is understood. It means the refusal to be with the bare welter fact, or even with the bare habit of routine. The first step in science and philosophy has been made when it grasped that every routine exemplifies a principle which is capable of statement in abstraction from its particular exemplifications. The curiosity which is the gadfly driving civilization from its ancient safeties is the desire to state the principles in their abstraction."

Philosophy, thus grows directly out of life and its needs everyone who lives and thinks is in some measure a philosopher. Philosophy is neither an accident nor a luxury but inevitable, normal and necessary. The individual as living, is active and dynamic not passive and station we have desires, interests, wants, nor our conduct is directed to some end. The environment (physical, vital and social) makes demand of us that we must meet if we are to live. The types of reaction which the individual makes can be classified into (1) sensitive (2) emotional (3) intellectual. This last gives rise to science and philosophy.

Thinking is a bare necessity there are moral situations, strange experiences, to which we must adapt our life, there are problems and mysteries which must be solved by intellectual activity.

"Whence are we and why are we?

of what scene the actors are spectators?"<sup>2</sup>

These are the problems not of Shelley alone, but in some degree of every individual, normal, intelligent human being we thus think because we must because our nature is at if, and because our environment forces on us demands which we dare not ignore. Thinking is a necessity of human existence; it is man's most efficient means of prolonging and expanding his life.

### Key Notes

- 1) Common Sense and science
- 2) Family and marriage
- 3) Accuracy
- 4) Conventional aspect
- 5) Bourgeois Family
- 6) Bankruptcy in marriage

### Common sense and Science

There are two stages of this unending venture, viz common-sense knowledge and scientific knowledge.

- 1) Common sense knowledge – It is a knowledge which is generally accepted as true without question, knowledge of the first look, self-evident knowledge. It has three main characteristics.
  - a) It is a theory – it is not given knowledge; it is knowledge that is created by the activity of the mind. It results from interpretation, it is already an advance on animal consciousness, in as much as reflexion is already at work.
  - b) It is largely inherited: the medium through which it is transmitted in language tradition and custom. The common-sense knowledge of any generation is the legacy of the past to the present and is transmitted through the conservative forces of group life. We grow with it during childhood and is parts of our daily intellectual diet. We assimilate it unconsciously as we digest our food
  - c) It is vague, indefinite, sketchy. It cannot be defined with any precision many of the views vary from age to age and community to community. They are superficial, they result in contradiction, as soon as one beneath digs in the surface. They rest on uncriticized prejudices and assumptions which are open to question. Thus, common sense cannot carry us very far in our intellectual enterprise. It has soon to be abandoned for science. As Thomas Huxley said, "Science is nothing but trained and organized common - sense".

### The essence of Science

The essence of Science is a certain critical quality. Scientific knowledge is more gratifying to our intellectual interests. It is not knowledge of a different reality. It is rather a critical and systematic knowledge of the same reality in which

common. Sense is interested to a vague and haphazard manner. It has three main characteristics.

- 1) Accuracy: Science demands definiteness and precision. It is neage satisfied with vague guesses. The true scientists are possessed of the fanaticism of veracity and untiring search for truth. For this purpose, science introduces quantity and measurement to make the results definite, exact and accurate.
- 2) Universality Science is concerned with general principles a laws rather than particular facts. The scientific man is concerned with the understanding of individual facts as illustration of general principles. The principles are understood in the abstract, and the facts are understood in respect to their embodiment of he principles. To attain this end, science takes resort to framing of hypothesis and their verification by experimental methods.
- 3) Organization – This leads us to the third characteristic of science. Science is systematic and organized, it wants to correlate the various bits of isolated information and to solve all contradictions which arise in the attempt. The goal of science is the construction of an organized body of knowledge and this accomplished through generalizations. The knowledge which in thus get is far superior in value to anything which common sense can give. This is now generally accepted. Where common sense and science differ, the verdict of science must be accepted.

### **The Family and Marriage**

That the family is natural to man is apparent from the fact that it is natural to most of the more developed animals. It is obvious that the care of the young becomes increasingly important in the higher types of animal life, because they tend to be more and more helpless at birth and are more and more in need of care and protection for their development and nature and for a comparatively longer duration. We also find that the instincts of the parents become graduate adapted to the cope with the biological necessity. The critical burden of responsibility and care and protection falls generally upon the parents, and mainly upon their mother. This may be taken as constituting what Mackenzie calls “the natural basis of family”.<sup>3</sup> Thus the monogamous family which would, *prima facie*, seem to be the best adopted for achieving this biological end, has been declared by many as being the ideal social institution for the true and proper nurture of the human animal. Here, both parents can normally devote themselves whole - heartedly, and with cordial cooperation, to the necessary task. This form of family life is seen in its greatest perfection and beauty chiefly in certain p-species of birds, e. g. the common sparrow which in other respects are not at all closely akin in human beings. On the other hand, dogs and cattle and other mammals, more allied to man, show the definite sanctity to the marriage tie. Thus, it has been urged by many thinkers today that polygamy and polyandry are more natural to man as well as the higher mammals. Mackenzie, however, thinks that some birds are closely akin to human beings in an essential point, i. e. the need for special care and preparation for the young. “Flying is the natural mission of many birds, as thinking is of man, and the young are, in general, quite unfitted for either of three functions”.<sup>4</sup> Swimming, preying, speed in running, are equally the natural missions of other

animals but no one suggests that the fish the tiger and the greyhound require a protracted period of early training or the monogamous family. The fact remains that discussion about matters where intimate human emotions are involved, cannot always be based on logical and rational groupings.

### **The conventional aspect of the Family**

Though we may grant that the family is a natural form of association we have to ask the question, why the family as a social institution has, in all times and climes tended to foster the growth of a number of rigid conventions, traditions and even ritual. If we look to the origin of the word “family” itself, 5 we can trace it to the Roman ‘*famulus*’ a domestic slave, the family meant primarily “a collection of slaves attached to a household”. (Domus appears to be nearest equivalent in Latin for what we understand by a family). Later, the family came to mean, not merely the slaves, but all the persons included within the household, all regarded more or less as property of the head of the family the father. In the Ten Commandments.<sup>6</sup> We have practically the same conception “Thou shall not covet thy neighbour’s wife nor his man - servant, nor his maid servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, now anything that is thy neighbour’s.

### **Bourgeois Family in Modern Europe origin of the Patriarchal family**

In this form of family development begins as a social being. Here puresian morality and bourgeois property meet.<sup>7</sup> (Bartlet Sigmund Freud p/84 “The commercial value of virginity increases and becomes ultimately a sentimental demand for virginity. Sexual abstinence begins to be demanded from birth” 8 (Ibid P/102)

Taking the child then as the natural basis of the family, we have regard to its preparation for life as the primary function of this institution. “If we treat the family as a little state, the child is its legitimate sovereign Mackenzie.

A family is founded in time by the marriage of two persons of opposite sexes. But marriage need not always result in children, and even when it does, the union is generally prolonged beyond the period during which the care of children is essential. Hence it is not unnatural to regard love between persons of opposite sexes rather than the care of children, as the fundamental basis of the family.

### **Educational Functions of the family**

The care of the young ones means primarily the preservation of life and health (satisfaction of purely vegetable needs but it also needs) the development of the animal instincts, especially the need of movement and expression. The natural love and affection of parents, and especially of mothers for their offspring, an affection which they have in common with the lower animals, makes it generally true that no others are so well adopted to care for them in their early state of helplessness. In some parents’ natural affection and instinct may be comparatively weak, as it may sometimes stronger in those who are not parents. The family, in a larger sense, is also a natural center of educational influence. The parents learn a great deal by teaching. Another important educational influence is the inter parental one. In any married couple they are bound to be many differences in temperament, taste and outlook on the world. If there is the

tie of natural affection and intimate association in wedlock, which can be learned by mutual intercourse, if there is emotional maturity on both sides and the desire to understand each other. This aspect of family life deserves more emphasis in modern times as it has gone into the background on account of the prevailing motion in Europe and America that marriage is a "bankrupt" institution.

### **The Bankruptcy of Marriage**

The importance of this aspect of family life is one of the strong arguments in support of monogamy. In a polygamous relation, the position of woman tends to become degraded, and can hardly be such as to yield that close personal tie of equal fellowship which monogamy makes possible. The modern industrial development in Europe which has given to the democratic process, the emancipation of women, Universal Adult suffrage and the influx of girls to the universities, factories and the public services on terms of equality with boys has brought about a situation, in which no modern woman wants to enter into the marital relation with any but an equal status. Women's freedom is no longer a passive thing, but an active and dynamic reality in Europe, America and Russia today. The most revolutionary factor of the new rational morality is that of the free divorce. Divorce can be got by mutual consent or even at the instigation of one party, on the ground of incompatibility. The mutual consent for the husband and wife or the desire of either of them to obtain a divorce shall be considered a ground of divorce". This is clear and unambiguous statement of the code in the United States of Soviet Republic. The bourgeois English family, on the other hand carries with it "an obvious sense of stiffness and narrowness, moral and intellectual".<sup>9</sup>

### **Economic functions of the Family**

As the care of the young, especially in its earlier stages, falls almost unnecessarily upon the mother, the father is normally called upon to provide for her support, as well as that of the children. This economic aspect of the family is so important that sometimes marriages tend to be arranged largely on financial grounds, and even when they are not so arranged, financial considerations are seldom without weight. This economic aspect of the family was so prominent in the mind of Marx and Engels that they came to the conclusion as far back as the year 1847, that there is practically no family life among the large majority of the workers in the factories and mills in a modern industrial area. Those who have seen the condition of the workers in Ahmedabad and Kanpur for instance will have to admit that a very large proportion of our rural population is slowly drifting towards a life of the slums, by sheer economic pressure, and the evils of drinking, gambling and public prostitution are now growing too rapidly in our own country that has already become a social problem of the first magnitude. The words of the authors of the communist manifesto, prophetic as they are, are unfortunately beginning to apply with full force to our own country, which can hardly in any sense be called truly industrialized on a grand scale.

### **Community of Women**

Community of Women plays an important play an important role in the family. The bourgeois community have no need to introduce community of women, it has existed almost from time immemorial Bourgeois marriage is in reality a

system of wives in common and thus, at the most what communities might possibly be reproached with is that they desire to introduce, in substitution for a hypocritically concealed, an openly legalized community of women. For the rest, it is self-evident, that the abolition of the present system of production must bring with it the abolition of the community of women springing from that system is of prostitution both public and private (The communist Manifesto). The fact cannot be denied that the real point aimed at by the communities is to do away with the status of women as mere instruments of production.

## **2. Observation**

Considering the above facts, it is clear as noticed from my observation that the family is natural to man and the care of the young becomes increasingly important in the higher types of animal life, because they tend to be more helpless at birth and more indeed of care and protection for their development and nature. The critical burden of responsibility and care and protection falls generally upon their parents and mainly upon their mother. A family is founded by the marriage of two persons of opposite sexes. Hence, it is not unnatural to regard love between person of opposite sexes rather than the care of children as the fundamental basis of the family. As the care of the young, especially in its earlier stages, falls unnecessarily upon the father, the father is normally called upon to preside for its support, as well as that of the children. This economic aspect is very important because sometimes marriages tend to be arranged largely on financial grounds otherwise, they may lead to bankruptcy in marriage.

## **3. Summary**

Summarizing the facts mentioned about it is clear that family plays a major role in a social life. From the details furnished it is apparent that the young ones need care of the mother than the father because the father is busy with mills, factories etc. whereas the mother at home cooks after her children. A family so to say consists of mother, father and their children and vice versa. Mother or father cannot consist a family. Both have to be there. In a Bourgeois family development begins as a social being. The importance of the bankruptcy of marriage in a family life is one of the strong arguments in support of monogamy. The economic aspect of the family was so prominent in the mind of Marx and Engels that they came to the conclusion so far back as the year 1847, that there is practically no family life among the large majority of the workers in the factories and mills in a modern industrial area. Large majority workers in Ahmedabad and Kanpur show that they are drifting towards a life of the slums, by sheer economic pressure and the evils of drinking, gambling and public prostitution are now growing too rapidly in our country that has already become a social problem of the first magnitudes.

## **4. Conclusion**

We are now in a weakness of the family position to conclude, from the various considerations referred to above, that though the family is deeply rooted in nature, and especially in human nature, there are some essential

weaknesses that tend to make it ineffective and even pernicious to its influence. There defects are all connected with certain conflicts that arise between the family and some other important interests in human life. Human nature as we have seen, is diverse and multiple not a simply unity. There are various currents and cross currents in man and society, both conscious and unconscious we have already referred briefly to the economic interests of man as disturbing the unity of the family plato, however, it is worth noting does not appear to have felt any special difficulty on this score. In the ideal republic which he so carefully and elaborately sketched; he did not intend to interfere with the family life of the industrial class. In the fifth book of the republic, plato definitely insists on the abolition of the family in the ruling class. Plato is rightly regarded as a pioneer in the enfranchisement of women. From this point he was however the most daring innovator that the world has even seen. Plato is undaunted by any natural prejudice allowing a perfectly free and open field in all walks of life to men and women alike. For this bold declaration of rights of women, he deserves our admiration and respect, and women in all ages and countries owe an immense gratitude to him. In the Laws, which is a work of ripe age, plato is not a whit less convinced of the good that will accrue to a state, through the education of their women and full cooperation in public affairs. The legislator ought "not to let the female sex live softly and waste money and have no order of life, while he takes the utmost care of the male sex, and leaves half of life only blest with happiness, when he might have made the whole state happy".<sup>10</sup> Moreover, as they have no private property in lands, houses, or other goods, they will be free from all quarrels, occasioned by the possession of money or children or Kindred.<sup>11</sup> This communistic scheme has been severely criticized by Aristotle Roussean and many others. Roussean says "Having got rid of the family there is no place for women in his system of government, so he is forced to turn them into men. I refer to that subversion of all the tenderest of our natural feelings he sacrificed to an artificial sentiment which can only exist by their aid".

### **Gandhiji's conception of Marriage**

According to Mahatma Gandhi, marriage, is and ought to be a sacrament, the union is not the union of bodies but the union of souls, in dissoluble even by the death of other party. Marriages where the true law of marriages ignored, do not deserve the sense. Again "marriage is a fence that protects religion. If the fence were to be destroyed, religion would go to pieces. The foundation of religion is restraint, and marriage is nothing but restrained".<sup>12</sup> Again about a decade later Gandhiji says "when a man has completely conquered his animality, envoluntly in can renitence becomes impossible, and the desire for sexual gratification for its own sake cases altogether. Sexual union then takes place only when there is a desire for offspring".<sup>13</sup> It is in this sense that the famous Urdu poet of Delhi, Ghalib says – "vkneh dks Hkh eq; Llj ugha bUlka gksuk" the active opposition to trend takes an emotional form, when freud is accused of being sex mad of "reducing everything to sex of of "Pan - Sexism". According freud the sexual instinct is active from the first day of life to the last, but it manifests itself in greater variety of ways, the nature of which is often to unrecognized than is generally supposed. We may now return from our digression to the question of upbringing of

children which has been emphasized by the psycho - logical conclusion that all character is permanently formed for good or ill by the age of five, during which period the child has to go hurriedly through a complicated emotional development which it has taken mankind fifty thousand years to achieve the civilizing of his primary instincts. Love is as necessary for the (child's) mental development as food is for his bodily development.

### **Glossary**

- 1) Adventures of ideas.
- 2) Shelley the Romantic poet.
- 3) Mackenzie
- 4) Ibid
- 5) Roman famulus – a domestic slave
- 6) Ten commandants
- 7) Sigmund Freud P/84
- 8) Carpenter: Loves coming of Age
- 9) The Laws 806 C. Tr Gowett
- 10) The Republic, Book 5, 466 E
- 11) Young India, June, 3, 1926.
- 12) Harijan, March 1937 in Married Brahmcharya