PREFACE

In the curricular structure introduced by this University for students of Post Graduate degree programme, the opportunity to pursue Post Graduate course in Subjects introduced by this University is equally available to all learners. Instead of being guided by any presumption about ability level, it would perhaps stand to reason if receptivity of a learner is judged in the course of the learning process. That would be entirely in keeping with the objectives of open education which does not believe in artificial differentiation.

Keeping this in view, study materials of the Post Graduate level in different subjects are being prepared on the basis of a well laid-out syllabus. The course structure combines the best elements in the approved syllabi of Central and State Universities in respective subjects. It has been so designed as to be upgradable with the addition of new information as well as results of fresh thinking and analyses.

The accepted methodology of distance education has been followed in the preparation of these study materials. Co-operation in every form of experienced scholars is indispensable for a work of this kind. We, therefore, owe an enormous debt of gratitude to everyone whose tireless efforts went into the writing, editing and devising of proper lay-out of the materials. Practically speaking, their role amounts to an involvement in invisible teaching. For, whoever makes use of these study materials would virtually derive the benefit of learning under their collective care without each being seen by the other.

The more a learner would seriously pursue these study materials the easier it will be for him or her to reach out to larger horizons of a subject. Care has also been taken to make the language lucid and presentation attractive so that they may be rated as quality self-learning materials. If anything remains still obscure or difficult to follow, arrangements are there to come to terms with them through the counselling sessions regularly available at the network of study centres set up by the University.

Needless to add, a great part of these efforts is still experimental–in fact, pioneering in certain areas. Naturally, there is every possibility of some lapse or deficiency here and there. However, these to admit of rectification and further improvement in due course. On the whole, therefore, these study materials are expected to evoke wider appreciation the more they receive serious attention of all concerned.

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Subject : Post Graduate : Master in Social Work   [PG : MSW-11]

Paper : XI
Contemporary Social Problems and Social Policy

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NETAJI SUBHAS OPEN UNIVERSITY

M.S.W – 11

Unit-01 ❑ Concept of Social Problem

Structure :

1.1. Concept of Social Problem

Raab and Selznick maintain that a social problem is ''a problem in human relationships which seriously threatens society itself an impedes the important aspirations of many people.'' They go on to say, 'a social problem exists when organized society's ability to order relationships among people seems to be failing; when its institutions are fathering, its laws are being flouted, the transmission of its values from one generation to the next is breaking down, the framework of expectations is being shaken. The widespread contemporary concern with juvenile delinquency, for example, is only partly that delinquency is the doorway to crime or is a threat to personal safety and property. It is also a fear that society is failing to transmit positive social values to its youth. It is seen in other words, as a breakdown in society itself.

A social problem may also be defined as a ''deviation from the social ideal remediable by group effort''. (Walsh and Furfey). Two elements are important in this definition : (i) a situation which is less than ideal, that is, which is undesirable or abnormal, and (ii) one which is remediable by collective effort.

Drug abuse, alcoholism, terrorism, poverty, unemployment and crime, are not individual problems but affect the public at large. Individual problem is one which affects one individual or one group. Its resolution lies within the immediate milieu of the individual/group. Against this, a public issue is one which affects the society as a whole, or the larger structure of social life. The sociologists' aim is to understand how these social problems crop up in the functioning of different social structures, to study the operation of varied patterns of interrelationships in the society and how people are affected by them, and observe how social systems need to be reorganised and restructured in dealing with them.

1.2. Nature of Social Problem

Social problems are behaviour patterns or conditions which arise from social processes and are considered so objectionable or undesirable by many members of a society that they recognise that corrective policies programmes and services are necesary to cope with them.

Social problems arise by being collectively defined as objectionable by many members of the community. Thus adverse conditions not defined by the community as reprehensible are not considered as social problems. For example, if taking alcohol is not regarded as objectionable by the society, it is not considered a social problem. But as the society, recognizes and discusses the problems inherent in alcohol consumption, studies its consequences and devises a plan of corrective action to control it, it comes to be defined as a social problem even though the original situation may not have changed.

Social problems change when the concerned behavioural patterns are interpreted differently. For example, till a few decades ago, mental illness was viewed as insanity but now it is seen only as one type of 'deviant behaviour' which requires psychiatric and social treatment.

Mass media (like newspapers, television, radio etc.) play an important role in creating awareness about the scope and urgency of social problems.

Social problems have to be viewed in the context of the society's values and institutions, for example, the problem of racial conflict in the united states is different from the problem of untouchability in India.

Social problems vary historically; contemporary social problems are the society's concern.

Social problems need to be analysed in terms of the influences upon them by group processes and social relationships.

Thus, the nature of social problems can be described briefly as follows :

- All social problems are deviations from the 'ideal' situation.
- All social problems have some common basis of origin.
- All social problems are social in origin.
- All social problems are inter-connected.
- All social problems are social in their results, that is, they affect all sections of society.
- The responsibility for social problems is social, that is, they require a collective approach for their solution.

1.3. Causes of Social Problems

Social problems arise out of pathological social conditions. They occur in all societies-simple (that is, small, isolated and homogeneous with a strong sense of group solidarity, and which change slowly) as well as in complex (which are characterised by impersonal secondary relations, anonymity, loneliness, high mobility and extreme specialization, and where change is faster), that is, wherever a relationship is affected between a group of individuals leading to maladjustments and conflicts.

Reinhardt has referred to three factors in the development of social problems :

(1) Differentiation and Multiplication of Interests and Functions :

The principle that the greater the number of parts in a machine or an organism, the greater the probability of maladjustment among the parts holds good for human societies too, where there is increased opportunity for the collision of interests of various individuals, groups, institutions and systems. Untouchability, communal riots and political crimes, are the social problems which are the result of the clash of interests of different castes and classes.

(2) Accelerating Frequency of Social Change or Growth of Civilization :

This has been made possible due to the multiplication of scientific and mechanical innovations. For example, the innovation of machine has destroyed many old forms of employment resulting in the migration of millions of people, and has given rise to class conflicts. It is, thus, the structural and functional maladjustments arising from revolutionary inventions which create many social problems.

(3) Man's Developed insight to make a scientific analysis :

Ever since man has developed his social insights of looking into the working of nature issues which were formerly regarded as simple are now perceived as the result of various kinds of natural conditions which influence man and society.

Types of Social Problems :

Clarance Marshall case has given four types of social problem on the basis of their origin :

   (i)   these which are roated in some aspect of the physical environment,

   (ii)   which are inherent in the nature or distribution of the population involved,

   (iii)   which result from poor social organisation,

and

    (iv)   which evolve from a conflict of cultural values within the society.

Fuller and Myers have given three types of problems :

(a) Physical problems : though these are problems for the society but their causes are not based on value-conflicts, for example, floods and famines,

(b) Ameliorative problems : there is consensus about the effects of these problems but there are differences pertaining to their solutions, for example, crime, poverty, and drug addiction, and

(c) Moral Problems : there is no consensus pertaining to the nature or causes of these problems, for example, gambling and divorce.

1.5 Theoretical Explanations of Social Problems :

Though social problems are essentially subjective, they can be studied scientifically. Some of the theoretical approaches may be examined that present universal explanations for all types of social problems.

(A)   Social Disorganization Approach

Social disorganization is a condition of a society, community or group in which there is a breakdown of social control, or of a social order, or of formal and informal norms that define permissible behaviour. It is characterized by the lack of cooperation, common values, unity, discipline and predictability.

Social disorganization occurs when there is a change in the equilibrium, of forces, a breakdown of social structure so that the former patterns no longer apply, and the accepted forms of social control no longer function effectively. This disruptive condition of society, which is evidenced by normlessness, role conflict, social conflicts, and demoralisation increases social problems.

Many of the old rules which governed the intra-family and inter-family relations seem to have broken down. Many people feel frustrated and unhappy. This is the condition of social disorganization, in which changes and unhappy. This is the condition of social disorganization, in which changes in the basic conditions of life, causing breakdown of traditional norms, have resulted in widespread discontentment and disillusionment.

(B) Cultural Lag Approach : Culture lag is a situation in which some parts of a culture change at faster rate than other related parts resulting in the disruption of integration and equilibrium of the culture, for example, material culture changes more rapidly than the non-material culture

10

in industrial societies through rapid advances in science and technology. The theory of culture lag, in particular holds that in modern societies there has been a tendency for change in the political, educational, family & religious institutions to fall behind technological changes. It is thus easy to see how cultural lag can create social problems. Even after rapid industrialisation in the last quarter of the 19th century & in the first quarter of the 20th century, some people were so influenced by the rigid restrictions of the caste system that they refused to work. With members of other castes in the industries and prefer to remain unemployed and poor. The first quarter of the twentieth century, thus, remained a period of cultural lag.

(C) Value Conflict Approach : A value is a generalized principle of behaviour to which the members of a group feel a strong, emotionally-toned positive commentment and which provides a standard for judging specific acts and goals. Each member of the group is expected to remain committed to the values accepted by the group. Values, thus, provide the generalized standards of behaviour. Examples of values are equality, justice, freedom, patriotism, mobility, individualism, collectivism etc. The value conflict theorists like Waller, Fuller, Cuber and Harper, hold that clashes in value system are of basic importance in the arigin and development of social problems. Waller has referred to the conflict between 'organisational' and 'humanitarian' values. The former favour private property and individualism, while the latter are votaries of remedying the misfortunes of others.

(D) Personal Deviation Approach : Deviation is non-confirmity to social norms. It is different from abnormal behaviour because the latter commets psychological illness rather than social maladjustment or conflict. Thus, people who deviate from social norms are not necessarily mentally ill. In the social disorganization approach to social problems, one books to the rules that have broken down and the changes that have taken place because of the breaking of the rules. In personal-deviation approach, one looks to the metiration and behaviour of the demants who are instrumental in causing the problems.

(E) Anomie Approach : This approach was propounded by Merton. Anomie is a condition characterised by the relative absence or weakening or confusion of norms and values in a society or a group. Merton says, "the social problem arises not from people failing to live upto the requirements of their social statuses but from the faulty organization of these statuses into a reasonably co-herent social system." Anomie is the counterpart of the idea of social solidarity. Just as social solidarity is a state of collective ideological integrations anomie is a state of confusion, insecurity and normlessness. According to Merton the disjunction between goals and means and the consequent strain leads to the weakening of men's commentment to the culturally prescribed goals or institutionalised means, that is, to a state of anomie. Merton maintains that people adopt to this disjunction either by rejecting the cultural goals or the institutionalised means or bath.

Conclusion : To conclude, it may be said that the sociologists' role in social problems is to create an awareness about the social problems, to analyse the causes of social problems, to develop theories about social problems, to discuss effects of social problems on individuals, groups and society, and to examine the consequences of alternate plans suggested for solving the problems.

1.6 Exercises

(i) Define the term 'Social Problem' and explain its nature and causes.

(ii) Write an essay on theoretical explanation of social problem.

Unit-02 ❑ Problems Related to Family and Marriage in India, Marital Conflict, Causes and Consequences of Divorce and Desertion, Problem of Child Marriage, Dowry

Structure :

2.1   Problems Related to Family and Marriage in India

2.2   Marital Conflicts; Causes and Consequences of Divorce and Desertion

2.3   Child Marriage

2.4   Dowry System

2.5   Exercises

2.1 Problems Related to Family and Marriage in India

The family is the most important primary group in society. It is the simplest and the most elementary form of society. The family, as an institution, is universal. It is the most permanent and the most pervasive of all social institutions. Mac Ivern says that a family is "a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduning to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children."

Marriage implies sanctioning by society of a durable bond between one or more males and one or more females established to permit sexual intercourse for the implied purpose of parenthood. Marriage is a stable relationship between adults of opposite sexes in which certain rights, duties and interactions are socially prescribed and supported and in which any children born are legitimate in the eyes of society. Marriage may also be defined as the approved social pattern wherely two or more persons establish a family.

In pre-industrial and agricultural societies, production of most goods and services was organised on the basis of the family or household unit and usually involved parents, children and other members of the household. Since the family unit produced must of the goods and services it needed to survive (and sometimes a little extra for sate in local markets) the family of this period was an independent commodity-producing unit the basic unit of production.

13

In course of time smaller farming families and cottages were displaced from their landholdings, with the result families became more reliant on outside employment-often selling their services to larger landholders. But the most decisive change came from the late 18th century as production of goods became organized through workshops and factories. People left their homes each day to go to work and earned wages by means of which they hoped to purchase the goods which formerly the family unit might have produced.

In India also, the traditional joint family was a unit of production and consumption. Today, which the advent of diversified occupations, members in the joint family tend to seek their fortunes outside. The contemporary family is a unit of consumption. Particularly, in technologically advanced societies, the family has a vital economic function as a unit of consumption. The separation of home and workplace resulted in the general exclusion of women from social production. Many women became for the first time just housewives.

In many countries of the west, sexual norms have been greatly liberalized-statistics indicate a significant change in pre-marital sexual behaviour pattern. They show on increasing gap between the conventional ideals of the adult world and the actual behaviours of both adults and young people. And the actual behaviour of both adults and young people. One of the reasons for this change is the dramatic increase of women in the work force and the slow but sure alterations in sex roles that are being accepted. In most parts of the world and in India too, the only women who worked outside the home or for pay were those women whose husbands were unable or unwilling to support them. Today, working women are increasingly from the upper and middle classes. In India, the growing emphasis on the education of girls, rise in marriage age, employment opportunites for women, social approval, or at least tacit tolerance of single girls and married women accepting employment resulting greater opportunities for developing outside contracts and working side by side with their won colleagues, increasing readiness to admit women to professional and other responsible and better salaried jobs and the new legislations granting freedom and parallel rights to women have all contributed to bring about a charge in family.

The graditional joint system of India has undergone vast changes. These changes have not destroyed the system as such. They have definitely affected its structure and functions and also its stability. Milton singer has identified five factors which have affected the family most. These are education, industrialization, urbanisation, changes in the institution of marriage, specially in the age of marriage and the legislative measures.

Perhaps the most quoted change in the western countries is the dramatic increase in the number of divorces. The high rate of divorce in urban industrial societies reflects :

(1) the separation of marriage from religion;

(2) the emancipation of women

and (3) the change in values to a new emphasis on individualy and personal happiness.

This frequency of divorce and remarriage has led analysts of the family to call the institution 'serial marriage'. Regardless of personal moral judgements on the subject of

14

divorce, many have now started viewing it as a natural product of social change. The factors responsible for this are growing secularity, emancipation of women and their employment outside the home and the trend towards smaller families. In the industrialized societies newly-weds are less willing to put up with an unpleasant situation. Today institutions and private counsellors have set up courses to help couples going through a divorce. In other words, divorce is becoming institutionalized. Another alternative to marriage and family is remaining single and this no longer has the stigma it used to have.

Thus, societies differ in the way in which the family is functioning. Among the former functions of the family that have been taken over by separate institutions are religion, education and care of the all in old age homes. This is true of western societies but not to that extent in India. Change in the order of the modern age and is touching society at all levels. Family, which forms the care of society, can hardly remain immune from its influence.

2.2 Marital Conflicts; Causes and Consequences of Divorce and Desertion

The striking problem that confronts the modern family is its instability. The traditional family was a stable type of family whose dissolution was rarely thought of and was not very easy. It faced the world as a unit. Women outside the family had no refuge. The profession of the family was fixed which was continued by succeeding generations. Social mobility was slight. But today it is all changed. The control of the family over its members has decreased. The younger generation does not like any interference by their elders. There is lack of unity among the family members. Faith in one another is decreasing. The problems of working women have hindered the development of the children and increased conflicts between husband and wife. There is lack of mutual trust. The marriage bonds have weakened. The ancient ideal of fidelity in sex-relationship has been adversely affected. Pre-marital and extra-marital relationships have increased. There is sexual disharmony between husband and wife. There is no longer any family craft or profession. The members of the same family are engaged in different pursuits, one in service, the other in business, a third in politics. The increase of specialized agencies have greatly dismissed common participation which was the backbone of traditional family. The modern family has shurnk both structurally and functionally and is gradually losing its primary character. The state has undertaken to provide pre-natal attention and infant schools; expensive medical facilities are available, the factory and office provide the place of work and women clubs and bars provide for recreation. If people find their education, their work and their recreation outside the family and if women can get jobs which make them independent, surely the charge of a broken home can be laid at the door of the modern family.

What leads to divorce?

A particular case of divorce is always the outcome of a long process of mutual alienation between the married fair. So, it cannot be said that the "causes" are in any strict

rense, for there may be a worse case of mutual alienation that did not end in divorce. However, it can be said that certain aspects of culture and social structure are likely to lead to a high divorce rate. Among these aspects the following are the important ones.

(i) Decay of Social Values : The grounds that are usually given in the courts for dissolving marriages are numerous, chief among them are sexual immorality, cruelty, incompatibility, sterility and venereal disease in communicable form. These are, however, the external causes of divorce. The deep lying cause is that in modern family there is a noticeable decay of the social values upon which the family rests. Marriages today are for personal convenience and not for spiritual emancipation.

The modern view of marriage is materialistic and self-centered which has weakened the foundations of family. Modern family is an equal partners demanding reciprocity and naturally less stable than the partriarchal family which was an autocracy. Family life requires solid foundation, sacrificial living, personal charity and the assumption of social responsibility. And since these are lacking, the rate of divorce of increasing.

(ii) Less Social Protection : Moreover, the change in the functional nature of the family has also added to family instability. In the partriarchal family the adjustment of partners to one another through the tensions and crisis of the family was brought about by economic necessity and social pressure. Today the necessity and pressure are lessened. The factory system has reduced the importance of the family as a producing unit and has provided jobs for women. Woman earns an independent living and does not depend upon the man for her bread. She separates as soon as she does not find the man to her liking. Society does not press her to live in the family as in this age of urbanism men are indifferent to each other. The family is compelled to rely upon its own strength for survival in times of crisis and since the modern family is a loose union based on a weak foundation, it fails to survive. Economic conditions in the past made the family fails to survive. Economic conditions in the past made the family a forced union especially for the woman. For the modern woman this economic dependence practically does not exist. Further, commercialization of services has freed men and women from dependence on the home for meals, clothing, laundering and recreation. The divorce rate has been going up in the industrialized societies. There is likelihood that the process that increases the economic independence of women will advance further and consequently family instability will also be increased. Section 13 of the Hindu Marriage Act, 1995 provides grounds for seeking decree of divorce such as :

  (i)   Adultery,

 (ii)   Cruelty,

(iii)   Desertion,

 (iv) Change of religion,

  (v) Incurable unsoundness of mind,

 (vi) Leprosy,

(vii) Venereal disease,

(vii) Renunciation of the world,

(ix) Presumed death,

(x) Non-resumption of cohabitation inspite of the decree of judicial separation.

(xi) Non-compliance with the decree of restitution of conjugal rights.

"Desertion" was only a ground for judicial separation before Marriage Laws (Amendment) Act, 1976 but now it has been made a ground for divorce as well. Section 13 read with section 10CU(a) of the Hindu Marriage Act, as amended provides that the desertion for a continuous period of net less than two yours immediately proceeding the presentation of the petition is now a good ground both for judicial separation and divorce. Desertion is a matter of inference to be drawn from the facts and circumstances of each case. The inference may be drawn from certain facts and circumstances of each case. Where in consequence of mutual agreement between the parties the wife was residing separately but she had been compelled to agree that way on account of Cruelsome behaviour of the husband to her, the husband was held to be deserter and not the wife.

Since divorce is a failure of marital adjustment, to avoid it the folllowing steps are suggested.

(i) All feelings of resentment should be abandoned;

(ii) Needless irritants and antagonizers should be eliminated;

(iii) Find ways to do new joyful things together.

(iv) Have children but by mutal agreement;

(v) Understand your mate;

(vi) Discuss your vital family problems with your mate frankly, but do not argue endlessly;

(vii) Discover areas of agreement and develop together joint programme of action.

(viii) Surrender non-essentials. Do not wreck your happiness and that of your mate over some comparatively minor issue that was never worth the tears and agony it caused;

(ix) Agree to live and let live.

(x) Put the welfare of your family first and stop fretting about yourself.

2.3 Child Marriage

Child marriage in India has become, more or less a custom and the people seem to be of the opinion that they have to follow this custom. A popular study reveals that during

the last 35 years there is no perceptible change in this custom particularly in Rajasthan where males and feramles are getting married in their childhood. The study also shows that child marriages cannot be curbed merely by legislation. However, community panchayats can play an important role in curbing this social evil. Realisation of adverse effects of child marriages can help in reduction of incidence of child marriage. A general awareness and understanding of this fact is spreading very fast because of literacy and mass communication. Attention is also being paid towards adopting remedial measures through effective voluntary efforts which could help in applying a brake to widespread social-cultural problem of child marriage.

Child marriage was not prevalent in ancient India. Various types of marriages were prevalent in ancient India. viz., Gandharva Vivaha (love marriage), Asura vivaha (marriage by abduction) etc, but among these Bal-vivaha is conspicuous in its absence. There are many reasons to believe that this custom originated in the medieval ages. The vedic mantras, such as the Rigveda mentioned that a girl could be married only when she was fully developed both physically and mentally and that she was to be fully developed physically before leaving her father's home. Men were advised to marry a girl with a fully developed body. One hymn mentions that a female should be married only "when she is not a child."

In India, during the 1860s marriage meant girls getting married below 8 or 9 years old. Socio-Reform-religious movements such as the Brahmo Samaj & the Arya Samaj pioneered work against child marriage. Late in the 1860s some success was made, when the Indian Penal Code prohibited intercourse with a wife who had not reached 10 years of age. Nevertheless, it wasn't until 1880 that child marriage as a problem became a public issue in India runing the debate on the age of consent bill.

Shortly thereafter, in the 1886 the first, petition against 'Hindu Infant Marriage' was proposed to the Govt. by the natives of Meerut. It was finally passed in 1927. It declared that no marriage would be valid unless the girl has completed here twelfth year. Finally the child marriage restraint Act was passed in 1929. The object was to eliminate the special evil which had the potentiality of danger to the life & health of a female child, who could not with stand the stress & strains of married life & to avoid early death of such minor mothers.

According to the Act.

(1) "child" means a person who, if a male, is under 21 years of age, and, if a female, is under 18 years of age.

(2) "child marriage" means a marriage to which either of the contracting parties is a child.

It is noteworthy that a contravention of the provisions of the Act does not render the marriage invalid as the validity of the marriage is a subject beyond the scope of the Act.

Child marriage violates every human right to which a child is entitled : the right to health, to education, to equality, to liberty and security of the person and of course the right

18

to make a free and informed choice of a spouse. The practice of child marriage reinforces the basic problem of low levels of health, and education among women. The state of law, the lacunae in it was well as the confusions, contradictions, and lack of gender sensitivity inherent in the provisions of various statutes dealing with the age of marriage, the age of consent and the validity of the marriage should be criticized for the prevalence of this evil practice throughout this country.

2.4 Dowry System

Dowry was initially an institution in which gifts and presents were given to a girl at the time of her marriage when she was required to leave her parents' home and join her husband's household. But unfortunately it has become a crude institution resulting in female infanticide, suicide, bride-burning and other indignities and cruelties. The dowry problem has become a serious social problem among the upper castes and middle classes in towns and villages. The rules of marriage, namely, caste endogamy and clan exogamy and anuloma (hypergamy) and pratiloma (hypogamy) have been misinterpreted and misused for maintaining the dowry system. These rules restrict the choice of mate-selection. They ensure that marriage takes place within one's caste and outside one's clan.

It is difficult to suggest a set of factors responsible for the custom of dowry, but we can think of a tentative list. These include certain rules of marriage (including hypergamy), caste, hierarchy, patriarchy, primogeniture, the low status of women modern education and employment, a false sense of prestige, and economic prosperity of some people. Since dowry has become a complex phenomenon and a social problem of a dynamic nature, it needs quick and far-reaching remedial measures. Only legislation would not be sufficient. Legislation has several lacunae, and it is not easy to overcome them. Some voluntary agencies have started movements against the instituion of dowry. These organisations have organised demonstrations against the incidents of dowry homicides, suicides, torture and harassment. Social boycott has also been done in some cases.

What we need today is a crusade against this evil, which has, in fact, ruined several families and has destroyed the lives of thousands of women year after year. There is a need to chalk out a programme having both curative and preventive measures, and also long-term and short-term device. The curative and long-term measures would include inculcation of a new ideology, and a value-system which gurantees a place of honour to women and their parents. Young men of marriageable age do not become marketable commodities sold by their parents to the parents of brides in return for dowry. Egalitarian values are the only substitute for caste-based hypergamous marriages. Inter-caste marriages should be encouraged. Arranged marriages with demands of dowry must go.

The preventive and short-term devices would include immediate action when incidents of dowry deaths, harassment and humiliation occur. The victims of dowry should be provided legal and social protection. The television,radio and newspapers should highlight such

incidents with all seriousness to curb the menace in future. Street corner plays should depict such incidents as serious matters of life and not as a source of entertainment. Political leaders, government officials, businessmen and others must not be allowed either to take or give dowry in any form, not even in the form of gifts and presents. It has become a vicious evil. A man who gives dowry to his daughter plans to take more dowry for his son than he has given for his daughter. If such thing continues, there will be no end to this social evil. Hence, the measures suggested above are the only way out to reduce the magnitude of the problem.

The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 provides girls with the legal rights to a share in the parental property; but rarely do girls demand their share nor are they given it. The law is almost redundant. The Dowry Prohibition Act of 1961 has utterly failed to check the growing menace of dowry. The girl does not make a claim for her share in parental property, but the parents spend a lot on her marriage. The Act 1961 prohibits dowry. Despite this, the practice of dowry is widespread. It has even spread to the communities, castes and regions which were hitherto unaffected.

2.5 Exercises

   (i) Write an essay on the problems related to the family in contemporary Indian society.

  (ii) What is 'Divorce'? What are its causes and consequences?

 (iii) What is 'Dowry'? What are its different forms? Write about its practice in India.