

Family in the global context



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Family constitutes the basic unit of society, and it assumes diverse forms and functions from one country to another, and within each national society.

There are many different types of family structure, with different strengths and weaknesses. Any image of what constitute the ideal family differs greatly both within and among countries. The manner in which families form, establish pattern of behavior, function and evolve, as well as their relationships with the local community reflect societal values and expectations and, to some degree, individual choice.[1] Societal values regarding the functions and roles of families differ both among and within countries.

Changes in social structure, in part a result of globalization, have affected the nature of what is considered a family. There has been general trend towards reduced family and increased emphasis on the nuclear family. Rapid improvement in communication, transportation and information technology have converted the world into a ' global village'. Now the effects of capitalism are spread throughout the world by means of internet and satellite television.

These improvements have allowed individuals increased contact with ideas and behavioral norms beyond their traditional spheres, and profoundly changed the lives of families. These changes have produced new issues and challenges before families as well as Christian ministry. However, we cannot deal with all issues and challenges because of lack of time and space. Therefore, in this paper, the writer focused attention only on more crucial issues.

In collecting materials, apart from personal experience, the writer conducted structured interviews and a kind of non-formal group discussion. 1. Impact of Media Though the evolution of media has brought many good changes, it also has given birth to difficulties in family life. One is constantly exposed to the opinions, views and reviews on TV, Internet, magazines, etc. This has resulted in the different members of the family having different mindset, opinions and views leading to slow demise of the familial solidarity. The constant exposure to media via TV or Internet robs us of the time that could have been used in a more constructive manner and often becomes the excuse for procrastinating other important work.

In a family, we are making less and less time to communicate with each other that further leads to the decay of healthy & meaningful interaction among the family members. Trivial matter like wanting to view different channels on the TV is resulting in unnecessary arguments & disharmony in a family. It has even been said that the Football World Cup and India-Pakistan Cricket match at the same time had been the bone of contention of many families. There are many scenes mostly sex and violence in movies, soaps, serials, etc.

that are unsuitable for children. However, since they constitute the key ingredient of the package it is hard to categorize and take them away. Hence, in the end it is there for all see. These have a negative impact on children in the way they think and in their future upbringing. I do not know whether we all know about it but there was this news where a little boy jumped to his death because he believed that he could fly like his movie superhero. One thing that becomes conspicuous is that we tend to harbour a

craving to become what we see on TV and on the Internet and this may lead us to wrong ways of life.

2. Consumerism Ours is a consumer society and none can deny it. Whether we like it or not the spirit of consumerism has a vice like grip on our families today. We strive to possess all the new things that we see even though we do not necessarily need them. Our wants changes as and when we see things that are more new.

We see advertisements that show the perfect and beautiful things even though in reality it may not be so. We see so many bright and beautiful colours and suddenly we want to be a part of it if not be it. Whether it be clothes, food and drinks, technology, everything seems so perfect. We even come to believe that without those things our lives would be incomplete and that they are the key to our happiness.

Especially in the case of our youths, it is ‘ uncool’ not to have the things his/her friends have. Therefore, because of the spirit of consumerism, we believe the things that we want are actually the things that we need and we have to have them irrespective of our circumstance, budget or income. We truly follow the “ Just Do It” motto. We are not ashamed of anyone and are almost ready to do anything as long as it gets us our wants. We do not see what type of work it is but are only interested in how much it would pay.

We not only follow but also chase our wants. This is the reason why we have so many working couples today leaving their children to be cared by others. These children are the ones who more often than tend to follow the wrong ways of life. The difference between the working hours of a couple also often

leads to problems in their marital life. Anyway, the worse part of consumerism might be the dissatisfaction even after having the things that we so craved for.

We believe our wants would bring us happiness and contentment but that is not so. We might be happy for sometime but our happiness ends as and when we see other new things and so it goes around. This is something very tiresome. 3. Individualism Changes of lifestyle in the global village are easily accepted as positive.

They provide evidence that individuals are exerting more and more control over their own destinies and are enjoying additional opportunities for more diversified lives. As a result, however, many people now feel less responsible for family relationships. Because of the rapid development of information technology, the western individualistic lifestyle has a widespread effect on the lives of the young people. Many young people now do not care for other members of the family; they just live their own lives according to their own will.

It is becoming the root of many of the problems in our family. We are becoming so opinionated that it is getting difficult to live together as a family. "Ours" rapidly being replaced by "Mine" is not helping either. It is only further deteriorating whatever bit of family life is left. Today, it seems that a man is no longer the head of the family but it is the person who earns the most in the family.

4. Education Education is one of the main concerns for family in the global context. Because of market economy, education becomes business. In a

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profit based market economy, business enterprise suck profits from whatever aspects of the family they can.

Education is now seen as economic territories for the expansion of market. Because of this market morality, the quality of education offered by different institutions/universities is varied. Some institutions offer good quality but some offer bad quality. The education morality becomes ' if you have enough money, you can get good education'. Therefore, it is really a burden for the family to search for good education.

The father of six-years-old girl said, " We buy ABC at a very high price". Another problem that India faces is the huge difference in the level of quality of education. While some institutions are imparting world-class education, there are others that it would be a bane to say that they are imparting education. The rich and prosperous do not have any problem in selecting the type and quality of education that they would want to give to their offspring.

However, for the not so rich it takes on the form of a great burden as if it were the wages of their wrongdoings. Even if everything goes well and their education is completed, the quality of education one received does show eventually and becomes the deciding factor on the type of job they would get and in their respective career. Hence, even though there are exceptions, it becomes very difficult for those who cannot afford good education to excel in their chosen field and career. This further increases the gap between the haves and the have-nots. Therefore, people resort to loans to provide their children with the best education, which only adds up to their burdens. 5.

Uncertainty of the Future In the global village, things are changing very fast. The surest thing about tomorrow is that it will be different from today. Something that is 'good' for today becomes 'bad' for tomorrow and 'new' becomes 'old' in a very short period of time. This rapid change of everything becomes a great problem for the family.

One couple said that it is very difficult to prepare for the future, because they do not know what will happen in the future. What we considered as nice and good for today may not be considered as nice and good tomorrow. This rapid change has made many a families nervous because it blurs their view of the future making them vulnerable to future change. Rearing family on a constant principle is becoming increasingly difficult. Therefore, because of the uncertainty of the future, families are tempted to face the future without a proper preparation, because they do not know how to prepare.

In this case, the apparent consequence is that families without proper preparation for the future will face more problems. 6. Child Rearing The era of simple innocence has gone. In this global village, most parents struggle to keep up with their children. Children want much more than playthings.

A mother of six year old girl said, " She is not happy with mere barbies, she wants more variety and novelty in everything we bring her." From X-Men, transformers, beyblades, video-games, to gadgets that even adults cannot fathom, children are certainly going global today. Today's children are also more fashion-conscious than their adult counterparts are. They demand clothes with their favourite characters like Mickey or Harry Potter on them.

Peer pressure is another thing that dominates the child psyche today. Competing with other children in schools results in additional demand on the parents. “ We have to buy the latest version of beyblade because my son saw it with someone else in the school,” says the father of eight-year-old boy. These are but few examples of changes in the lives of children. It is clear, however, that parenthood in the global context today is not what it was a relatively few years ago. In our times, family living has experienced radical alterations.

This is reflected in the statement made by some parents, “ When I was a kid, we...” These changes pose a great challenge before parents. They just cannot rely on the traditional way of child rearing. For many parents it becomes a burden to meet the ‘ needs’ of the global child. Conclusion We cannot stop the changing system of family lives in the global context. Forces of globalization are beyond our control.

If our Christian message is to continue to be relevant in a day when many a ‘ voice in the wilderness’ of families cries out to be heard, it must continuously reinterpret its proclamation. The redemptive love of God in Christ is still as pertinent and needed as in any previous generation. However, one of the major tasks of each generation is the reapplication or reinterpretation of this gospel to meet new manifestations of issues. Therefore, in order to successfully resolve issues faced by family in the global context, we need to reinterpret the same gospel of Christ.

Perhaps one of the beginning places in gaining and maintaining contact with the needs of family in the global context is by establishing better lines of

communication between the pulpit and pew. Through the pulpit preaching, contemporary issues faced by families can be addressed. For example, we can preach that getting and receiving whatever we want (consumerism) does not guaranteed true happiness and satisfaction. The Church needs to seek to establish and maintain the sanctity of the home. It needs to continue to be an advocate for family life and a context in which questions about the purpose and meaning of the family can be examined.

At the same time, the church's access to families at different life cycle is a privilege and an opportunity for a ministry with individuals and with entire families for the sake of growth and stability. Home visitation can also provide an opportunity to learn about patterns, values; low conflicts are dealt with, individual styles of living and ways of being together as family. This will help the minister to effective help to families in time of crisis.