
UNIT13 DEMOGRAPHY, FAMILY AND GENDER

Structure

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13.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this Unit, you will be able to explain:

- population growth in Europe and its implications,
- family structure and the changes in family structure following industrial revolution and urbanization, and
- transformation in gender relationship.

13.1 INTRODUCTION

This Unit will focus on demographic and family patterns and the changes in gender relation. From the mid-18th century the population of Europe, especially in the western part, began to expand rapidly. Population growth and expanding market economy influenced family structure and cultural values. Women in large numbers got employed in industries moving away from their traditional jobs. Women and a section of intelligentsia became vocal about inequality faced by women in different spheres of life. Coming out of the patriarchal domination women raised their voices for equality and rights and began to play significant role outside their household responsibilities. This broadly gives you an idea about the nature of changes in modern Europe following industrialization and urbanization.

13.2 DEMOGRAPHY

Many European countries since mid-18th century witnessed decisive growth in population. Industrial revolution brought about dramatic changes in demography of industrializing countries. By 1850 the European (excluding Russia) population reached to 210 million and by 1950 393 million which was considered a revolutionary change. This was also the period when a large number of people, about 50 million, migrated from Europe to America, South Africa and Australia. These areas were rich in land and natural resources but thinly populated, therefore had immense opportunities for European expansion. Before we try to find the reason for population growth it is important to keep in mind that population change varied greatly in different parts of Europe. Over the years studies on demography developed with new researches and there is shift from the Malthusian

analysis to new approaches analysing population growth and its regional variation. Generally the gap between births and deaths, migration (both internal and external), changes in fertility and mortality are considered as factors influencing the rise in population. There are also studies referring to improvements in modern medicine controlling diseases, climate and socio-cultural change which also contributed to the changing rates of population growth. It is important to point out here that researches on demographic changes in different countries of Europe suggest that it is difficult to suggest uniform European demographic system, rather population history of each country was linked more closely to its specific economic, institutional and cultural histories.

History of European population during the 19th century is much documented than elsewhere because there are censuses and many precise reconstitutions of demographic dynamics of many areas. Before the beginning of census parish registers maintained by the Church were useful sources to have information about demography, particularly for France and the Nordic countries, where as for England family reconstitution provided information on infant and child mortality. Since 1801 England, Scotland and Wales had a regular population enumeration and other countries like France started in 1816, Ireland in 1821, Belgium in 1829, Netherlands in 1839, Switzerland in 1850, Germany in 1852. Studies on demography in Europe suggest that from 1750 there was steady growth of population and in 50 years from 1750 the growth rate was doubled and there was a general increase in population in the nineteenth century in Europe. It is said that Europe's share of the world population increased from about 21 percent in 1800 to at least 25 percent in 1900. Population growth however was not even in all parts of Europe. Rise in population was very much linked to industrialization and urbanization and because of this Western Europe was ahead of Eastern Europe in terms of growth in urban population. There are number factors explaining the unparalleled rise in population. However, it is generally argued that acceleration in population growth in nineteenth century Europe was directly linked to declining death rate and stable or increase in birth rate.

European population growth in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is primarily explained in terms of the changes in the birth and death rates. Compared to the past since mid eighteenth century there was a shift from high birth and mortality rate to a significant decline in both. There was noticeable decline in normal death rate and also the death caused by famines, epidemics and wars. In an article, 'Population in Europe 1700-1914', Andre Armengaud (*The Fontana Economic History of Europe*, Carlo M. Cipola (ed.), Vol.3) has analysed this trend by referring to certain factors. Increase in agricultural productivity contributed to availability of adequate food supply and this resulted in disappearance of famine from Western Europe. Medical facilities improved and the development of modern methods of diagnosis helped in checking epidemics and diseases. Decline in mortality during this period was to a great extent due to the reduction in infant mortality. There was also increase in life expectancy. Study of this period reveals that there was general decline in the birth rate. This was due to a number of factors like 'the decrease in infant mortality due to better sanitation; industrialization; the trend towards individualism; the wish to rise in the social scale; the spread of education; the woman's franchise; the decline of religious beliefs and their replacement by rationalist norms'. (Andre Armengaud) There was increase in the average age of the population due to declining mortality and increased life expectancy. This period in Western Europe was characterized by a

transition from high birth and mortality to a reduction in both. Summing up we can say that the benefits of increased agricultural production, modern medicine and rising living standards contributed towards the process of mortality decline. Although earlier writers on European demographic change explained the decline in mortality in terms of advances in medical education, hospital and increased number of medical personnel, preventive medicine and improvements in hygiene, in 1950 and 1960s Thomas McKeon refuted this explanation. He argued that advancement in medical treatment and modern medicine did not check mortality. According to him the key factor in reducing mortality was decline in deaths from airborne infections. In his opinion rising standard of living due to economic growth arrested the falling mortality. McKeon's thesis is also criticized, Wrigley and Schofield's study on population history of England does not subscribe the view that there was a causative link between improvements in standards of living and mortality. Mortality continued to fall during the 20th century. Infant mortality improvements contributed significantly to the general mortality decline. In recent studies cultural factors which are the product of political, economic and social changes appear to have important bearings on demographic changes.

Nineteenth century Europe witnessed increase in mobility of population due to social and economic changes. Besides rising population in Europe, periodic slumps in European economy forced unemployed workers to move to Australia and South Africa. The development of steamships and railways made movement from one country to other country safer, speedier and cheaper. It is estimated that between the beginning of the nineteenth century and the end of the First World War about 50 million people emigrated to other countries. Emigration also opened up new commercial markets because there was demand for products which the emigrant people were used to have at home. Emigration also affected the gender ratio as more male members left family for better fortune and majority were young adults. Their departure also caused decrease in birth rate. In Germany and Switzerland following the potato harvest failures of 1816-17 and 1847 there was major exodus of population. In the 1840s over 300,000 Germans emigrated from a population of just over 30 million. Though migration was chiefly caused by economic considerations, political developments also contributed to population movements. The civil wars in Russia and Spain and the rise to power of the Nazis in Germany greatly encouraged migration. There were also internal migrations of population in nineteenth century Europe following industrialization and urbanization. People in rural areas migrated to cities looking for better fortunes following industrialization. As there were more opportunities for job more people left their rural homes for jobs in new industrial centres. Andre Armengaud in the article 'Population in Europe' states that 'From about 1830, migration, not only to the New World, but also within the Old, began to climb to new peaks...In general, the movement was from underdeveloped countries to under-populated or highly industrialized ones. This seems to show that industrialization, far from reducing, tends to increase the demand for labour...From 1851-1911, the number of foreigners in France rose from 380,000 to over 1, 150, 000, most of them coming from neighbouring countries...the number of aliens in the United Kingdom rose from 105, 000 in 1871 to about 300, 000 in 1914...In 1910, the German Empire contained 1,236,000 foreigners from other European countries.'

Although in most European countries throughout nineteenth century the majority of the urban population was engaged in agriculture, in England three fourth of the adult population was employed in industry. Still population living in urban

areas increased, in France from 25 percent to 44 percent; in Germany from 30 percent to 60 percent. As urban population grew economic resources available in cities also increased and cheap labour was also available in cities. Cities became centres of industrial production, banking, trade and other financial networks.

13.3 FAMILY

The family as an institution is an important area to understand for students of history. Although anthropologists and sociologists for a long time studied family as a social institution to understand the changing nature of society, historians since the 1960s began to look into the change in family structure and functions in order to have a better understanding of social process. In pre-industrial society family was an important unit of reproduction, production, consumption, socialization, etc. What constituted a family unit remained debatable in the family history of Western Europe. There used to be a dominant notion that the transition from a pre-industrial to an industrial society was marked by shifting from extended family to a small family or nuclear family. Nuclear family is characterized by late age of marriage for both men and women and a separate household after marriage. But research scholars led by Peter Laslett and John Hajnal in the 1960s refuted this assumption that nuclear family was the result of industrialization. Laslett argued that contrary to the general belief small or nuclear family was very much in existence in pre-industrial society. In England and other Western European countries the nuclear family was the dominant form for centuries before industrialization. In Laslett's opinion England used to have nuclear family as a dominant form in pre-industrialization period and theories suggesting a shift to nuclear family after industrialization cannot be empirically validated. Study done by Laslett and others analyzing family and household structure suggests that there were three types of households in the early modern era: simple (nuclear or conjugal), extended (a conjugal unit plus widowed parent, or other relatives) and multiple (two or more related conjugal units).

Picture that emerges from the above discussion is that Industrial Revolution did not create nuclear families in Western Europe. At the same time it is not true that Industrial Revolution did not bring any change in the family and the household. It is suggested that in England live-in servants in the family declined and also the age of first marriage especially for women increased. Average family size declined and infant and child mortality also increased. In other parts of Western Europe like Austria, France and Germany small conjugal household was a common pattern, whereas in Eastern Europe large complex household existed. In Eastern Europe the age of marriage was also relatively smaller. Economic change contributed to changes in social life also. In England after 1750 age at first marriage fell with the incidence of marriage remaining stable. It is argued that changes in occupational structure, the relationship between employers and employees and opportunities in industry and agriculture influenced family life. Structural constraints in some jobs and wage levels led to relatively higher ages at marriage. Industrialization led to deliberate family limitation. One finds that as a result of industrialization there was migration to urban centres for employment opportunities and better wages leading to overcrowding of urban centres and also dependence on kinship networks. In Western Europe, the nuclear family was historically associated with a high degree of independence for the household head and the possibility of rapid economic mobility. New forms and methods of industrial production also required new forms of craftsmen which pushed people

to move out from family for new opportunities away from home. Development of domestic industry and new demands for consumer goods provided opportunities for these people to work away from home. Demographic and economic pressures compelled many peasant family members to supplement their family income by taking up jobs in rural industry. Migration from families because of employment also affected family ties. With better education opportunities families started sending their children for education in order to have better future employments. It is suggested that industrialization and urbanization brought changes in the position of women in the family from late nineteenth century. We can sum up by saying that family was not a static social structure and was influenced by long term historical changes and the changes in cultural values, economy and government policies. In the following section we are going to discuss about role of women in modern Europe as women had an important role in family structure.

Check Your Progress I

- 1) Write in brief about the reasons explaining the rise in population.

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- 2) Discuss the debate regarding changes in the family following industrialization.

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13.4 GENDER

Nineteenth century is considered a century of domination by men, women did not have rights equal to men but they were also not passive victims. In this century women questioned their marginalization and succeeded in changing their role simply as wife and mother. An overarching patriarchal model always tried to keep women within the domestic boundary taking care of all within the family. Women were denied of any role in public sphere. Even in the days of the French Revolution of 1789 the famous declaration of the rights of man and of the citizen women were excluded from the principle of equality. In the Victorian era (1837-1901, reign of the queen Victoria) literature women were portrayed as angelic figures-innocent, physically weaker and household material. Queen Victoria represented a kind of femininity around family, motherhood and respectability which became the ideal of womanhood. In Robert Browning's poem "Women and Roses" ideal woman was compared to a rose bush and rose imagery was

used to indicate values of love and passion of women towards their husbands. Women faced inequalities within their marriages and they did not have the right to sue, divorce or have property. Virginia Woolf in the essay “Professions for Women” showed how difficult it was for women to come out of the age old prejudices that prevailed in the society and also within women themselves. Wolf through her writings tried to raise voice against conventional notion of women, particularly that women had a mind of their own. She said, society expected ‘they (women) must charm, they must conciliate, they must-to put it bluntly- tell lies if they are to succeed’. (Virginia Woolf was an English author and was a major influence on feminist writings and modernist approaches in English literature). John Stuart Mill, famous philosopher and political economist, wrote an essay, *The Subjection of Women*, published in 1869, and in this essay he argued for legal and social equality between men and women. He wrote, ‘The object of this Essay is to explain as clearly as I can the reasons for following proposition: The principle that regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes- the legal subordination of one sex to the other- is wrong itself, and is now one of the chief obstacles to human improvement; and it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality that does not allow any power or privilege on one side or disability on the other.’

Despite their subjugation within and outside the family and cultural obstacles many women could pursue professional activities. There were famous women writers in Britain in the 19th century like Jane Austen, Elizabeth Gaskell, George Eliot and in 1818 Mary Shelley published her novel *Frankenstein*. Linda L. Clark in her book ‘*Women and Achievement in Nineteenth Century Europe*’ provides a survey of women’s accomplishments from England to Russia between 1789 to 1914. In France, Olympe de Gouges, as a counter to the main document of the 1789 revolution, “A Declaration of the Rights of Man and Citizen” published her “declaration of the Rights of Woman and Citizen”. De Gouges argued for equal rights for men and women. Similarly Mary Wollstonecraft, an important voice in English radical circles, declared in her 1792 text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, argued that giving equal rights to women society will improve because women will contribute equally. Here it is important to point out that women were not a homogenous group and the condition of women belonging to the lower strata of society was completely different. Before going to discuss how women rights movements in Europe gathered strength and compelled the governments to bring in amendments in existing laws to empower women we will introduce you to the world of working women in Europe in the nineteenth century.

Before the women got their civil and political rights, a large number of women worked outside their homes during most of the nineteenth century. However, middle class women did not constitute a significant part of the female labour force in nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. What was the nature of work women were engaged at that time? Women who worked in large numbers mostly belonged to peasants and workers families. Majority of working women were in domestic service and textile industry. Here I would like to refer an article written on women’s work which demonstrates in detail the nature of work done by women in the nineteenth century and their variations in different parts of Europe.

“In England in 1841 and still in 1911 most working women were engaged in domestic or other personal service occupations. In 1911, 35 percent were servants

(including laundresses), 19.5 percent were textile workers and 15.6 percent were engaged in the dressmaking trades. In Milan, according to the censuses of 1881, 1901 and 1911, a similar concentration of women in domestic service existed, with garment making ranking second and textiles much less important than in England...The percentage of women in 'middle class' (white collar) occupations-teachers, nurses, shop assistants, secretaries and civil servants-increased in England between 1881 and 1911, while the percentage of women employed in working class occupations fell...In France, 69 percent of working women outside agriculture were employed in these three fields in 1866: domestic service, 28 percent; garment making, 21 percent; textiles, 20 percent. In 1896, the proportions were altered, but the total was 59 percent: domestic service, 19 percent; garment making, 26 percent; textiles, 14 percent. Despite very different rates of industrialization in England, France and Italy, the evidence strongly suggests that women in all three cases did not participate in factory work (except in textiles) in large numbers. Rather, economic and social changes associated with urban and industrial development seem to have generated employment opportunities in a few traditional sectors in which women worked at jobs similar to household tasks. The economic changes leading to high employment of women included the early industrialization of textiles and the nineteenth-century pattern of urbanization, with cities acting as producers of and markets for consumer goods and as places of employment for domestic servants. The expansion of production of consumer goods involved the growth of a large piece-work garment industry. Production moved from the workshops of craftsmen to the homes of people who sewed together pre-cut garments. This change in the process of production generated employment opportunities for large numbers of women.

In 1911, while 69 percent of all single women in Britain worked, only 9.6 percent of married women did. In France in 1896, 52 percent of all single women were in the labor force, and 38 per cent of married women. Although our evidence is impressionistic and scattered, it looks as though as industrialization advanced (at least in the pre-1914 period), fewer married women worked. Thus Britain, the more advanced industrial country in 1911, had the lower proportion of married women workers; on the other hand, in France, in which both agriculture and manufacturing were organized on a smaller scale than in Britain, more married women were in the labor force...Domestic service remained a major occupation for women until the twentieth century in most of Europe. In fact, in the mid-nineteenth century the number of women employed as domestics increased tremendously". ('Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe', Author(s): Joan W. Scott and Louise A. Tilly, Source: *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 17, No. 1 (Jan., 1975), pp. 36-64 Published by: Cambridge University Press).

The above narrative is cited to familiarize you with the role of women in the changing economic life in Europe following industrialization and urbanization. Capitalist production and class formations produced important changes in the lives of women.

In spite of the oppression that women faced in male dominated society and cultural values, women were not merely silent spectators. The notion of equality breaking the dominant notion of natural male supremacy very much drew the attention of a section of intelligentsia. As we mentioned earlier, in the writings of Virginia Woolf, John Stuart Mill and many others one finds voices against women's assigned

role in household and discrimination. The emergence of organized women's movement which began in the nineteenth century, by the beginning of the twentieth century the movement succeeded in strengthening the bonds between women, and forced the state to acknowledge their equal rights. Movement for women's rights and emancipation in Europe was shaped by economic changes as well as political, social and intellectual developments. In Europe socialist movement criticizing the new industrial social order and the Revolution of 1848 demanding popular rule influenced many to raise the question of the place of women in society and in politics. As we have referred above the book by Mary Wollstonecraft, '*A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*', advocating for equality of sexes became the major source of inspiration for the activists. A number of women authors like Anna Wheeler, Aurore Dupin Dudevant, Flora Tristan, Catherine Barmby, Jeanne Deroin and many others wrote exclusively demanding emancipation of women and their civil, political and economic rights. In Britain and other countries growing middle class support for women's property rights, access to divorce and voting rights further encouraged women movements. The women question was debated in day to day life. In 1860s demand was made for female suffrage and in 1867 the National Society for Women Suffrage was created. Emmeline Pankhurst founded the Women's Franchise League in 1869 and her campaign succeeded in gaining partial victory when the Local Government Act passed in 1894 allowed married women to have equal right to vote and seat on municipal councils. But she continued her struggle and in 1912 gave a call to her followers; "Those of you who can break windows, break them. Those of you who can still further attack property so as to make the government realize that property is as greatly endangered by Women Suffrage as it was by the Chartists of old, do so. And my last words to the government: I incite this meeting to rebellion" (Martin Pugh, *The March of the Women, A Revisionist Analysis of the Campaign for Women's Suffrage, 1866-1914*, p.217). Following the long struggle both the Houses of the British Parliament passed the Representation of the People Act giving women above the age 30 voting right. Later in 1928 all parties supported equal franchise law giving equal political rights with men. The journey that began in the nineteenth century asking for women emancipation not from the boundary of her household but also for equal rights ultimately by the beginning of twentieth century women achieved not only economic independence but a new identity which was free from the shackles of patriarchy. Each woman got the right to decide for herself and the control of her body.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) How was woman depicted in the Victorian era?

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- 2) Write a note on women movements to establish their rights.

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13.5 LET US SUM UP

We have explained to you in this Unit how from the mid-eighteenth century European countries witnessed dramatic rise in population. Pattern of population growth varied in different European countries and scholars working on history of population growth have identified various factors like the changes between the births and death rates, decline in mortality, migration, etc. Direct linkage between population and economic growth is debatable. The family as an institution drew the attention of historians to understand the historical changes since 1960s. Change in family structure and functions have been studied and historians have demonstrated various continuities and discontinuities between pre-industrial and industrial family structure. We have also discussed in this Unit the changes experienced by women in the course of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth century. Women came out openly against the Victorian era stereotype of subdued woman and raised their voices for equality and civil, legal and political rights. After prolonged struggle they succeeded in gaining equal rights with men in the twentieth century.

13.6 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS EXERCISES

Check Your Progress I

- 1) See Sec.13.2
- 2) See Sec.13.3

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) See Sec. 13.4
- 2) See Sec. 13.4