

Summaries

Family et al.: A Non-Western View

by S. Devadas Pillai

In the 1950s and '60s many social scientists, convinced that the joint family was incompatible with the norms of the industrial society and that it certainly hindered socio-economic growth, were waiting to write its obituary. There were, however, no signs of its demise: it underwent structural changes, it got bent, even got twisted often but did not break while coping up with challenges from the techno-economic environment. Naturally many of us now would like to write treatises on 'the joint family re-visited'! This paper is a plea to look at the joint family on its own terms first and then go into its positive and negative aspects. If the conjugal family of the west is the result of long-standing traditions of nuclearity, freedom and self-reliance, then the joint family is rooted in the Indian ideals of jointness and a co-operative way of doing things. The culture of jointness is different from the culture of individualism of the west. *Both* systems have a price to pay but this is conveniently ignored by many 'comparative' studies whose cross-cultural pretensions turn out to be mere decorations. The ultimate question is, who pays a heavier price and what are the reasons for this? But to answer this we must try to understand both systems on their own terms first.

The East-West Encounter

by K. W. van der Veen

Aspects of communication and cooperation in an Indo-Dutch research team of sociologists working in India are discussed with special reference to the culturally-based differences in the appreciation and evaluation of human interrelationships. A few cases illustrate how the Dutch task-orientation and corresponding preference for retreat as a mechanism for controlling human relationships conflicted with the Indian preference for explicitly diffuse and mutually obligating relationships in which reference to status is the major control mechanism. The Dutch egalitarian approach was bound to contradict the hierarchical interpretation of the Indian team members. It is also shown to what great extent the differences in appreciation are based on internalized value-patterns and therefore difficult to prevent. For Indians as well as Dutch hierarchical or egalitarian behaviour goes to the heart of what is considered good and moral.