

Woman's Status in Ural Mono-City Family: Historical and Sociological Analysis

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Submitted: Aug 27, 2013; **Accepted:** Oct 2, 2013; **Published:** Oct 6, 2013

Abstract: In the year 2010, the author conducted a sociological research aimed to study family of Ural single-industry city (mono-city). Processes in Ural families taking place in close connection with other social institutions are analyzed in this article. The author singles out three stages of Ural family evolution: period before the October revolution, Soviet period and modern period. Family of each period has its own characteristics preserving a steady kernel that consists of special attitude to labour, peculiarities of family lifestyle, certain communicational traditions in and outside a family. Woman played a significant part at every stage of family's existence in Ural. This fact is testified by historical sources and research papers including authoring research. In this article one can find assessments that female respondents gave to their marital relations as priority among other kinds of family relations. Besides, here we consider the reasons for women to be dissatisfied with their family life. These reasons are based on women's unrealized egalitarian sets that promote disappointment in their marriage. Research findings allow us to conclude that modern Ural woman living in a mono-city takes the lead in treating matrimony as a value. At the same time, patriarchal values usually initiated by a man are still being kept. The empirical basis of this paper is the ground for statement of changes in family culture.

Key words: Gender approach • Family • Patriarchal values • Matrimony • Gender asymmetry • Autonomy

INTRODUCTION

Gender approach is a discourse of gender problems in social relations, favouring the detection of changes in both male and female family sets [1].

The representatives of this school showed the most evident "pain spots" that influence the state of modern Russian family: social inequality in labour, family and healthcare; family problems of men and women; increasing dichotomy "house – work"; growing number of one-parent families; extramarital maternity etc. Thus, L.L. Rybtsova emphasizes that "family and children are uppermost in the system of woman's life values... But at the same time we can see that women's assessments of family life vary greatly. A huge gap appears between hypothetic and real behaviour of women concerning family and children. There is distinct orientation to one-child or two-child family. Ural families limit the quantity of children in order to give them education and profession. That is why married couples aspire to have few children" [2].

Regional peculiarities influenced the value system and the lifestyle of Ural provincial family: patriarchal values traced back to "genetic" peasant roots. Nevertheless, the economic basis Ural family formed on throughout its history differs from the peasant one.

In the time before Soviet Union man (father) was the head of big family containing members of several generations. He accumulated all earnings of a family, preserving the principle of "family pot". This fact didn't detract from the importance of woman – a hostess and a mother. We can find an explanation for it in features of Ural family lifestyle. The activity of a husband resolved itself to economic functions. Housekeeping, child-rearing and farm were heaped on woman's shoulders. She did all shopping, sometimes with the help of her husband. The most considerable questions were settled in joint discussions of a couple. Thus, the base for housewife's high authority and status was being created. Woman took an active part in labour, that's why dependency was impossible for her. Woman was not economically interested in working at a factory. A woman earned much

less than a man. For example, in 1886, average annual earnings of a man working at the Dedukhin plant was 136.6 roubles and a woman occupied in salt industry earned 71.9 roubles a year on the average; a woman making tow earned 3/7 rubles a year [3].

One of the main reasons preventing normal existing of a family was hard drinking. It undermined family's economy and destroyed it morally. In such conditions a housewife had to start working becoming a support for her family. Widowhood and divorce also impelled a woman to take part in industry. It is necessary to add that all state-owned factories in Ural were health-destroying.

Besides, family performed a large amount of agricultural work, especially in summer (many workers had meadows, cattle and small ploughed lands in addition to a homestead plot). Land labour was conducive to preserving patriarchal mode of life and encouraged mothers to have many children.

In general, housewives experienced labour overstrain because a family could exist only if all its able-bodied members were involved in labour. In 1913 week meal expenses absorbed three fourth of an average worker's income.

Poor living conditions aggravated labour overstrain. Tied barrack cottages that were built around factories didn't favour family strengthening. Testifying this fact, the priest Afrikan Bogomolov from Nadezhdinsk city (now Serov) wrote in church chronicles of early XX century: "Family life is being shattered, family relations are being demoralized. Criminal affairs, extra-marital cohabitation, chastity decay, foppishness are growing and are close to become usual. Intimate side of life loses its covers of modesty and even decency" [4].

In Soviet period, woman began to be actively employed in social production. Wages of both spouses became the main source of family substance. In Ural, in comparison with other areas, more women began to work in heavy industry. At first, this fact provoked displeasure and resistance of regular workers at old plants. From 1930s a woman employed in production (mostly in heavy industry) could maintain not only herself but also her children. This process promoted undermining of patriarchal family principles. Changes in economics were conducive to ebbing of family head's role and to simplification of inner family relations. At the same time patriarchal values were not destroyed completely and lifestyle of a man and a woman had clear-cut distinctions. Sociocultural and living inequality remained. In 1970, life of miners and metallurgist in Nizhny Tagil became a

research subject. The results allow us to make a conclusion of what wives and husbands thought about priority in family. Working women answered that the head of their families were men that was motivated by strong traditions. One woman said: "It seems that woman is a head of family but man receives all the honour" [5]. It can be explained by established economic equality of women against the background of preserving the status-role distribution that was traditional for mining environment. At that, the majority of Ural families worked actively in agriculture increasing the load of adult members of a family.

The researcher I.A. Kurganov reasonably noted that "the spirit of poverty constantly hovered over Soviet family" [6].

Excessive volume of women's domestic labour was the most important and obvious element of social imbalance in Soviet Ural family. Everyday duties were distributed in such a way that a mother had to do the domestic work while a father could devote his free time to entertaining, cultural activity, communication etc. A woman got three fourth out of 50 hours, during which working parents were supposed to do domestic work and to spend time with children. It was really a double-workday that limited women's opportunities to develop other kinds of activity [7].

The reforms of 1990s put mono-city family in extreme conditions and made it survive at the limit of their economic abilities against the background of changes in general notions about a normal family [8]. This fact inevitably influenced the execution of family's functions and status of woman in a family. In 2010, a research was conducted in Serov city (Sverdlovskaya Oblast) when a family worker employed by a city-forming enterprise was chosen as an object. According to the research findings, we can testify indisputable importance of woman in functions of a family. Like it was in Soviet period, woman continues to form the household budget. Thus, 82.6% of respondents stated that both spouses take part in providing the finance base in their families.

The research findings showed that women take upon themselves the creation of family strategy more frequently than men. It is a woman who has the ability to stretch out family budget to meet all expenses economizing and planning costs in details. All the above mentioned testifies our supposition that role statuses are changing in families of workers employed by city-forming enterprises while patriarchal traits are still being preserved.

The research findings show that carrier opportunities of a mono-city woman are limited as opposed to a mono-city man. That's why she chooses a highly-paid job demonstrating that social and individual values are less important for her than the family values. This feature is typical for woman's life in a mono-city. Active industrial activity doesn't allow a woman to manage her roles of a worker, a mistress, a mother and a wife if a husband doesn't share the household duties. At that, a woman may have quite a male profession, for instance, overhead crane operator in electric steel-making shop of an iron and steel plant.

About 50% of female respondents stated that they lean on their parents' experience in child-rearing and in their attitude to labour. Respondents of both sexes denoted the leading role of their mothers in housekeeping questions (37.2% of women and 39.4% of men), in attitude to labour (55.3% of women and 52.7% of men) and in child-rearing (54.9% of women and 49.9% of men). This allows us to speak about remaining gender asymmetry in family roles in Ural mono-city families.

According to the findings of research conducted by L.L. Rybtsova in 1996 [9], 60% of women treated sex with their husbands only as a means of family consolidation. This fact indicates a low level of sexual culture. Research conducted by the author in 2010 testified that sexual harmony is not the main condition of a stable marriage for Ural mono-city women. It is more important for them to distribute the domestic work evenly among spouses. That is the opinion of 38.9% of questioned women.

Family model does not always correspond to real relations and it does not always promote the implementation of value wishes. According to the results of our survey, the respondents do not cherish illusions – only one third of them called their feelings to a spouse love. Such an assessment is especially inherent in respondents from 20 to 25 years old (about 80%). In this age, love is a chief characteristic of marriage orientations. At the same time, habit relationship is rear in answers of respondents – only 6.7% of men and 8.1% of women denoted this. Critical assessments increase with age: only 36.7% of men and 29.5% of women from 40 to 45 years old called their attitude to a spouse love. For the half of respondents of 40 years old and above, relationship with husband became a habit: 46.7% of men and 54.1% of women denoted this. 8.1% of women are indifferent to their husbands. That is 1.7 times as many as the same index of men. According to the research findings, the pursuit of love and happiness leads to instability and

ephemerality of marital relations. People have great expectations of marriage. But lack of such personal characteristics as the ability to live for someone and to overcome one's egoistic inclinations does not give the opportunity to built stable relationship of a lifelong marriage [10]. In our opinion, the dominance of such transformation of women's attitude is the feature of a mono-city family. As we mentioned above, equal participation in family earnings, the load of domestic labour, men's resistance in the attempt of sharing housekeeping duties among spouses, little help of men in child-rearing and low level of sexual life are not conducive to preserving love towards husband.

The survey showed that there are twice as many women with negative feelings for their partners as men: 1.2% of women against 0.5% of men. 7.3% of women and 11.3% of men didn't answer this question that is a variety of negative assessment of family relations. The majority of women's negative assessments of their spouses can be explained by the fact that there are slim chances for a spouse, especially a woman, to find a new partner in their common work team in a mono-city. A woman has to live with an unloved husband because of the fear of being left alone, with children (this doesn't correspond to the patriarchal sets of miners' family culture). This peculiarity is a specific trait for marital relations of female respondents. It should be also noted that men's hard drinking is one more widely-spread reason for family conflicts in Ural. This bad habit, as the general indicator of work environment, got implanted into miners' lifestyle.

Gender analysis of data allows us to conclude the following: modern family woman living in a Ural mono-city takes the bigger part in realization of all functions of family than a man. So she has a greater impact on children than a father. Woman cannot function as a worker, a mistress, a mother and a wife in full measure if a husband doesn't share duties in housekeeping and child-rearing. In Ural mono-city family, marital values are strengthened by a woman and patriarchal values are established by a man, while child-rearing values are in the center. The clash of role stereotypes of a traditional family and an egalitarian family become the reason for the majority of family conflicts [11].

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