

Nature and Role of Family in Marginalized Communities: A Study

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Abstract: Marginalization is described as a process, whereby a group of individuals are pushed to the margins of the society. The Baker is known as Kandur or Sofi in Kashmir and is a marginalized community. But, it is necessary to mention here that all Sofis are not Kandur. The family structure of Kandur community is patriarchal in nature. The head of the family has a final word in family decisions regarding the career, marriage, or any other important decision of a family. The joint family is no longer predominant in the baker (Kandur) community and nuclear family has emerging among them. The economic problems associated with joint families, lack of consensus among the family members, lack of privacy and lack of ample living space has forced the community to have nuclear families. In the Kandur community, there hasn't been any appreciable change in the traditions of accepting decisions of heads of families. No matter what changes have occurred yet many households have strict moral discipline wherein every decision of their heads is well and straight way accepted by the members of family especially by the children. Based on a sample of 200 respondents selected out of 20 thrust areas of Urban Srinagar of Kashmir valley, the study examines the nature and role of family in Kandur community of urban Srinagar. It traces how the Kandur community despite occupational issues like less income, poverty, low prestige, and little leisure and sleep disturbance have experienced some changes in family like disintegration of joint family to nuclear and in practising family planning practices. For the present study, an exploratory research design was used. A simple random sampling technique was used to collect information from Kandur household's members.

Keywords: Nature, role, family, marginalization, community, Kandur, Kashmir.

1. INTRODUCTION

Community is a term with numerous meanings both sociological and non-sociological. A community can be a collection of people who share something in common as in the (artistic community) without necessarily living in a particular plane. It can be a feeling of connection to others, of belonging and identification as in community spirit or sense of community. It can be a collection of people who do related kinds of work as in the health community [1]. Thus; the community can't be necessarily living in a particular plane or territory. A community can be a group of individuals living in the different parts of the world and yet have something in common. For example, a group of scientists who may be residing in different parts of the world are regarded as a community (scientific community) because of their common interests and shared work.

The community is the smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of the social life. Although, the household is a smaller contiguous group, it is also more limited in scope. The community, is on the other hand is a local group broad enough to include all the major institutions, all the statuses and interests that make a society [2]. Thus, it can be said that the community is a group sharing common characteristics or interests and is distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists. The community does not, as does the clan, gang, crowd, business, church, require the existence of other groups outside and beyond itself. In more instances, it forms part of a larger organization such as tribe or a nation. But, it need not even so; it remains true that most of the individual's social life is spent within the community. The common area of residence implies also a common life [3]. The objectives of the community are more important than those of its constituent groups. This very feature gives transcendence to community ends and the inter-group associations

give it (the community) further strength thereby making it all-inclusive. Lundberg defines Community as “a human population living within a limited geographic area and carrying on a common interdependent life.” According to Dawson and Gettys, community is “a unit of territory within which is distributed a population which possesses the basic institutions by means of which a common life is made possible. Majumdar, argues, “Community comprises the entire group sympathetically entering into a common life within a given area regardless of the extent of area or state boundaries.” Joeberg Gidden defines Community, “as a collectively of actors sharing a limited territorial area as the base of carrying out the greatest share of their daily activities.”

2. MARGINALIZED COMMUNITY: AN OVERVIEW OF KANDER COMMUNITY

Marginalization is described as a process, whereby a group of individuals are pushed to the margins“ of the society [4]. It is defined as a social process whereby people are systematically blocked from rights, opportunities and resources, resulting in the prevention of the individual members from full participation in the economic, social and most importantly political life of the society in which they live. The process impedes a person, a group, a section or a community to enjoy the privileges and opportunities that are normally enjoyed by the people as a part of their being members of a society. They are thus, pushed to a complex state of disadvantage and powerlessness due to their lack of participation in the social, economic and political spheres, where they are expected to participate according to certain determined criteria. The group of individuals who are pushed to a marginal situation is referred to as marginalized group [5]. The term marginalized is therefore, something more than oppressed, exploited, and subaltern and the like [6]. Peter Leonard (1984) defines social marginality as 'being outside the mainstream of productive activity and/or social reproductive activity'. This includes two groups, firstly a relatively small group of people who are voluntarily marginal to the social order- new age travellers, certain religious sects, commune members, some artists, for instance [7]. Some of the most vulnerable marginalized groups in almost every society are; women, people with disability, elderly, ethnic minority, caste group and tribes [8].

The Baker is known as *Kandur* or *Sofi* in Kashmir and is a marginalized community. But, it is necessary to mention here that all *Sofis* are not *kandar*. According to Khursheed Ahmad, the secretary of All Kashmir Local Bread Makers Union, (AKLBMU, 2015) the *Kandar* occupation was introduced in Kashmir by a Sufi saint Aakhoon Sabah who had migrated to Kashmir from Kazakhstan, Turkistan. Aakhoon Sahib was a pious man and was widely respected by the people of that time. The reason why the *Kandar* community is also called the *Sofi* community is also because of Sufi Aakhoon Sahib. He used to get up early in the morning and would knead the dough himself after the Tahjud Prayers (Night Prayers). This practice was followed by his pupils for many centuries because for them it was not only a means of earning a living but also a way to serve the people. He is considered to be the founder of *Kandar* occupation in the Valley. He is buried near Islamia College of Science and Commerce, at Hawal. The Muslims and the Kashmiri *Pandits* both have had separate shops in Srinagar, though the shops of the *Pandits* were fewer in number. However, after the mass migration of *Pandits* from the Valley, the *Kandar* occupation was completely monopolized by the Muslim bakers [9].

The mention of *Kandur* is also found in the legendary story of *Shahi Hamadan*, a spiritual saint of the 14th century, and *Laladed* (a mystic poetess) and a contemporary of *Shahi Hamadan*. *Laladed* used to wander stark naked in the city. When she saw *Shahi Hamadan*, she started yelling that she has seen the real man and her while fleeing from the scene jumped into a *Kandar's* oven because she could not find anything to cover her stark naked body however, the fire of the oven could not burn and she came out alive wearing the heavenly dress. It proves that the *Kandar* occupation has been prevalent in Kashmir for centuries.

The *Kandur* is usually accompanied in his job by his wife and children who help him in the whole process of bread making. The couple along with the children gets up early in the morning and kneads the dough. Then they make breads of various types using traditional burning ovens. Breads are cooked using a gentle fire. These ovens are made out of clay adobe refractory fire bricks which can withstand prolonged heat. A fire is usually built inside the oven and once the ovens walls absorb enough heat the fire is allowed to die down or is kept burning only very gently. The smoke which keeps coming out of the oven makes the walls and the roof of the baker shop black. As there is no proper ventilation system, the smoke also takes toll of on the baker's health. Therefore, the people associated with this occupation and their family members who help them in their work suffer from chest and lung diseases.

Among the various occupational groups, the traditional Kashmiri baker (*Kandur*) has been familiar since times immemorial across the valley of Kashmir. It has been a part of daily routine of every common Kashmiri in the sense that Kashmiri are in the habit of visiting a *Kandar* shop every morning soon after the Fajr prayer for bread. They stand at the

Kandar's shop in a queue waiting for their turn to get conventional breads of Kashmir named as *Girda* (round bread made of fine flour) and *Lavasa* (round bread made of flour mixed with curd and baking powder). The morning starts with *Girdas* and *Lavasa* served with butter, rolled up and savored with a cup of *kahwa* or *nun chai* or salt tea. Besides this, the *Kandur* also makes *chehvir* (a type of bun) and *baker khani* (a type of leavened bread) which are usually taken with tea in the afternoon. The *Kandars* also make 'rooth', a type of cake baked in the traditional oven, which is distributed on many auspicious occasions e.g., when someone is engaged or qualifies his or her examination to share the joy with the neighbours and the relatives. The working people who don't have time to make chapattis at home get up early in the morning and collect the bread from the *Kandar's* shop so as to save their time and reach their offices on time. At the time of good events, like engagements, marriages, etc. or when someone dies, they make an order to the *Kandars* to make bread in large quantities. In the above context, it can be said that the *Kandar* community have great importance in Kashmir. Thus, the *Kandars* are an integral part of social fabric in Kashmir who have a distinct identity and a vital importance in the society.

3. FAMILY OF KANDAR COMMUNITY.

Family is the most important institution of society comprising parents and their children considered as a group. It is a primary group of society and an important instrument for transmission of culture and values. One of the primary functions of the family involves providing a frame work for the production and reproduction of persons, biologically and socially. The family is not a mere association but also an institutional complex on a system of institution [10]. The family especially the nuclear or individual family is the most basic social group. It is the first group in which we find ourselves. It is an outstanding group because it is in the family that the child develops its basic attitudes. It transmits ideas and ideologies, folkways, mores, customs and traditions from one generation to the next. A family is a group of persons united by the ties of marriage, blood or adoption; consisting of a single household, interacting and intercommunicating with each other in their respective social roles of husband and wife, mother and father, son and daughter, brother and sister creating and maintain a common culture. Mostly traditional occupational communities lived in big joint families; the avenues of income were meagre and limited. But as time passed, the strength of families diminished and opted to have separate residence. This brought in the concept of nuclear family and changed the universal structure and functioning of the family. In Kashmir valley, joint family system remained in vogue everywhere and was regarded as an index of harmonious relation among the members of the family, but now the common form of family is nuclear.

Available literature shows that a well-marked change has taken place from the joint families in past towards nuclear families at present. The economic crunch, inability to take the responsibility of a joint family, varied opinion, etc. has forced people to have nuclear families. Joint families are still surviving because of the controlling heads who are elder ones and who have got a strong feeling of staying in one family.

The family structure of *Kandar* community is patriarchal in nature. A patriarchal family is a family in which the authority is held by the eldest male member. He may be grandfather in a joint family system or father in a nuclear family system. The head of the family has a final word in family decisions regarding the career, marriage, or any other important decision of a family. The present study reveals that usually men are the family heads in the *Kandar* community in urban Srinagar.

4. RESEARCH DESIGN

The universe of the present study is *Kandar* community of urban Srinagar. Since the total number of *Kandar Households* in urban Srinagar is only 600 (AKLBMU; 2015), a sample of 200 households respondents (i.e., 33.33 percent) were randomly selected for the study purposes. To have a representative sample, 20 thrust areas of Urban Srinagar were located i.e., *Rainawari, Khanyar, Nowakadal, Malarota, HabbaKadal, Babademb, Saidakadal, Nowhatta, Malarota, Habba Kadal, Shaheed gung, Nowshera, Soura, Naidyar, Dalgate, Dargah, Khankaimoula, Nawabbazar, Basantbagh, and Hawal*. Out of these thrust areas, 10 households from each area (20×10=200) were selected as a sample for study. For each thrust area, a random sample technique was used to select respondents. To carry out the study, the techniques of interview schedule and observation were used to get objective and reliable findings. The reason for such kind of choice was mainly sociological and methodological. Since the majority of our respondents were illiterate. The relevant literature was reviewed and analysed to provide some direction in drafting schedule. In order to give a practical shape to the research, the researcher went for the pilot study and collected the data so that the researcher may arrive at an empirical conclusion about the given study.

The present study involved both primary and secondary source of data collection. For primary sources, first-hand information was collected through interview schedule and observation in the field. The secondary source of information is based on books, book chapters, journal papers, unpublished thesis and newspaper articles etc. available on the topic. Facial expression, body language was given due importance and informal talks with the respondents helped in enriching the study. The American psychological Association 5th ed. (APA) style was used in the present study for citation and references.

Purpose of Study:

The research was carried out in Srinagar city with a purpose to know the nature and role of family in *Kandar* community. The main focus of the study was to examine family status of *Kandar* community. An attempt was made to analyse all these variables in a scientific orientation. Further, the thrust of the researcher was to explore the patterns of social mobility in family which has taken place in *Kandar* community in urban Srinagar.

Hypothesis of Study:

The family structure of *Kandar* community was mostly large in size and patriarchal in nature. The authority was held by the eldest male member. The head of the family had a final word in family decisions regarding the career, marriage, or any other important decision of a family. The family is experiencing change due to various processes of change like education, modernization etc.

Objectives of Study:

1. To examine the nature of family in *Kandar* community of urban Srinagar like family size and family type.
2. To trace the role of family in *Kandar* community of urban Srinagar like decisions taken in the family and family planning practices.
- 3 To identify the sociological factors for family change in *Kandar* community of urban Srinagar.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

5.1. Family size:

The number of individuals living in a family indicates the family size of that particular family. In the present study, the respondents were asked to mention the family size of their families.

TABLE 1: Family size of respondents

S. No.	Size of family	No. of respondents	Percentage
1.	Up to 05 members	134	67.00
2.	Up to 08 members	26	13.00
3.	Above 08 members	40	20.00
Total		200	100.00

Source: - Field work, 2014 carried out in urban Srinagar

The number of families who have 5 or less than 5 members is 134, number of families with 6 – 8 members is 26 and those families who have 8 or more than 8 members are 40 in number. These figures reveal that nuclear families are gaining popularity in the community.

TABLE 2: Family type of respondents

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
1	Family Type	Joint	40	20.00
		Nuclear	160	80.00
Total			200	100.00
S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage

2	Preference for joint families	Yes	33	82.50
		No	07	17.50
Total			40	100.00
S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
3	Head of the family	Father	194	97.00
		Mother	06	3.00
Total			200	100.00

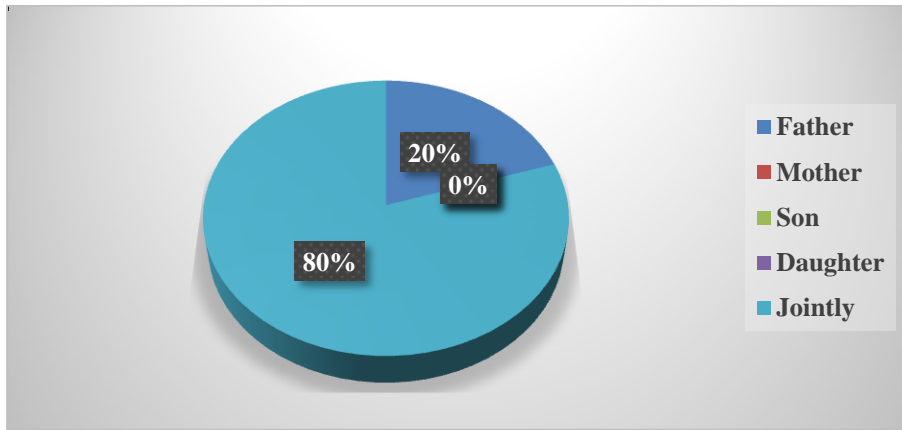
Source: Field work, 2014 carried in urban Srinagar.

The above table clearly shows that out of the total 200 respondents, 160 respondents (80 percent) live in nuclear families whereas the remaining 40 respondents (20 percent) live in joint family which indicates that joint family is no longer predominant in the baker (*Kandar*) community and nuclear family is common now among them. The economic problems associated with joint families, lack of consensus among the family members, lack of privacy and lack of ample living space has forced the community to have nuclear families. On the basis of observation, it was found that due to change in family structure from joint to nuclear, the nuclear families are no doubt living their life smoothly, but it was seen that there is a lack of inner sympathy among the members related to each other on the basis of blood relationship. So this was found that this social change in family structure has proven to be a big loss and has resulted in disintegrating *Kandar* community in particular and society in general.

Further, it reveals that varied responses were gathered from the respondents regarding their opinion about living in joint families. The numbers of respondents who are presently living in joint families were 40 respondents that are (20 percent). A significant number of respondents that is 33 out of 40 (82.5 percent) respondents said that they were happily adjusted in joint family because it created a sense of togetherness and unity; 17 respondents (51.51 per cent) out of 33 respondents who said that they preferred to live in joint family were of the opinion that living together decreases economic burden; 9 (27.27 per cent) respondents claimed that responsibilities in a joint family get shared and 7 (21.22 percent) respondents claim that one never feels alone and depressive in such a family. So far as the remaining 7 (17.5 percent) respondents said that all members of their family do not prefer to live jointly; 4 (57.14 per cent) respondents feel that arriving at a mutual consensus becomes difficult in a joint family setup; 3 (42.85 per cent) respondents were of the view that due to a large number of family members, regular conflicts are a common place in joint families. It was found from the study that in 194 (97 percent) households the father was assigned the role of the head of the family whereas only 6 (3 percent) households were those where the mother was given the status of the head of the family. Thus, it becomes clear that the community is fundamentally patriarchal in nature where male members are the heads of the family and only a small percentage of the family units have accepted females as heads. This too has been possible due to the death of the father or due to the absence of a male member who can lead the family.

5.2. Decisions taken in the family:

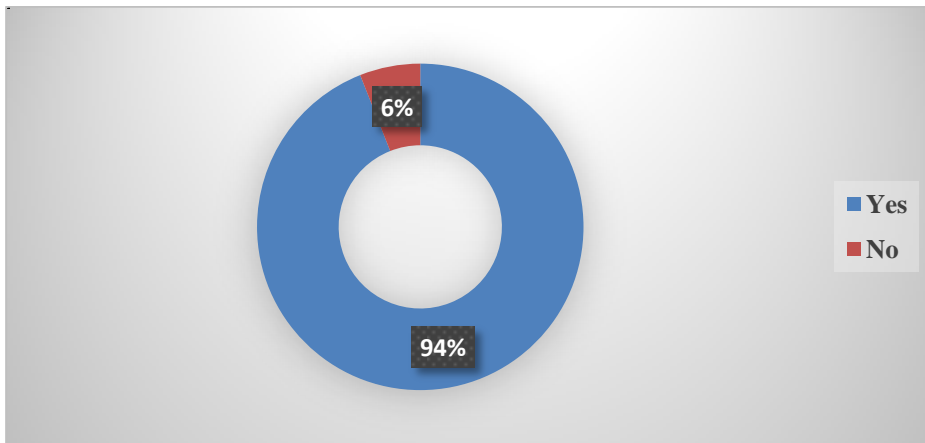
Generally, every society is governed by certain laws and norms set by ancestors in past. The norms have been formulated and practiced for years together on the society. Every aspect is being examined and then made a rule or law. Society in particular has developed a trend of practices that even holds good in modern times though younger generations question and challenge it. Heads of families were at the helm of affairs and, therefore were the only ones controlling them. The authority of taking any decisions was least questioned by other members. Now, younger ones in almost every community have little respect for decisions of elders. The same is not true for *Kandar* community of Kashmir. In the *Kandar* community, there hasn't been any appreciable change in the traditions of accepting decisions of heads of families. No matter what changes have occurred yet many households have strict moral discipline wherein every decision of their heads is well and straight way accepted by the members of family especially by the children. The below table shows the responses regarding the decisions taken in the family of *Kandar* community:



Source: Field work, 2014 carried in urban Srinagar.

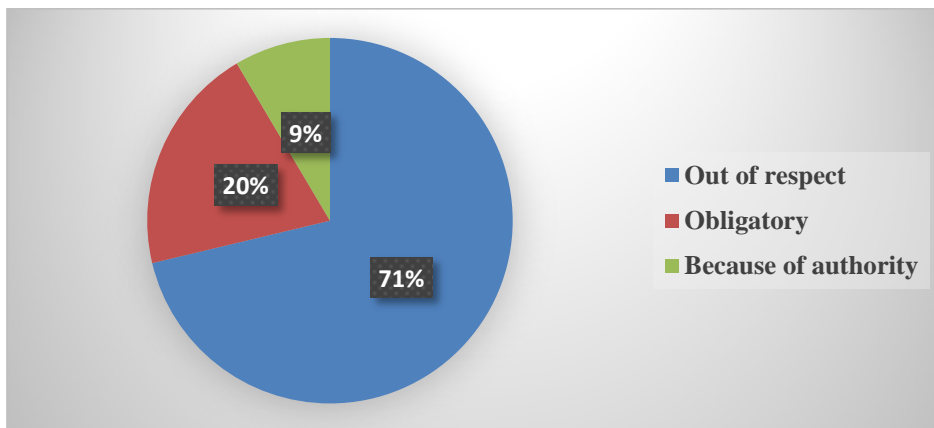
Fig 1: Decisions taken by in the family

The above table depicts that 40 (20 percent) respondents said that major decisions in their households are taken by their father, whereas 160 (80 per cent) respondents replied that that decisions are taken jointly after reaching to a consensus among the family members. None of the respondents was in favour of their mother or daughter exclusively. This shows us that majority of the decisions are taken by mutual consent and females are not allowed to take decisions unilaterally which again confirms male dominance in their community in certain domains.



Source: Field work, 2014 carried in urban Srinagar.

Fig 2: Acceptance of decision by the children



Source: Field work, 2014 carried in urban Srinagar.

Fig 3: Reasons for acceptance

Further, the study shows that out of 200 respondents 188 (94 per cent) respondents replied that their offspring do accept their decisions; 134 (71.27 per cent) respondents said that their children accept the decisions out of respect for their elders; 38 (20.22 percent) said that accepting their decisions was considered obligatory by their children and 16 (8.51 percent) respondents were those who said that their offspring accepted the decisions taken by the family head both out of respect as well as because of obligation. Out of the total respondents, 12 (6 per cent) respondents said that their children do not accept their decisions. It was noted that the children of this community have imbibed their traditional values. The figures in the above table indicate that the children of this community have imbibed values from their forefathers and the generation gap present in these households is less.

5.3. Family planning practices of respondents:

In the changing society, family planning has assumed an important role and people limit their family size by adopting different family planning practices. Also, in order to live a sustainable life, people prefer to follow one or two child norm. The *Kandar* community has also experienced this change and they practised family planning. In this respect, the respondents were asked whether they practise family planning practices or not. The responses given are shown in the table below:

Table 3: Family planning practice of respondents

S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
1	Family planning practises adopted	Yes	176	88.00
		No	21	10.50
		Not applicable	03	1.50
Total			200	100.00
S. No.	Theme	Response	Number	Percentage
2	Rearing of children by	Father	00	00.00
		Mother	128	64.00
		Both	69	34.50
		Servant	00	00.00
		Not applicable	03	1.50
Total			200	100.00

Source: Field work, 2014 carried in urban Srinagar.

The above table shows that in response to the question of whether the respondents practise family planning or not, 176 (88 percent) respondents accepted that they practise family planning. The reason for adopting this practice were aberration of poverty, family welfare concerns and health of their family. A low percentage 21 respondents (12.50 percent) abstain from family planning because of religious restrictions. Further, the study shows that out of 200 respondents, 128 respondents (64 percent) only the mothers' rear children, whereas 69 (34.5 percent) respondents said that both parents are responsible for rearing the children. This question did not apply on 3 (1.5 percent) respondents as they were yet to have children. These statistics show that in this community even today mothers are primarily responsible to look after young children. But the trend is increasing whereas both parents show interest in the rearing, care and welfare of their children.

6. CONCLUSIONS

The community is the smallest territorial group that can embrace all aspects of the social life. The community is a local group broad enough to include all the major institutions, all the statuses and interests that make a society. Thus, it can be said that the community is a group sharing common characteristics or interests and is distinct in some respect from the larger society within which it exists. The community does not, as does the clan, gang, crowd, business, church, require the existence of other groups outside and beyond itself. Marginalization is described as a process, whereby a group of individuals are pushed to the margins of the society. The Baker is known as *Kandur* or *Sofi* in Kashmir and is a marginalized community. But, it is necessary to mention here that all *Sofis* are not *kandar*. The mention of *Kandur* is found in the legendary story of *Shahi Hamadan*, a spiritual saint of the 14th century, and *Laladed* (a mystic poetess) and a contemporary of *Shahi Hamadan*. The family structure of *Kandar* community is patriarchal in nature. A patriarchal family is a family in which the authority is held by the eldest male member. He may be grandfather in a joint family system or

father in a nuclear family system. The head of the family has a final word in family decisions regarding the career, marriage, or any other important decision of a family. The present study reveals that usually men are the family heads in the *Kandar* community in urban Srinagar. The joint family is no longer predominant in the baker (*Kandar*) community and nuclear family is emerging among them. The economic problems associated with joint families, lack of consensus among the family members, lack of privacy and lack of ample living space has forced the community to have nuclear families. The community is fundamentally patriarchal in nature where male members are the heads of the family and only a small percentage of the family units have accepted females as heads. This too has been possible due to the death of the father or due to the absence of a male member who can lead the family. In the *Kandar* community, there hasn't been any appreciable change in the traditions of accepting decisions of heads of families. No matter what changes have occurred yet many households have strict moral discipline wherein every decision of their heads is well and straight way accepted by the members of family especially by the children. The *Kandar* community also experience and practise family planning to reduce their family size.

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