

LOGOTHERAPY

An Effective Remedy for the Ailing Families

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Abstract: In this study the author delineates the major hurdles in modern family life and proposes a solution to the snags that they face. The members of the family increasingly find the need of assertion of their individual independence. As a result, there is diminishing capacity for adjustment in the family. When patriarchal domination leads to domestic violence, the disastrous picture of the family is almost complete and separation would be the likely outcome. The dissolution of marriage and thoughts of remarriage of divorced and widowed would be following inevitable step. Those who choose to remain single head the single parent households and contribute to the number of the increasing population of the elderly. The author brings Logotherapy, proposed by V. E. Frankl, as an effective remedy into this wounded world, which has a high rate of divorces. Defining logotherapy, along with its basic concepts, principles, assumptions and aims, the author claims that the therapy has to do with finding the meaning in life. Finally, defining the nature of logotherapy, the author proposes a few steps to logotherapeutic counselling methods in order to find meaning in life and live it in a fuller manner.

Keywords: society, culture, marriage, divorce, family, challenges, communication, family survey, incompatibility, dowry, infertility, independence, values, personality, commitment, dissolution, women, individualism, domestic violence, patriarchy, education, single-parent, logotherapy, psychology, freedom, will, counselling

1. Introduction

The Indian society is characterized by considerable cultural contrasts at regional or sub-regional level. The contrasts are also felt at the caste and community levels within the same region. Since India is a vast country with a long chequered history, there has always been plurality in family types with varied local problems. In this Year of the Family, we are advised to consider family life at the macro level recognizing the fact that it is hazardous to offer a generalized view of the nature

and problems of the Indian family. Evidence abounds for the substantial rise in the level of both male and female education, degree of urbanization, per capita income, and expectancy of life at birth, diversification in occupation and profession, new means of livelihood, modernization and population redistribution during the last six decades.

Simultaneously, there has also been a marked rise in the incidence of separation and divorce, conflict between parents and children and between siblings, dowry related casualties, freedom of marital choice, dissolution of joint or extended family, child labour and prostitution in cities and decline in intergenerational solidarity within the family. Massive poverty, illiteracy, bad governance of state and rapid rise in the population are possibly the most potential contributors to persistence and intensification of problems of family in varying forms and degrees. For long, the Indian society was characterized by a preponderance of joint and extended family, but the nuclear family is now the predominant feature of the Indian society. According to the reports of the current census of India,¹ of all the households, nuclear family constitutes 70 percent and single member without spouse or eroded families constitute 11 percent. The extended and joint family or households together claim merely 20 percent of all households. This is the overall picture of the families in the entire country, whereas in the case of urban areas the proportion of nuclear family is higher. The available data from the National Family and Health Survey (NFHS) -1 of 1992-93 suggests that joint family does not make up more than five percent of all families in urban areas.² The transition of family from joint or extended type to nuclear type has led to waning of some old problems and emergence of new ones.

2. The Challenges of Contemporary Indian Family

Family is the most important primary unit of the society. The rise in the number of single member households, break-down of the traditional joint family system, increase in cases of divorce, erosion of traditional family values, increase in the number of working mothers and single parents in cities, rise in domestic violence and practices of

¹Census of India, 2001, Provisional Population Totals, New Delhi: Registrar General and Census Commissioner, India.

²J. P. Singh, "The Contemporary Indian Family," in Bert N. Adams and Jan Trost, eds., *Handbook of World Families*, 129-166, California: Sage Publications Inc., 2004, 137.

dowry, neglect of children and the elderly, and poor regard for family values are enough indications of the danger that the family and ultimately the society are progressively facing in India. Now the family needs greater state support in the areas of child care, social services, income assistance and health services than ever before. In any case, because of the rising individualism, competitiveness and openness in the society and ever-increasing aspirations for greater achievements in life coupled with greater autonomy of individuals in the society, an ideal family life may be a distant dream.

The problems of the modern family are different from the traditional family system of joint or extended type. In the following pages, we dwell on the major problems that the contemporary Indian family is confronting.

3. Divorce as a Challenge to Family Life

Family and marriage are considered to be the two pillars of any society and as such they are the two most important societal institutions. In India, traditionally and from time immemorial, marriage has been hallowed as sacred; and marriage for most Indians is not merely a sacrament but is sacrosanct. Once the couple enters into the bond of marriage, the relationship is considered perpetual till death does them part. In other words, marriage used to be for life and it worked as a bulwark against social vulnerabilities. It had an inbuilt system of checks and balances, and roles and priorities were defined by the society for the couple. What distinguished marriage in India from marriage in the West was the sanctity attached to it: a sense of perpetual bonding and an element of divinity.

By any definition, divorce is a horrible word. The depth of the word is expressed by Whitney as she notes from a child's point of view: "Divorce is like a thousand knives being thrown at one's heart or a slow, painful ride through Horror Mountain."³ There is no way to make the word sound better or make its effects less painful. The phenomenon of divorce, however, is not new to India, and it has existed at all times in known history, as it was resorted to only in extreme cases where there was unbearable cruelty, desertion, mental illness, impotence/infertility, and infidelity. But it is no longer so. With the new strains and challenges that have emerged in the Indian family, it has been going through a new kind of transition, wavering between traditional and western models. The fast-changing social and

³"Through the Eyes of a Child." [Http://www.divorceonline.com](http://www.divorceonline.com) (20 November 1998).

family environment has thrown open new challenges, particularly to the young people, like growing instability, lack of communication, changing attitude towards sex, changing roles of husband and wife, and tensions of a fast life. All these have resulted in disharmony among married couples. The decline in harmony are associated with values that emphasize individualistic, materialistic and self-oriented goals over the family well-being. Divorce, in any circumstance, rips a child apart, tossing him/her from one house to another, limited time spent with his/her parents, and confusing him/her.

4. High Rate of Divorces

Divorces have become common in India. A very recent report points out that of the 1.3 lakh marriages registered every year in Delhi, about 10,000 do not live happily ever after. Alarmed by this, the Delhi Commission for Women (DCW) has set up a pre-marital counselling cell where young men and women and their parents can call for help and guidance.⁴ Because of increasing number of young couples resorting to divorce, six more family courts have come up in Delhi since the late nineties to deal with over 9000 cases of matrimonial disputes.

An extensive study of 243 individual respondents, directly involved in disputes and who had approached some external formal agency [Marital Dispute Resolving Agency (MDRA)] for intervention, mediation or help, revealed that the main causes of marital discord (male and female taken together and in descending order) are the following: (1) While as many as 46 per cent of the male respondents attributed the main cause of their marital discord to 'incompatibility' factors, far fewer, that is, 11 per cent female respondents attributed the main cause to such factors. (2) For as many as one-third of female respondents, the main cause of marital problem was 'material/monetary gains through marriage (mainly dowry)'. (3) Personality related behaviours/tendencies (including deficiencies/disorders) were reported more by female respondents than by male respondents (27 per cent vs 19 percent). (4) More female than male respondents reported 'desertion' as the main cause (13 per cent vs three per cent).⁵

⁴"10 Divorce Cases per Day in City," *Hindustan Times*, 29 July 2008, 5.

⁵Namita Singh Jamwal, *Marital Discord: Modes of Settlement* (with special reference to family courts in India). A Doctoral Thesis submitted to the Department of Social Work, Jamia Millia Islamia in 1998. The methodology consisted of semi-structured

In a study of 1165 cases from four urban cities - Mumbai, Pune, Aurangabad and Nagpur - made on the reasons for divorce, the researchers found that most couples seeking divorce were educated, between 25 and 35 years of age, and childless. Though they had arranged marriages and lived in joint families, seventy per cent break-ups took place for reasons which included temperamental differences (apart from financial issues, family interference, dowry, and adultery). Eighty five per cent called off their marriage within the first five years.⁶ Researchers have postulated that divorce is disruptive for children largely because the custodial parent faces a significant amount of economic stress in the time period immediately following the divorce.⁷ In the new socio-economic environment, women in small towns do not feel shy of walking out of marriage.

In the modern Indian society, two main causes for divorce stand out. These two factors, though different, are related to each other.

4.1. Assertion of Independence

Assertion of freedom and the need for individual space, characterized by ambition and the fast pace of life, have created new pressures on marriage. For many career-oriented girls, their career, success and money are more important and hence get more priority over family. Priority of job over relationship is now an observable phenomenon.

Job opportunities for women have multiplied over the recent past, giving them economic independence. This motivates them to walk out of an unhappy marriage, particularly when they have no children. Because of the opportunities the present-day work environment provides to the young people for closer interaction at the workplace and liberal views of the new generation, extra-marital relationship, including sexual relationship, have become a common malaise over the recent past, especially if there is a context of a failed/failing marriage. It is a well-known fact that, with modern methods of contraception available, many a couple delays starting a family. In a way, these are the compulsions of modern times. As many of the female spouses today are well educated and employed, they have

interviews and discussion with the respondents, in-depth case studies and observations.

⁶Madhvi Desai and Suvarna Bhujbal, in *Pratibimb* (Maharashtra Family Counsellors' Magazine, January 2004).

⁷F. F. Furstenberg and K. E. Kiernan, "Delayed Parental Divorce: How Much Do Children Benefit?" *Journal of Marriage and Family* 63 (2001), 446-457.

become quite conscious of their rights. They also expect cooperation and adjustment from their husbands. Women have become assertive, and men, on their part, have not learnt to adapt to the new situation. Our society is in transition, in a state of flux. While old values are getting uprooted, the new value system has not got sufficiently taken root. The frequent ego clashes within the family are the consequence of this fluid situation.

4.2. Diminishing Capacity for Adjustment

In marriage, two individuals with different backgrounds come together. The thinking, attitudes, mind-sets and behavioural patterns cannot be expected to be similar or exactly matching. It naturally takes some time to know and understand each other. With the counsel and intervention of the elders in the joint family system, which earlier used to ensure the stability of the young couple's marriage being largely not available or absent today, small differences get magnified in the nuclear family. While the level of intolerance has gone up, there is a diminishing capacity for adjustment. Earlier, the non-likable personality traits, which got to be known after marriage and which led to sulks or temporary suspension of intimacy, are now resulting in divorce. The understanding, resulting in compatibility in marriage, can thus develop only gradually and, further, if only there is a desire to adjust with each other.

The essence of the success in marriage is "understanding" which also means understanding of each other's compulsions. From the practical standpoint, the concept of adjustment between husband and wife is not that of assimilating one into the other but of togetherness and simultaneity in behaviour with the greatest possible level of feeling for each other. Marital cohesiveness is the glue that holds partners together. The other side of cohesiveness is marital commitment, that is, the desire to stay in the marriage relationship through thick and thin, good times and bad times over the years of marital life. Commitment springs from emotional bonding and the belief about the permanence of marriage per se. The greatest chance of divorce is where partners feel a lack of cohesiveness and are not committed to making the marriage last, despite personal dedications.⁸

⁸Namita Singh Jamwal, *Marital Discord: Modes of Settlement*, 232.

4.3. Dissolution of Marriage and Remarriage of the Divorced

The dissolution of marriage has been quite uncommon and rare in India for a long time. In case of a crisis or threat to the stability of marriage, the community and kinsmen played a crucial role in stabilizing it. "Remarriage of divorced or separated women are quite difficult. Morality relating to sex is so highly valued that every male wants to marry a virgin girl only. To the surprise of many, a married woman is described as a 'second-hand-stuff'- an expression covertly pejorative of women. Under the circumstances remarriage of women is so difficult that annulment of marriage is a very hard choice or option."⁹

However, there has been a significant change in the views and attitude towards the sanctity of marriage in the recent past, especially in cities, where marriage is no longer held to be a 'divine match' or a 'sacred union'. Now it is more like a transfer of a woman from one family to another, or from one kinship group to another. Marriage is viewed only as a bonding and nurturing life-long relationship and friendship.¹⁰ Rising individualism, resulting from modern industrial development, causes break-down in the traditional institutions of marriage and family.

From the part of the state, although the Government of India legalised and encouraged remarriage through legislative measures like the Widow Remarriage Act, yet the problem of young widows in India has not vanished. Currently widows account for nine percent of the female population and only 40 percent of them are over 50 years of age. This suggests that despite the amendments, 60 percent of widows do not contract second marriage for one reason or another. Dreze has contended that the overall number of widow remarriage is as low as 1 in 5 or 6.¹¹ Chen has reported that only a very few widows remarry in India. Within her sample of 562 widows, she has argued that the widow remarriage rate is about nine percent.¹²

⁹J. P. Singh, "Changing Marital Practices in India," *Guru Nanak Journal of Sociology* 29 (2008), 89-108, 101-102.

¹⁰J. P. Singh, "Changing Marital Practices in India," 100.

¹¹J. Dreze, "Widows in Rural India," DEP Paper No. 26, Development Economics Research Programme, STICERD, London: London School of Economics, 1990.

¹²M. Chen, *Perpetual Mourning: Widowhood in Rural India*, Delhi: Oxford University Press, 2000.

4.4. Patriarchy and Domestic Violence

Violence within family settings is primarily a male activity. The prime targets are women and children. Women have been victims of humiliation and torture for as long as we have written records of the Indian society. Despite several legislative measures adopted in favour of women during the last 150 years, continuing spread of modern education and women's gradual economic independence, countless women have continued to be victims of discrimination and violence in the country.¹³ Domestic violence is a kind of assertion of the dominance of patriarchal values. Often, women are subjected to violence to impose the superiority of men in the society. A study of five districts of the State of Uttar Pradesh has revealed that 30 percent of currently married men acknowledge physically abusing their wives. Similarly, the multi-sectoral survey done by the International Clinical Epidemiologists Network (INCLEN) has reported that two out of every five married women reported being hit, kicked, beaten or slapped by their husbands.¹⁴

Domestic violence is one among the several factors that hinder women in their progress, and the Domestic Violence Act seeks to protect them from this evil. This Act is an extremely progressive one because it covers not only women who are married but also extends the protection to other women in the household, including the siblings and mother extending to relationships in adoption, beyond the marital context. In addition to physical violence of beating, slapping, hitting, kicking and pushing, the Act also covers sexual violence like forced sexual intercourse, forcing his wife or mate to look at pornography or any other obscene pictures or material and child sexual abuse.

4.5. Single Parent Households

Pointing to the necessity of both the parents in bringing up a child, Robert Michael observes with a hint of exaggeration that it truly takes a village to raise a child.¹⁵ However, since the 1950s, the number of single parent homes has consistently increased to the point of catastrophe. Today, 14 million single parents are responsible for 28

¹³J. P. Singh, "Social and Cultural Aspects of Gender Inequality and Discrimination in India," *Asian Profile* 30, 2 (2002), 163-176, 168.

¹⁴About 50 percent of the women experiencing physical violence also reported physical abuse during pregnancy (UNC 1997).

¹⁵Robert Michael, "The Rise in Divorce Rates, 1960-1974: Age-Specific Components," *Demography* 15, 2 (1978), 177-182.

million children. World over, raising a child is difficult enough in a two parent home, especially in tough economic conditions. The situation is direr when there is only one parent. Economically, a single parent is likely to bring less income home. This equates to fewer opportunities for such vital necessities as education. Trying to make ends meet also takes time – time that is spent away from children who need a parent's presence. Devoid of a parent's diligent guidance, children contribute to higher dropout rates, higher risk of dangerous sexual behaviours and pregnancies, higher chances of drug and alcohol abuse etc.

The Hurdles before Single-parent Families are manifold. They range from the visitation and custody problems, the effects of continuing conflict between the parents, less opportunity for parents and children to spend time together, effects of the break up on children's school performance and peer relations, disruptions of extended family relationships to problems caused by the parents' entering new relationships.

5. Logotherapy as an Effective Remedy

Modern men and women, especially under various stresses related to family, often lack a guide to help them live meaningfully in the rapidly changing world. They ask why they have come to this world and how they can maintain a normal life despite the cruelty, terror, hatred and wickedness that exist in the world. They search for a way that will help them discover meaning to their lives lived in the company of others. One such way is offered by Professor Viktor Frankl in logotherapy, which he created, developed and spread throughout the world for more than sixty years. In order to discover the meaning to life, he makes people ask "What is life demanding from me now, at this moment?" Meaning, Frankl stresses, comes from "getting out of ourselves" toward purposes and goals and ideals to achieve and people to love. When human beings cannot discover, recognize, or accept meaning, they find themselves in an "existential vacuum." This vacuum, especially when it appears in families, is dangerous and cries out to be filled. Those who cannot fill their lives with some meaning pay a price, in the form of psychiatric symptoms, such as deviations from the social norms that are commonly accepted in a given culture. These symptoms are expressed as addictions to dangerous and harmful substances, infidelity, separation, divorce, violence and aggression that, in their worst excesses. These symptoms can lead

further to what Frankl has termed “existential neurosis.”¹⁶ However, these can be remedies with the help of the therapeutic method called logotherapy that he invented.

6. What Is Logotherapy?

Logotherapy is a therapy for the sick, support for the sufferer, education for the confused and philosophy for the frustrated, meaning for the meaningless. Applied to the family circles properly, it can save many a marriage. Logotherapy includes and deals with the biological, psychological, and spiritual dimensions of a human being. And all of these dimensions come together and are expressed in the functional dimension. Frankl has referred to logotherapy as a theory of motivation, a way of thinking and a methodology combined.¹⁷ The aim is to enable clients to discover meaning in their lives rather than to satisfy their drives and instincts.

Logotherapy, developed and validated by Viktor Frankl has become known as the Third Viennese School of Psychotherapy. *Logos* is a Greek word translated, in this context, as “meaning.” “Logotherapy focuses on the future.” According to Logotherapy, meaning can be discovered in three ways: (1) By engaging in a work or doing a deed, (2) By experiencing something or encountering someone and (3) By attitude we adopt toward an unavoidable suffering.¹⁸

In every theory of psychology the essence of a human being is central. Frankl emphasized the adult phase of development, during which spiritual determinants are more decisive than biological ones. According to him, the human spirit is the only healthy nucleus found in even the sickest individual. In all of Frankl’s works a struggle to make the concept of meaning clear and understandable in the modern world is apparent. According to his biography, at the age of four Frankl was already wrestling with the question of the meaning of life, and his struggle continued throughout his life.¹⁹ Later, as if in answer to this question, he developed his theory of logotherapy. It is a strong

¹⁶V. E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning* (Revised and Updated), New York: Washington Square Press/Pocket Books, 1984.

¹⁷V. E. Frankl, *Man’s Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, New York: Pocket Books, 1963.

¹⁸V. E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*, New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1969.

¹⁹H. Klingberg, *When Life Calls Out to Us: The Love and Lifework of Viktor and Elly Frankl*, Viktor Frankl Institute of Vienna, 2001.

philosophical and practical outlook on life, guiding individuals to deal with the problems, difficulties, and crises that life brings to most people. It enables them to be armed with an ability to choose a perspective on problems of life, to nourish their souls and to provide a spiritual anchor as they face and brave the vicissitudes awaiting them. This therapy can help them to make the necessary preparations to strengthen their mental and spiritual powers, talents, capacities, and resources for what will inevitably come. Although Frankl did not develop logotherapy with family in focus, its application can be effectively extended to heal the wounds developed in relationships between the members of the family, especially wife and husband.

Logotherapy, in other words, is a psychological, therapeutic treatment comprising a spiritual approach to the root of the problem, which helps people appreciate their responsibility for existence, gain liberty from emotional distress and find the meaning and purpose of their life. "Logotherapy focuses rather on the future, that is to say, on the assignments and meanings to be fulfilled by the patient in his future."²⁰

In logotherapy there are no shortcuts. Individuals must work hard to gain the necessary change. Logotherapy, "is based on choice and responsibility, and these belong first of all to the client. The therapist can only help. He cannot make a decision instead of the client, for the client is the one who carries the responsibility for his choices and for his fate"²¹If you want to live a meaningful life now, instead of living in the past, you must make an effort. According to logotherapy, meaning in life is an effective antidote to anxiety and fear. Frankl is, to a certain extent, influenced by Nietzsche who said: "Whoever has a reason for living endures almost any mode of life." Adversities and suffering become more bearable when one has something worthy living and dying for. A crisis can be an opportunity for a spiritual re-birth and a discovery of meaning for existence. Even in the most gloomy and hopeless circumstances, one can discover gifts of hope and grace, as demonstrated by Frankl in the Nazi concentration camps.²²

Pain and suffering caused by wounded relationships, especially in the family, can be a powerful source of inspiration and motivation.

²⁰Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning*, 90.

²¹V. E. Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (Revised and expanded), New York: Vintage Books, 1986.

²²V. E. Frankl, *Viktor Frankl-Recollections: An Autobiography*, New York: Insight Books, 1997.

Depressed people feel sad, anxious, empty, hopeless, worried, worthless, guilty, irritable, hurt, or restless. They lose interest in activities that once were pleasurable, experience loss of appetite or resort to over eating, have problems in concentrating, remembering details, or making decisions, and might attempt suicide. Insomnia, excessive sleep, fatigue, loss of energy or aches are other symptoms. Logotherapy points out repeatedly that the individual is more than an intellectual being. The individual is also a spiritual being in search of meaning. Instincts, desires, and feelings are strong within each individual; the will to meaning is equally strong. Reasoning, planning, and assuming responsibility are of great importance in deciding what individuals do with their lives now and what kind of person they wish to become.

There is a meaningful path for each person. Only he or she can walk this path in his or her own unique way. Lukas stressed that there is something intended for each person in the world; each person has a task waiting for him or her to perform.²³ Logotherapy guides people to alternate their perceptions in order to view situations differently and to accept and embrace what is beyond their control. Trained logotherapists can help a troubled family. They can assist the parents and the children to acknowledge that the domestic problems are not entirely their fault. Using techniques of logotherapy, the couple and the children can be helped to identify short-term resolutions that will enable them to realize what can and what cannot be done, identify choices and foster an awareness of what step to take and what attitude to assume toward the family crisis. According to, the moment a man questions the meaning and value of his life, he is sick.²⁴ Though sick, such a man is trying to prove that he is truly a human being.

The "existential aspect of Frankl's psychotherapy maintains that man always has the ability to choose; despite the biological and environmental forces he is circumscribed by. Logotherapy helps individuals and couples in several ways. It helps them turn suffering into human achievement and accomplishment, helps them derive from guilt the opportunity to change themselves for the better and enables them to derive lasting joy from life's transitoriness.

²³E. Lukas, *Meaning in Suffering: Comfort in Crisis through Logotherapy*, Berkeley, CA: Institute of Logotherapy Press, 1986.

²⁴V. E. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978.

7. Basic Concepts, Assumptions and Aims

The basic concepts that Logos Therapy revolves around are three. First of all, the theory stresses that life has meaning under all circumstances. Secondly, the primary motivation for living is our will to find meaning in life. Finally, every responsible individual possesses freedom to find meaning.²⁵ In a similar manner, Frankl also speaks about a few basic assumptions, which are related to the basic concepts on which logotherapy is founded. (1) Human being is an entity consisting of body, mind, and spirit. (2) Life has meaning under all circumstances; even the most miserable ones. (3) People have a will to meaning. (4) People have freedom under all circumstances to activate the will to find meaning. (5) Life has a demand quality to which people must respond if decisions are to be meaningful. (6) The individual is unique.²⁶ Similarly, the aims of Franklian Psychotherapy are threefold. First to make an individual aware of his or her spiritual resources. Second, to help an individual make conscious spiritual resources. Third, to enable an individual to use "defiant power of the human spirit" and stand up against adversity.²⁷

8. Principles of Logotherapy

Logotherapy is neither teaching nor preaching. However appealing, it often involves exhortation on the value of taking a heroic stand against suffering. It has certain specific guiding principles, originally developed by Frankl. The psychological aspects like our personality traits, conflicts and inconsistencies can block our way to find meaning. These guiding principles play a great role to discover these blocks and find meaning for life.

When we apply logotherapy to heal the wounded relationships in families, it is essential that the client as well as the therapist keep these guiding principles in mind. These principles of logotherapy are mentioned below.

²⁵V. E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning: An Introduction to Logotherapy*, New York: Pocket Books, 1963.

²⁶V. E. Frankl, *The Unconscious God: Psychotherapy and Theology*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1985.

²⁷V. E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Revised and Updated), New York: Washington Square Press/Pocket Books, 1984.

8.1. Freedom of Will

Life has meaning, as long as one is conscious, in all circumstances. One can choose an attitude toward what is happening to one as a result of the pressures from outer and inner forces. Frankl used to cite Nietzsche's contention that if one knows the why of the suffering, one can bear almost anything. One can find meaning in life even in the most difficult circumstances. Meaning is a potent force in each and every phase of our lives, irrespective of our physical, family, occupational, or mental condition. Therefore, it makes sense to search for meaning in every phase of life, even close to death. There is always some choice one can make, even in the worst situation. One needs to be aware of one's choices and weigh them according to the importance of their meaning for one's life.²⁸

8.2. The Defiant Power of the Human Spirit

The defiant power of the human spirit is very important for human survival. Frankl emphasized the human capacity not to succumb to destructive internal or external factors. We are not supposed to meekly accept what life brings us, especially not disasters that circumstances deposit at the doorsteps of our family. We can resist them and turn our defiant power into a tool of survival at any phase in life. According to Frankl, the human spirit is the "medicine chest" of Logotherapy. From the human spirit flows forth the will to meaning, manifesting itself in the defiant power of the human spirit.²⁹ Other resources of the human spirit include: conscience (beyond the superego), creativity, love (beyond the physical), sense of humour, capacity for choice (beyond the instinctual), commitment to tasks, ideas, ideals, responsibility and response-ability, capacity for self-awareness, self-distancing, self-development, self-transcendence, compassion, forgiveness and our awareness of time, finiteness, fallibility and mortality.³⁰

8.3. The Three Human Dimensions

Frankl recognizes three dimensions of the human being: the body, the psyche and the spirit. The somatic, the psychic and the spiritual dimensions are therefore not seen as separate or distinct

²⁸V. E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*, New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1969.

²⁹Fabry Joseph, *The Pursuit of Meaning*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1968.

³⁰D. Guttman, *Logotherapy for the Helping Professionals: Meaningful Social Work*, New York: Springer Publishing Co., 1996.

compartments of human being but as complementary. People should never be reduced to just one of the above dimensions or seen as machines in need of repair. A therapist who relates only to the psychosocial dimension diminishes the dignity and self-respect of a human being. There are specific human activities which are not reducible to mere cellular activity. Such human phenomena as self-detachment and self-transcendence, choice, freedom, love and meaning can only be understood when human being is considered from another dimension, higher than the psychosomatic dimension, namely, the spiritual dimension.³¹

8.4. Human Spirit as the Healthy Nucleus

Logotherapy assumes that someone can be sick in body, or in soul, but not in spirit. Logotherapy maintains that the human spirit is free and is not chained to an individual's body or soul. Consequently, a person is free to choose his or her reaction to what happens to him or her. Frankl, gave more emphasis to the third dimension - the spiritual - because he regarded spirituality as the most important characteristic feature that distinguishes human beings from animals. This spirituality is revealed not in immediate self-consciousness, but it is derived from the spiritual unconscious. Thus the basis of existence and inner core of each human is unconscious.

8.5. Human Capacity for Self-Detachment

The fifth principle states that we can refrain from constant preoccupation with ourselves through humour and laughter. We are capable of using these tools to deal with human weaknesses in a humorous way without being too serious. Frankl turned the two human capacities, self-transcendence and self-detachment, into important therapeutic devices in logotherapy.³²

8.6. Life in the Present Gazing at the Future

Our existence in the present is determined not only by our past, but also by what we wish to become in the future. We are able and willing to make sacrifices only when we know that these are necessary for achieving something meaningful for us. We should not live in the past,

³¹Godfrey Onah, *Logotherapy and the Philosophy of Man*, Roma: Urbanian University Press, 2000.

³²V. E. Frankl, *The Doctor and the Soul: From Psychotherapy to Logotherapy* (Revised and expanded), New York: Vintage Books, 1986.

but concentrate on the present and look forward to goals we wish to accomplish in the future in order to live meaningful lives.

8.7. Human Uniqueness and Irreplaceability

Each individual is unique in the world and cannot be replaced by someone else. The popular saying goes: "The cemeteries are full of people that cannot be replaced." Each human being is essential and irreplaceable; if he or she were not, there would have been no need for him or her to exist in the world. Our uniqueness in the world is expressed by our contribution to its welfare and preservation; by our creativity and attitude to life; in the way we live and maintain relationships with others; in the way we carry our pain and suffering; in the way we use the opportunities that life tosses at us; and in how we deal with feelings about guilt and death. We sense the meaning of our lives when we feel our uniqueness. Each one of us is unique and no one can be replaced by someone else. One's relationship to the social, physical and interpersonal environment, to family, friends, and colleagues, to religion and country are unique to one. Each individual has a unique mission on earth and must perform this mission to the best of his or her ability. One cannot be replaced in this task by someone else, for only he or she can perform it.³³

8.8. Meaning Is Subjective and Changing

Each situation in life presents an opportunity for discovering meaning. The individual decides whether to use or to lose the opportunity inherent in the situation to find that meaning. This meaning is subjective; we can neither buy it nor can we transfer it to others. Each person living in family must discover the unique meaning of his or her life in relation to the life of other members in the family. Our role in the family brings to all of us many opportunities for finding the unique meaning of our existence.

8.9. The Meaning of the Moment

It is important to emphasize once again that the meaning of the moment is not always clear and evident to us. We must be patient in order to discover it. In some cases, especially in the family, this discovery is a teamwork. We must make an intellectual effort to catch it. Missing the opportunity to find meaning in what life throws our

³³J. B. Fabry, *The Pursuit of Meaning: Viktor Frankl, Logotherapy and Life* (New Revised ed.), Abilene, Texas: Institute of Logotherapy Press, 1994.

way results in sadness, and sometimes even despair that may accompany us throughout life.

8.10. Responsibility for Our Choices

Responsibility is the ability to respond to the demands of life in a given moment and role. Logotherapy, as opposed to various theories still in vogue today, emphasizes that we must take personal responsibility for our deeds and mistakes in life. We are always responsible for the choices we make, good or bad, and are not supposed to shun this responsibility by blaming others in the family for our failures. Choices are present in almost every situation. We only have to be aware of these choices and weigh them according to their meaning for our lives. Frankl emphasized that personal responsibility was the cornerstone of logotherapy. As human beings are endowed with "response-ability" they can respond to a concrete situation by using their freedom of choice available to everybody.³⁴

8.11. Discovery of Meaning as an Achievement

An individual does not know his or her limitations as long as life does not force him or her to test them. Family is one of the best arenas for this test. It is impossible to give meaning to other people but in their company one finds meaning for one's life. Each human being must discover his or her personal meaning according to his or her understanding, abilities, and efforts. We can only help someone to take the necessary steps that would lead that individual to discover meaning in his or her life. The logotherapist serves only as a teacher or guide for this purpose.³⁵

8.12. A Positive Attitude toward Life

Personal and spiritual growth and development are the results of change. This change is expressed in one's positive attitude to life in the family. Therapy is needed only when change is not accompanied by a feeling of growth. According to Frankl, some situations offer the greatest opportunity for finding meaning with an attitudinal change. The situations which call for attitudinal values are those we are not able to change or avoid, the unalterable conditions of a conscious

³⁴V. E. Frankl, *The Will to Meaning: Foundations and Applications of Logotherapy*, New York and Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1969.

³⁵V. E. Frankl, *The Unheard Cry for Meaning: Psychotherapy and Humanism*, New York: Simon & Schuster, 1978.

choice – marriage. The only rational way of confronting differences in family life is to accept them.³⁶ The way in which one accepts his/her situation, the courage with which one bears sufferings, the dignity one displays in the face of disaster and the magnanimity in forgiving is the ultimate test and measure of one's fulfilment as a husband or wife. Attitudinal value as a way of giving meaning to life, gives hope to human life, probably the highest level of personality development. Those who find meaning in life reach the state of self-transcendence, the ultimate state of being for the healthy personality.³⁷

8.13. Happiness is a By-Product of Meaning in Life

The last principle for meaningful living states that life does not owe us pleasure, but only meaning that we must find. Happiness and pleasure, wealth and power, and all other worldly benefits are by-products of finding meaning in life. At the World Congress for Logotherapy held in 1984 in San Francisco, Frankl was asked by one of the participants what is the meaning of his life. Frankl answered without hesitation: "To help other people discover meaning to their lives."³⁸ In a family set up, the couple learns to find meaning in life, help the spouse find meaning in life and thus to live a meaningful life.

9. Steps to Logotherapeutic Counselling Methods

Lukas has suggested a series of steps that may be taken to help a patient/client with an existential, spiritual, or emotionally depressed problem. Here the logotherapist helps his/her patients realize that they are not identical with their symptoms. The patient is assured of the fact that all is not bad and is helped or awakened to see fear, suspicion, obsession, depression, inferiority and emotional outburst as not an integral part of what he or she is but qualities he has which he can modify and possibly overcome.³⁹ Socratic questions should, "stand with one leg firmly in the client's way of looking at his/her world, and the other in the new territory."⁴⁰ The focus of the logotherapist is

³⁶P. J. Abraham and B. Parangimalil, *Images of Human Wholeness*, Bangalore: Pangaya Publications, 1995.

³⁷Nelson Richard Jones, *Theory and Practice of Counselling and Therapy*, 3rd ed., London: Continuum, 2001.

³⁸V. E. Frankl, *Man's Search for Meaning* (Revised), New York: Washington Square Press/Pocket Books, 1984.

³⁹E. Lukas, *Meaning in Suffering: Comfort in Crisis through Logotherapy*, Berkeley, CA: Institute of Logotherapy Press, 1986, 81.

⁴⁰P. Welter, *Counselling and the Search for Meaning*, Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987.

that of helping his/her client gain new perspectives of him/herself and his/her life situation and thus modify his/her attitudes. The logotherapist here endeavours to educate the client by way of drawing out what is in the client. He must of course do all in consideration with the client's well-being in and his truthfulness to the family.⁴¹

10. Conclusion

Logotherapy is based on the theory that all healing is derived from people's noetic dimension and there in lays the cure for all of people's negative harmonies, relationships and emotions especially in the family. Each person has a healthy core; the primary focus is to enlighten individuals and their internal resources and provide them with the tool to explore their inner core. Life offers people, purpose and meaning; it does not owe them a sense of fulfilment or happiness. It is from the noetic dimension that people must gather the information necessary to develop a resolution of spirit which can be used to facilitate necessary change in their life circumstances and inner conflict. Logotherapy is intended to help individuals discover the true mission of their lives.

Different from other approaches of psychotherapy, logotherapy is a spiritually oriented therapy - healing clients at their spiritual-existential level. It views the human quest for meaning as a universal human phenomenon, which reflects the spiritual dimension of humanity. In Christian circles, it is easier to apply to married life since marriage is considered as a sacrament. Frankl, the founder of logotherapy, was actually raised in a Jewish family and used his faith to cope with many hardships during life. His therapeutic technique led people to discover their meaning, the higher purpose in their lives. Logotherapy as a counselling method, is helpful to troubled families as it facilitates changes through deep spiritual, emotional and physical awareness. It is a therapeutic method that allows for the deepening of faith and beliefs that ultimately results in a strong commitment to God at the same time promotes sound ethical moral life in the family.

Family life is not determined by what happens to it but by how it reacts to what happens. Not by what life brings to us as members of the family, but by the attitude we bring to our life in the family. A positive attitude causes a chain reaction of positive thoughts, events, and outcome. It is a catalyst, a spark that creates extraordinary

⁴¹J. Lantz, "Stages and Treatment Activities in Family Logotherapy," *The International Forum for Logotherapy* 19 (1996), 20-22.

results. The unconditional faith in an unconditional meaning may turn a complete failure into a heroic triumph. Faith and the right attitude can save a marriage and family. Yet, out of an unconditional trust in ultimate meaning and an unconditional faith in ultimate being, Habakkuk chanted his triumphant hymn:

Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines,
The produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food,
The flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls,
Yet I will rejoice in the LORD;
I will exult in the God of my salvation. (Hab 3:17)