

Joint Family System is an Asset to Indian Society

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Abstract

Indian family is considered strong, stable, flexible and enduring. Historically, the traditional, perfect and beloved family in India is the joint family. Joint families consist of three to four living generations, including uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and grandparents living together in the same home.

The head of the family is generally the senior male family member and is respected for his seniority, experience, and good judgment. The head of the family set up rules for his family. He controls the family's finances and serves as the judge in case of family disputes. Joint Family System of India



There have some tradition of Indian joint family system and every member have to follow this. A young person should always touch the feet of his elders; he should never speak in a high or rude tone to those who are older to him; he should always give respect to elders and he should not drink alcohol and tobacco or smoke cigarettes to them; he should respect women. Girls are not allowed to wear skirts after they reach certain age, while in others, they can wear Shari or Salwar Camize , as long as it is decent and not body-revealing.

Complete joint families always lived together and they eat the food cooked at one fireplace and are linked to one another through relationship binds. All members shared a common source of income by the earnable member. An Unemployment member of the family is helped by their parents or other earning members. Guardian of a family supports other members when raising their children. Children grow up in close contact with their aunts, uncles, grandparents, and cousins.

One of the important characters of the joint family is its shared nature. Family tasks like cooking, cleaning, caring for the children, and performing home maintenance are structured in a shared manner. The family members complete the tasks on a rotating basis, or else individual family members become responsible for specific tasks. Every family member involves and participates in life-cycle events or celebration such as births, marriages, deaths, and any type of regional festival celebrations.

Joint Family Culture in India:

The study of the Indian family system deserves special attention, not only because they are born in Indian families but also for here the family system differs in material respects from the western family system. The family in India does not consist only of husband, wife and their children but also of uncles, aunts and cousins and grandsons.



This system, called joint family or extended family system is a peculiar characteristic of the Indian social life. A son after marriage does not usually separate himself from the parents but continues to stay with them under the same roof messing together and holding property in common.

The family has joint property and every person has his share in it since the time he is born. The earnings of all the members are put in a common fund out of which family expenses are met. Non-earning members have as much share as the earning members. The Indian family system is thus like a socialistic community in which everyone earns according to his capacity and receives according to his needs.

The family in India is based on patrilineal descent. Children are identified by name and allegiance with the father's family. Property is passed from generation to generation within the father's family.

The Meaning of Joint Family:

Some Definitions of Joint Family are the following:

(i) "We call that household a joint family which has greater generation depth than individual family and the members of which are related to one another by property, income and mutual rights and obligations." I.P. Desai

(ii) "A joint family is a group of people who generally live under one roof, who eat food cooked at one hearth, who hold property in common and who participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred." — Karve.

(iii) "The joint family consists of persons having a common male ancestor, female offspring not yet married, and women brought into the group by marriage. All of these persons might live in a common household or in several households near to one another. In any case, so long as the joint family holds together, its members are expected to contribute to the support of the whole and to receive from it a share of the total product." —Davis

(iv) "The Hindu joint family is a group constituted of known ancestors and adopted sons and relatives related to these sons through marriage." —Henry Maine.

Nuclear family vs. Joint family:

A nuclear family consists of a husband, a wife, a couple of children. The number of members are very few in a nuclear family.

In a joint family system, the number of dependents living under the roof is much larger. Those living with a joint family may include, in addition to the above, grandparents, married brothers, sister, wives of sons, grandsons, granddaughters, other dependents and relatives.



Characteristics of Joint Family:

(i) Large Size:

The first characteristic of the joint family is its large size. A single family consists of only the husband, wife and their children. But a joint family consists of parents, children, grand children and other near relatives along with their women. It is a group of which several basic families live together at one and the same time.

(ii) Joint Property:

In a joint family, the ownership, production and consumption of wealth takes place on a joint basis. It is a cooperative institution, similar to a joint stock company, in which there is joint property. The head of the family is like a trustee who manages the property of the family for the material and spiritual welfare of the family members. The total earnings of all the family members are pooled together.

(iii) Common Residence:

The members of joint family usually live under the same roof. They may also live in separate houses in close proximity to one another. They eat the same food and wear the same type of clothes.

(iv) Co-operative Organization:

The basis of joint family system is cooperation. A joint family consists of a large number of members and if they do not cooperate with one another it is not possible to maintain the organization and structure of the joint family.

(v) Common Religion:

Generally the members of a joint family believe in the same religion and worship similar deities. They perform jointly the religious rites and duties. They celebrate all the festivals and social functions jointly. They also hold themselves jointly accountable for participating in social ceremonies like marriage, death and other occasions of family sorrows and rejoicing. They all share the family burden together.

(vi) A Productive Unit:

This feature of joint family is found among agricultural families. All the members work at one and the same field. They do the sowing and harvesting of the crops together. Even in the case of artisan classes all the members of a joint family do one and the same function

(vii) Mutual Rights and Obligations:

The rights and obligations of the members of joint family are the same. None except the head of the family has special privileges. Every member of the family has equal obligations. If one female member works in the kitchen, the other does the laundry work, and the third one looks after the children. There is rotation of duties as well.

Origin of Joint Family System:

It may not, however, be presumed that joint family system originated in India. This institution is said to be the outcome of the settling down of the Aryans in different parts of the world. We have similar institutions practically all over the world. As we have learnt before in the ancient Roman society, the supreme authority rested in the eldest male member of the family who, in administering the family affairs, was entitled to take all steps.

When the pastoral stage was over and the people began to live a settled life by tilling the soil, constructing the house and maintaining the patrimony, joint family system came into existence. Difficulties of communication and travel compelled all the members of the family to live together and carry on jointly the family occupation in agriculture or trade.

Over and above these causes the kinship idea and the religion emphasizing ancestor worship further made joint family a complex organization catering to the spiritual and economic needs of the large family groups which composed the society. In other parts of the world while joint family system has disappeared, in India, it still continues though suffering heavy strains brought about by industrialization and urbanization.

Advantages of Joint Family System:**The following are the Chief Merits of the Joint Family System:****(i) Ensures Economic Progress:**

It enables economic progress of the country since everyone in the family is guaranteed bare subsistence, a first condition of economic progress. Unless people are assured of food and shelter they would not devote themselves sincerely to the work of country's progress. It is an essential condition of national progress that the citizens must at least get two meals a day. Joint family provides this to its members and thus enables them to devote themselves to nation's progress.

(ii) Division of Labour:

It secures the advantages of the division of labor. Every member in the family is given work according to his abilities without being taxed unduly. Every phase of family's life is managed by all members including women and children. Thus, during the harvest season every member of the family helps in harvesting the crops. No outside labor is required.

(iii) Economy:

It secures economy of expenditure. Since things are consumed in large quantities they are secured at economic prices. Within small means a large family can be maintained if it lives jointly.

(iv) Opportunity for Leisure:

It provides opportunities for leisure to the members. The female members divide the household work and finish it within a little time spending the rest of it in leisure.

(v) Social Insurance:

In the joint family the orphans find a comfortable asylum instead of being thrown out. Similarly, widows are assured of their proper living for whom remarriage in India is unthinkable. The joint family acts as a social insurance company for the old, sick and incapacitated.

(vi) Social Virtues:

It fosters great virtues like sacrifice, affection, co-operation, spirit of selflessness, broadmindedness among its members and makes the family a cradle of social virtues. Under the care of elders the undesirable and anti-social tendencies of the young are checked and they are prevented from going astray. They learn to exercise self-control. All members learn to obey family rules and respect their elders.

(vii) Avoids Fragmentation of Holdings:

It avoids fragmentation of holdings and the evils inherent therein. It prevents property from being divided.

(viii) Socialism:

According to Sir Henry Maine, the joint family is like a corporation where trustee is the father. Everyone in the joint family works according to his capabilities but obtains according to his needs. Thus it realises the socialistic ideal—from each according to his ability, to each according to his needs.

Disadvantage of Joint Family:**The Main Defects of the System are Said to be the Following:****(i) Home for Idlers:**

Joint family is the home for idlers and drones as the non-earning members do not want to earn their livelihood. When a person can eat comfortably without exerting himself, he is unlikely to indulge in any strenuous activity. Mostly, in the joint family it happens that some people have to exhaust themselves while the others lead a life of utter lethargy.

(ii) Hindrance in the Development of Personality:

In joint family there is very little opportunity for the fostering of individual autonomy or self-dependence. The whole environment of the family is not congenial for the growth of the individual because he is bound down by the minutest rules and regulations framed by the head of the family who looks upon men and women as children even when they attain adulthood.

(iii) Encourage litigation:

The joint family system encourages litigation, for at the time of partition of common property generally disputes crop up which are not settled without a recourse being taken to law. In case of agricultural families partition leads to fragmentation of holdings which is harmful from the viewpoint of agricultural progress.

(iv) Leads to Quarrels:

It is the hotbed of quarrels and bickering especially among the female members. Generally, there is hatred and jealousy between the wives of brothers. There is continuous strife and fighting over the

doings of children. There is also the clash of ideas and temperaments on account of which there are constant quarrels between the elder and young members of the family.

(v) Privacy Denied:

In a joint family privacy is denied to the newlywed couple. The brides of the sons do not get an opportunity to develop their personality. They serve the entire family like slaves. They hardly meet their husbands during the day.

The invariable presence of other family members shames the bride and she cannot freely talk to her husband. Any natural love between husband and wife is prevented from blossoming. There is also no limit to the injustice done by the mother-in-law. In some cases this injustice becomes so inhuman and unbearable that women become fed up and commit suicide.

(vi) Unfavourable to Accumulation of Capital:

It is not favorable to large accumulation of capital. When one has to share one's income with large family, it is not possible to save much. The property of the family being jointly owned is sometimes allowed to go waste.

(vii) Uncontrolled Procreation:

In the joint family the responsibility for bringing up and educating the children is shared. No individual feels responsibility to control procreation because of the limited income of the family. The offspring of one member will be treated on the same footing as others. No distinction is made between the statuses of the family members. In this way no direct benefits occur to an individual in the joint family by earning more.

Thus the joint family system has got both its strong proponents as well as opponents. However, we are to remember that no institution is perfect and also that no institution full of defects can exist very long. The joint family system has been in existence since the society changed from the agricultural stage of economic development.

While the system is breaking down in cities, it still largely prevails in the villages especially among the agricultural families. Though there may be exceptions here and there, yet it cannot be said that the system has been completely abolished. It is no doubt true that the system once considered the pillar of stability is finding it difficult to withstand the dizzying pace of social mobility and the transformation of values.

Economic Advantage of Joint Family System:

The economic advantages of the joint family system are mentioned below in points:

1. It ensures at least a bare subsistence to all the members of the family.
2. The system has provided a safe and respectable home to every members of the family. This system provides a home and shelter for the aged, the infirm, and the disabled.
3. It promotes a sense of unity and solidarity among the members and thus renders the family unit strong in the struggle for existence and survival.
4. In the houses of the artisans, the system provides a simple division of labor, for each member may perform an allotted task. For instance, in a weaver's family even the children and women have their parts to do in the preparatory processes.

5. Since a family maintains one establishment, there is some saving in expenses. Even a small income may, therefore maintain a larger number of people than would be possible in case each member were to maintain an individual household.

6. In the field of economic enterprise, it favors the starting of small-scale business with little initial capital. Free family labor is a great asset to such business.

Importance of Family Relationship:



Kinship

Kinship is one of the main organizing principles of society. It is one of the basic social institutions found in every society. This institution establishes relationships between individuals and groups. People in all societies are bound together by various kinds of bonds.

The most basic bonds are those based on marriage and reproduction. Kinship refers to these bonds, and all other relationships resulting from them. Thus, the institution of kinship refers to a set of relationships and relatives formed thereof, based on blood relationships (consanguine), or marriage (affine).

‘The social relationships deriving from blood ties (real and supposed) and marriage are collectively referred to as kinship.’

‘Kinship is the socially recognized relationships between people in a culture, who are either held to be biologically related or given the status of relatives by marriage, adoption, or other rituals. Kinship is a broad-ranging term for all the relationships that people are born into or create later in life that are considered binding in the eyes of their society.’

‘Kinship is the recognition of relationships between persons based on descent or marriage. If the relationship between one person and another is considered by them to involve descent, the two are consanguine (“blood”) relatives. If the relationship has been established through marriage, it is affinal.’

Types of Kinship:

kin relationships are based either on birth (blood relations), or marriage. These two aspects of human life are the basis for the two main types of kinship in society.

1. Consanguineal Kinship:

It refers to the relationships based on blood, i.e., the relationship between parents and children, and between siblings are the most basic and universal kin relations.

2. Affinal Kinship:

It refers to the relationships formed on the basis of marriage. The most basic relationship that results from marriage is that between husband and wife.

