

JOINT FAMILY

Joint family system is a very old concept. Under this system, all members of the family would live together and enjoy the income of the family. 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.

www.gurmarg.com

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.

Characteristics of Joint Family

(i) Large Size

(ii) Joint Property

(iii) Common Residence

(iv) Co-operative Organisation - 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 organisation and structure of the joint family.

(v) 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.

(vi) 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.

www.gurmarg.com

Demerits of Joint Family

(i) 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 rules and regulations framed by the head of the family who looks upon men and women as children even when they attain adulthood. Any new enterprise or adventure on the part of the young people is discouraged by the head of the family. This adversely affects the individuality, originality and creativity of the young members. One make lack of attributes like leadership and decision making qualities as head of the family will decide and does all the important decisions.

(ii) Privacy denied

(iii) Low Status of Women - An important feature of the joint family system is the low status of women. During childhood, a woman is subordinated to her father, during youth to her husband and during old age to her son.

(iv) Hinders Social Change - The joint family is based on conservatism. Since it is based on traditions, it does not normally allow its members even to accept or encourage healthy social changes.

(v) **Limits Social Mobility** - The joint family is said to be more conservative in nature. Since it is dominated by tradition, it is slow to respond to the modern trends. It does not encourage its members to go after change. Members are more concerned with safeguarding their statuses rather than with changing them. Hence social mobility is very much limited here.

www.gurmarg.com

Factors responsible for the disintegration of joint family system in India

Joint family system emerged pre-eminently to cater to certain felt needs of individuals. But consequent upon the forces of industrialization, urbanization and modernization, it is gradually disintegrating. The institution of joint family is very old. The fact now is that there is a disintegration of this system of familial organization. No single factor can be pointed out as the sole cause of this disintegration. The breakdown of the joint family in India has often been forecast on the grounds that joint families were suited to the old agricultural societies but are dysfunctional under present conditions. Hence a sharp break between the 'traditional' joint family and the 'modern' nuclear family is supposed to occur.

1. **Industrialization** - The joint family is most suited to agricultural families as the members did not look for jobs. But in wake of industrialization and the establishment of new factories have motivated the workers from the villages move to the cities and it breaks up the joint family. Industrialization affected the cottage and village industries and workers started searching for jobs in industrial towns.

2. **Urbanization** - Urbanization has also led to the weakening of the joint family system in India. The amenities of urban life in the form of better transport and communication, better employment opportunities, better educational facilities, and developed health care facilities attract the ruralites to the towns and cities. Naturally there is a rural to urban type of migration.
3. **Modern education** - The role of modern education in bringing about the disintegration of the joint family is no less significant. Modern education inspires individualism among the people. Further, educated men and women in the countryside are forced to leave their families in search of suitable jobs.
4. **Extension of Communications and Transport** - Now the villagers are no more isolated from other areas. Earlier, difficulties of communication and travel in ancient times compelled all the members of the family to live together and carry on the family occupation in agriculture and trade jointly. Today when the means of communication and transportation have been extended, it is no longer necessary for men to stay with the family and carry on the family occupation. Now they go to the city and take up any other occupation.
5. **Decline of Agricultural and Village Industries** - The joint family system in India flourished when agriculture and trade in the villages were in a sound position. Today with the establishment of factories the commodities produced by the village craftsmen cannot compete in quality or price with those produced in factories with the result that the village industries suffer a loss and after some time close down. With the closing down of the village industry the workers in villages also are compelled to go to the city to find a job there. Increase in population has brought an additional pressure upon the agricultural land, leading to unemployment, reduced per capital income, food problem and thus disintegration in the joint family system.

6. **Enlightenment of women** - Enlightenment of women is also responsible for the disintegration of the joint family. The young educated women, being fully conscious of their new rights and status in society, are now not prepared to submit themselves meekly to their mothers-in-law. The mothers-in-law with their traditional domineering attitudes fail to adjust themselves with the educated women of younger generation. As a consequence, conflicts crop up and end in the disintegration of the joint family.

7. **Influence of western culture** - Western culture has fostered in young men and women individualistic tendencies with the result that they do not want their fortunes to be tied down forever with those of the joint family. Individualism as a gift of western culture has given rise to a separatist tendency among them. Furthermore, influenced by the western values such as rationalism, equality, freedom etc, they do not like to remain submissive under the tight grip of the joint family. The end result is the disintegration of the joint family system.

