



FACULTY OF JURIDICAL SCIENCES

COURSE: B.A.LL.B 204

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SUBJECT: SOCIOLOGY-II

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Lecture-9



LECTURE 9:

Characteristics of Joint Family: On the basis of the above definitions, the chief characteristics of joint family are the following: (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 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) 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 organisation 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.

II. Merits 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 labour. 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 labour 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.