

Features of the Joint Family

From the definitions mentioned above following characteristic features of a joint family can be pointed out:

Joint Habitation: Joint family resides under one roof that is to say members of the family live in one house where father, sons, son's wives and their children live together. No separation or particularization of accommodation is unthinkable in the joint families. According to Sir Henry Maine joint Hindu family 'is a group constituted of known ancestors and adopted sons and relatives to these sons through marriage'. However it must be noted that this feature is not always in all joint families.

Common Eating Place: The members of a joint family get food from a common kitchen. The time two separate kitchens are used for preparing meals for some of the members, from that very moment, the family ceases to be a joint family. The food for all old and young, man and woman is cooked in one kitchen. It was commented by Brahaspati, that the people who have a joint kitchen their ancestors, gods and Brahmins are worshipped at the same place. It implies that the existence of a joint family kitchen facilitates the members to perform other activities at a single place. It is opined that as soon as kitchen is separated, the joint family disintegrates.

Common Ownership of

Property: In addition to common eating place, a common shelter, another striking feature of joint family is joint property. This happens as such that 'the members of the family jointly undertake production and consumption and are joint owners of the wealth of the family. Because of its joint ownership and presence of co-operation among the members it has been called a co-operative institution. All work together and eat together and no distinction is made between the members on these grounds.

Ruled by Karta: The head of the family discharges the function of the trustee and he manages all the affairs of the family in such a way so as to provide material and spiritual benefit to all the members equally. He is called as the Karta of the family. He controls, supervises and looks after the affairs so the family. He receives the total earning of the family as its head and utilizes it in the interests of all the members of the family.

Common Origin: Joint family has a common origin and members are kin. According to Sir Henry Maine, "The joint family is a group of springs of some known common percentage or a group that arises out of their marriage.

Thus a joint family refers to the group life of the kin deriving their origin from some common source, living, working and sharing together the fruits of joint endeavor under the rule of their karta.