Institute of Sciences, Humanities & Liberal Studies

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Topic: Indian Society, Caste system and Family system

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The Caste System of India

A Very Rudimentary Summary

Background

The caste system in India is an important part of ancient Hindu tradition and dates back to 1200 BCE. The term caste was first used by Portuguese travelers who came to India in the 16th century. Caste comes from the Spanish and Portuguese word "casta" which means "race", "breed", or "lineage". Many Indians use the term "jati". There are 3,000 castes and 25,000 subcastes in India, each related to a specific occupation. These different castes fall under four basic varnas:

> Brahmins—preachers and saints
> Kshatryas--warriors and soldiers
> Vaishyas— businessman and service man
> Shudras— servant class

Caste not only dictates one's occupation, but dietary habits and interaction with members of other castes as well. Members of a high caste enjoy more wealth and opportunities while members of a low caste perform menial jobs. Outside of the caste system are the Untouchables. Untouchable jobs, such as toilet cleaning and garbage removal, require them to be in contact with bodily fluids. They are therefore cosidered polluted and not to be touched. The importance of purity in the body and food is found in early Sanskrit literature. Untouchables have separate entrances to homes and must drink from seperate wells. They are considered to be in a permanent state of impurity. Untouchables were named "Harijans" (Children of God) by Gandhi. He tried to raise

their status with symbolic gestures such as befriending and eating with Untouchables. Upward mobility is very rare in the caste system. Most people remain in one caste their entire life and marry within their caste.

The Origin of the caste system

There are different theories about the establishment of the caste system. There are religious-mystical theories. There are biological theories. And there are socio-historical theories.

The religious theories explain how the four Varnas were founded, but they do not explain how the Jats in each Varna or the untouchables were founded. According the Rig Veda, the ancient Hindu book, the primal man - Purush - destroyed himself to create a human society. The different Varnas were created from different parts of his body. The Brahmans were created from his head; the Kshatrias from his hands; the Vaishias from his thighs and the Sudras from his feet. The Varna hierarchy is determined by the descending order of the different organs from which the Varnas were created. Other religious theory claims that the Varnas were created from the body organs of Brahma, who is the creator of the world. Sattva qualities include wisdom, intelligence, honesty, goodness and other positive qualities. Rajas include qualities like passion, pride, valour and other passionate qualities. Tamas qualities include dullness, stupidity, lack of creativity and other negative qualities. People with different doses of these inherent qualities adopted different types of occupation.

Like human beings, food also inherents different dosage of these qualities and it affects its eater's intelligence. The Brahmans and the Vaisias have Sattvic diet which includes fruits, milk, honey, roots and vegetables. Most of the meats are considered to have Tamasic qualities. Many Sudra communities eat different kinds of meat (but not beef) and other Tamasic food. But the Kshatrias who had Rajasic diet eat some kinds of meat like deer meat which is considered to have Rajasic qualities. Many Marathas who claim to be Kshatrias eat mutton. The drawback of this theory is that in different parts of India the same food was sometimes qualified to have different dosage of inherent qualities. For example there were Brahmans who eat meat which is considered Tamasic food.

The social historical theory explains the creation of the Varnas, Jats and of the untouchables. According to this theory, the caste system began with the arrival of the Aryans in India. The Aryans arrived in India around 1500 BC. The fair skinned Aryans arrived in India from south

Europe and north Asia. Before the Aryans there were other communities in India of other origins. Among them Negrito, Mongoloid, Austroloid and Dravidian. The Negrito have physical features similar to people of Africa. The Mongoloid have Chinese features. The Austroloids have features similar the aboriginals of Australia. The Dravidians originate from the Mediterranean and they were the largest community in India. When the Aryans arrived in India their main contact was with the Dravidians and the Austroloids. The Aryans disregarded the local cultures. They began conquering and taking control over regions in north India and at the same time pushed the local people southwards or towards the jungles and mountains in north India.

The Aryans organized among themselves in three groups. The first group was of the warriors and they were called Rajayana, later they changed their name Rajayana to Kshatria. The second group was of the priests and they were called Brahmans. These two groups struggled politically for leadership among the Aryans. In this struggle the Brahmans got to be the leaders of the Aryan society. The third group was of the farmers and craftsmen and they were called Vaisia. The Aryans who conquered and took control over parts of north India subdued the locals and made them their servants. In this process the Vaisias who were the farmers and the craftsmen became the landlords and the businessmen of the society and the locals became the peasants and the craftsmen of the society.

In order to secure their status the Aryans resolved some social and religious rules which, allowed only them to be the priests, warriors and the businesmen of the society. For example take Maharashtra. Maharashtra is in west India. This region is known by this name for hundreds of years. Many think that the meaning of the name Maharashtra is in its name, Great Land. But there are some who claim that the name, Maharashtra, is derived from the Jat called Mahar who are considered to be the original people of this region. In the caste hierarchy the dark skinned Mahars were outcasts. The skin color was an important factor in the caste system. The meaning of the word "Varna" is not class or status but skin color.

Between the outcasts and the three Aryan Varnas there is the Sudra Varna who are the simple workers of the society. The Sudras consisted of two communities. One community was of the locals who were subdued by the Aryans and the other were the descendants of Aryans with locals. In Hindu religious stories there are many wars between the good Aryans and the dark skinned demons and devils. The different Gods also have dark skinned slaves. There are stories

of demon women trying to seduce good Aryan men in deceptive ways. There were also marriages between Aryan heroes and demon women. Many believe that these incidences really occurred in which, the gods and the positive heroes were people of Aryan origin. And the demons, the devils and the dark skinned slaves were in fact the original residence of India whom the Aryans coined as monsters, devil, demons and slaves.

As in most of the societies of the world, so in India, the son inherited his father's profession. And so in India there developed families, who professed the same family profession for generation in which, the son continued his father's profession. Later on as these families became larger, they were seen as communities or as they are called in Indian languages, Jat. Different families who professed the same profession developed social relations between them and organized as a common community, meaning Jat.

Later on the Aryans who created the caste system, added to their system non-Aryans. Different Jats who professed different professions were integrated in different Varnas according to their profession. Other foreign invaders of ancient India - Greeks, Huns, Scythains and others - who conquered parts of India and created kingdoms were integrated in the Kshatria Varna (warrior castes). But probably the Aryan policy was not to integrate original Indian communities within them and therefore many aristocratic and warrior communities that were in India before the Aryans did not get the Kshatria status.

Most of the communities that were in India before the arrival of the Aryans were integrated in the Sudra Varna or were made outcast depending on the professions of these communities. Communities who professed non-polluting jobs were integrated in Sudra Varna. And communities who professed polluting professions were made outcasts. The Brahmans are very strict about cleanliness. In the past people believed that diseases can also spread also through air and not only through physical touch. Perhaps because of this reason the untouchables were not only disallowed to touch the high caste communities but they also had to stand at a certain distance from the high castes.

The Religious form of Caste System

In Hinduism there exists four castes arranged in a hierarchy. Anyone who does not belong to one of these castes is an outcast. The religious word for caste is 'Varna'. Each Varna has certain duties and rights. Each Varna members have to work in certain occupation which only that Varna

members are allowed. Each Varna has certain type of diet. The highest Varna is of the Brahman. Members of this class are priests and the educated people of the society. The Varna after them in hierarchy is Kshatria. The members of this class are the rulers and aristocrats of the society. After them are the Vaisia. Members of this class are the landlords and businessmen of the society. After them in hierarchy are the Sudra. Members of this class are the peasants and working class of the society who work in non-polluting jobs. The caste hierarchy ends here. Below these castes are the outcasts who are untouchable to the four castes. These untouchables worked in degrading jobs like cleaning, sewage etc.

The first three castes had social and economical rights which the Sudra and the untouchables did not have. The first three castes are also seen as 'twice born'. The intention in these two births is to the natural birth and to the ceremonial entrance to the society at a much later age.

Each Varna and also the untouchables are divided into many communities. These communities are called Jat or Jati (The caste is also used instead of Jat). For example the Brahmans have Jats called Gaur, Konkanash, Sarasvat, Iyer and others. The outcasts have Jats like Mahar, Dhed, Mala, Madiga and others. The Sudra is the largest Varna and it has the largest number of communities. Each Jat is limited to professions worthy of their Varna. Each Jat is limited to the Varna diet. Each Jat members are allowed to marry only with their Jat members. People are born into their Jat and it cannot be changed.

This is the how the caste system is supposed to be in its religious form. But in reality it is much more complicated and different from its religious form.

The reasons stated above are among the few reasons that causes confusion in caste system.

Untouchables

The untouchablity feature in the caste system is one of the cruelest features of the caste system. It is seen by many as one of the strongest racist phenomenon in the world.

In the Indian society people who worked in ignominious, polluting and unclean occupations were seen as polluting peoples and were therefore considered as untouchables. The untouchables had almost no rights in the society. In different parts of India they were treated in different ways. In some regions the attitude towards the untouchables was harsh and strict. In other regions it was less strict.

In regions where the attitude was less strict the untouchables were seen as polluting people and their dwellings were at a distance from the settlements of the four Varna communities. The untouchables were not allowed to touch people from the four Varnas. They were not allowed to enter houses of the higher Varnas. They were not allowed to enter the temples. They were not allowed to use the same wells used by the Varnas. In public occasions they were compelled to sit at a distance from the four Varnas. In regions where the attitude towards the untouchables were more severe, not only touching them was seen polluting, but also even a contact with their shadow was seen as polluting.

If, because of any reason, there was a contact between an untouchable and a member of the Varnas, the Varna member became defiled and had to immerse or wash himself with water to be purified. In strict societies, especially among the 'Twice Born' (the three top Varnas) the touched 'Twice Born' also had to pass through some religious ceremonies to purify himself from the pollution. If the untouchable entered a house and touched things of a Varna member, the Varna members used to wash or clean the places where the untouchable touched and stepped.

In some incidences the untouchables who associated with the Varna members were beaten and even murdered for that reason. Some higher hierarchy Jats also had servants whose job was to go or walk before the high Jats members and announce their coming to the streets and to see to it that the streets would be clear of untouchable people.

The orthodox Hindus treated anyone who worked in any kind of polluting job as untouchable and did not have any contact with them. According to orthodox rules any one who does not belong to the four Varnas, meaning foreigners, are untouchables.

The non-Hindus in caste system

Religiously anyone who does not belong to the four Varnas is an outcast and untouchable. It means, all foreigners and non-Hindus are all supposed to be untouchables. But in reality neither all foreigners nor non-Hindus were treated as untouchables. Foreigners and non-Hindus were treated differently in different parts of India. Some of the foreigners adopted Hinduism and integrated in the upper level of the Hindu hierarchy.

The Rajputs of Rajasthan belong to the Kshatria Varna (warrior castes). The Rajputs, more than any other Indian Jat, represent the warrior castes of India. Almost any Indian community which

claims to be a warrior community, claims a Rajput ancestry. But it is believed that many foreign invaders of ancient India (see- India in the past), like Scythians; Huns; Greeks and others, who adopted Hinduism, integrated in the Rajput community and acquired a Kshatria status (see also Sati - burning of the widow).

The Muslims who arrived in India were strong and powerful to be treated as untouchables. Not only were they strong in the military sense, they also tried to enforce their religion on the Indians. The Indians who converted to Islam in most of the cases remained in the same social status as they had before their conversion to Islam. Hindus from the higher Varnas remained at the higher levels of Indian society. Hindus from the lower levels of the hierarchy thought that by converting to Islam they would come out from the Hindu hierarchy system, but in most of the cases they remained in the same hierarchy level after they converted. Among the Muslims of India there has developed a two-tier hierarchy. The upper class, called Sharif Jat, includes Muslims who belonged to the higher levels in caste hierarchy and also Muslims who arrived to India from foreign countries. The lower class, called Ajlaf Jat, includes Muslim converts from lower castes. As in the world, the upper classes do not have close social relations with lower classes, the same way the Sharif Jat do not normally have close social relations with Ajlaf Jat.

The different Christian communities of India were treated in different ways in different parts of India. The Syrian Christians of Kerala had a high status. Along with the Jews, they were the business communities of Kerala and they too had aristocratic rights. The Indians who were baptized from the 16th century by Christian missionaries remained mostly in the same status they had before. As in the Muslim community of India, the Christians also have a two-tier social hierarchy. Many untouchables who converted to Christianity are still treated as untouchables, sometimes by other Christians.

Other religions which were established in India - Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism - also have some marks of caste system, even though they oppose caste system. Sikhism rejects caste system. But different Jats who adopted Sikhism act according to traditional Jat lines. The different Jats normally marry within caste lines. The Jats which were the elite of the Punjab and converted to Sikhism do not give equal respect to Sikhs who belong to the lower levels of Indian hierarchy. The Jains also have separate communities who marry within the community lines. The Buddhist in India have a two-tier hierarchy and just like in the cases of Christians and Muslims it

is also related to the status of the community to whom the person belongs. On the other hand the Mahar community of west India, who were untouchables and converted mostly to Buddhism, prefer, because of different political reasons to recognize themselves as Mahars and not always as Buddhists.

Not all residents of India were part of the caste system. About 7% of India's population are referred to as tribes and not as castes or Jats. These tribes are scattered all around India and they are descendants of communities who were not interested in the Varna hierarchy. They preferred to live away from the main societies deep in the jungles, forests and mountains of India. They survived mostly on fishing, hunting or simple agriculture, and also from stealing, robbing and plundering. These tribes had different religious beliefs and different gods. Some of them had simple beliefs, but others use to sacrifice human beings in their ceremonies. One such tribe, called Gond, had a strong kingdom in central India. Most of the tribes adopted Hinduism, others adopted Islam or Christianity. Some tribes in East India claim to Jewish origin.

A Former Practice: Sati - The burning of the widow

Sati is described as a Hindu custom in India in which the widow was burnt to ashes on her dead husband's pyre. Basically the custom of Sati was believed to be a voluntary Hindu act in which the woman voluntary decides to end her life with her husband after his death. But there were many incidences in which the women were forced to commit Sati, sometimes even dragged against her wish to the lighted pyre.

Though Sati is considered a Hindu custom, the women, known as Sati in Hindu religious literature, did not commit suicide on their dead husband's pyre. The first woman known as Sati was the consort of Lord Shiva. She burnt herself in fire as protest against her father who did not give her consort Shiva the respect she thought he deserved, while burning herself she prayed to reborn again as the new consort of Shiva, which she became and her name in the new incarnation was Parvati.

Other famous woman in Hindu literature titled Sati was Savitri. When Savitri's husband Satyavan died, the Lord of death, Yama arrived to take his soul. Savitri begged Yama to restore Satyavan and take her life instead, which he could not do. So Savitri followed Lord Yama a long way. After a long way in which Yama noticed that Savitri was losing strength but was still following him and her dead husband, Yama offered Savitri a boon, anything other than her

husband's life. Savitri asked to have children from Satyavan. In order to give Savitri her boon, Lord Yama had no choice but to restore Satyavan to life and so Savitri gained her husband back.

These two women along with other women in Hindu mythology who were exceptionally devoted to their husbands symbolized the truthful Indian wife who would do everything for their husband and they were named Sati. The meaning of the word sati is righteous. But as written earlier the women named Sati, in Hindu religious literature, did not commit suicide on their dead husband's pyre. Therefore the custom of burning the widow on her dead husband's pyre probably did not evolve from religious background but from social background.

There are different theories about the origins of Sati. One theory says that Sati was introduced to prevent wives from poisoning their wealthy husbands and marry their real lovers. Other theory says that Sati began with a jealous queen who heard that dead kings were welcomed in heaven by hundreds of beautiful women, called Apsaras. And therefore when her husband died, she demanded to be burnt on her dead husband's pyre and so to arrive with him to heaven and this way to prevent the Apsaras from consorting with her husband. There are also other theories about the origins of Sati.

Even though Sati is considered an Indian custom or a Hindu custom it was not practiced all over India by all Hindus but only among certain communities of India. On the other hand, sacrificing the widow in her dead husband's funeral or pyre was not unique only to India. In many ancient communities it was an acceptable feature. This custom was prevalent among Egyptians, Greek, Goths, Scythians and others. Among these communities it was a custom to bury the dead king with his mistresses or wives, servants and other things so that they could continue to serve him in the next world.

Another theory claims that Sati was probably brought to India by the Scythians invaders of India. When these Scythians arrived in India, they adopted the Indian system of funeral, which was cremating the dead. And so instead of burying their kings and his servers they started cremating their dead with his surviving lovers. The Scythians were warrior tribes and they were given a status of warrior castes in Hindu religious hierarchy. Many of the Rajput clans are believed to originate from the Scythians. Later on other castes who claimed warrior status or higher also adopted this custom.

This custom was more dominant among the warrior communities in north India, especially in

Rajasthan and also among the higher castes in Bengal in east India. Among the Rajputs of Rajasthan, who gave lot of importance to valor and self sacrifice, wives and concubines of the nobles even committed suicide, when they came to know that their beloved died in battlefield? In other parts of India it was comparatively low. And among the majority of Indian communities it did not exist at all.

A few rulers of India tried to ban this custom. The Mughals tried to ban it. The British, due to the efforts of Hindu reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy outlawed this custom in 1829.

There aren't exact figures about the number of Sati incidences. In general, before this custom was outlawed in 1829, there were a few hundred officially recorded incidences each year. Even after the custom was outlawed, this custom did not vanish completely. It took few decades before this custom almost vanished. But still there are rare incidences in which the widow demands to voluntary commit Sati. In 1987 an eighteen years old widow committed Sati in a village of Rajasthan with the blessing of her family members. In this incidence the villagers took part in the ceremony, praising and supporting the widow for her act. In October 1999 a woman hysterically jumped on her husband's pyre surprising everyone. But this incidence was declared suicide and not Sati, because this woman was not compelled, forced or praised to commit this act.

In different communities of India, Sati was performed for different reasons and different manners. In communities where the man was married to one wife, the wife put an end to her life on the pyre. But even in these communities not all widows committed Sati. Those women who committed Sati were highly honored and their families were given lot of respect. It was believed that the woman who committed Sati blessed her family for seven generations after her. Temples or other religious shrines were built to honor the Sati.

In communities were the ruler was married to more than one wife; in some cases only one wife was allowed to commit Sati. This wife was normally the preferred wife of the husband. This was some kind of honor for the chosen wife and some kind of disgrace for the other wives. In other communities some or all of the wives and mistresses were immolated with the husband. And in some cases even male servants were immolated with the kings. This kind of Sati in which the wives and servants were treated as the ruler's property intensifies the theory that Sati was introduced to India by the Scythian invaders of India.

In some very rare incidences mothers committed Sati on their son's pyre and in even more rare

cases husbands committed Sati on their wives pyres.

Family System: Its Characteristics, Features and Trends in India

Family System: Its Characteristics, Features and Trends in India!

It is the lowest unit of social organization. Every human society has adopted the family system.

A family can be defined as a small group characterized by face to face relations and the members, are inter-related by kinship or marriage. Family exists within the society. It can be considered as a social system which exerts influence over the society. A society can't survive without family.

According to G.P. Murdock family is a social group characterized by a common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction.

Family can also be defined as a group in which people belonging to different generations live together.

Characteristics of family

1. Universal:

The family system is found in all societies. Family bonds and type of family differs from one society to another. E.g.: In India, the family bonds are very strong.

2. Identity:

It is a common practice for families to have a "nomenclature". Every family is identified with a particular name.

3. Lowest unit of social organization:

It can be observed that family forms a lowest unit of social organization. Group of families together constitute a community and two or more communities together form a society.

4. Antiquity:

It is difficult to trace the origin of family as such. But it is in existence since time immemorial.

Even the Indus Valley Civilization, one of the oldest civilizations, speaks about family system.

5. Primary Group:

Family is a small group characterized by face to face relations. The members of a family closely identify themselves with the family.

6. Nature of family:

It depends on the head of the family. There may be patriarchal or matriarchal family. In case of patriarchal family, father is the head of the family. In case of matriarchal family, mother is the head of the family.

Role of family

Family plays an important role in the life of an individual. Particularly in India, the family bonds are very strong. The impact of family on an individual can be analysed as follows:

1. Identity to members:

Family creates a sense of psychological identity to members. An individual closely identifies himself with the family. Such an identity may often create status and prestige.

2. Agency for socialization:

Socialization is a learning process which makes an individual an acceptable member of society. It is often remarked that "home" is the first school and the mother is the first teacher. A child learns norms from his family members such as cleanliness eating habits etc.

3. Values of Importance:

An individual acquires values from his family. Values can be defined as beliefs strongly held by individuals. Family teaches, certain values like respect for elders, helping the youngsters, Love and affection for each other etc.

4. Making of the personality:

Family plays a major role in molding the personality of an individual. Personality is reflected in the behaviour of individuals. E.g.: Over pampering of children may make them stubborn and egoistic. On the other hand if the family members show concern for others the same behaviour is

learnt by a child which is displayed in his behaviour.

5. Security:

Family provides a sense of security to its members. An individual feels secured when he is with his family members.

6. Fulfillment of Affiliation needs:

Every human being is gregarious (social) in nature. He feels comfortable when he is with his family members. Family provides an outlet for an individual's & feelings and attitudes. Family members provide emotional support in times of difficulty. Apart from the above stated functions a family also performs some other basic functions like:

i. Gratification of sexual needs

ii. Nurturing the children

iii. Procreation

iv. Protection of old people

Family System in India:

The institution of family is deep-rooted social system in India. Indians are very much attached to their families. Basically two types of families are found in India. Viz: Joint family and Nuclear family.

Joint family:

It is a system in which several generations of kinsmen live together in common residence and share property.

According to K.M. Kapadia Joint family is a group which consists of a couple, their children and other relations from father's side or mother's side (in case of matriarchal families).

Joint family is common among the Hindus.

In Kerala two systems of Joint families are found via: 'Illom' and "Tarwad".

"Illom" is a family system which is prevalent among the "Nambudaris" Community. In this system only the eldest son marries from within the same community other sons may marry Hair women. The eldest son enjoys absolute power of control over family property.

Trawad:

It is prevalent among Nayars of Kerala. It consists of a woman her sons and daughters. It is a Matriarchal family.

Features of Joint Family:

1. Common residence:

The members of a joint family live together under a common roof. Usually people belonging to different generations live together.

2. Joint property:

The members of a joint family share common property. The earnings of all members are poured into a common stock of family property. The head of the joint family is responsible for the management of joint family property. He should use the property for the benefit of the family.

3. Joint Kitchen:

It is the most essential feature of a joint family. It is even believed that joint family is disintegrated with the separation of kitchen. It is under the charge of an oldest woman who is assisted by other women.

4. Kinship:

The members of a joint family are related to each other by way of blood relationship. The members of a joint family upto 4 generations are considered as coparceners.

5. Common rituals:

The members of a joint family worship a common God and follow certain common rituals.

E.g.: Performance of "Shraddha" ceremony.

6. Head of the family:

Father is considered as the Head of the family. He exercises complete authority and control over the joint family. After the death of the father, eldest son will become the head of the family. The head of the family is known as "Karta".

Are Joint Families Helpful?

Joint families have their own merits and demerits. They may be helpful for the following reasons.

1. Division of work:

There is division of work among the members in a joint family. Activities are distributed among men, women and children.

E.g.: Family trade and agricultural activities are carried out by male members and they are assisted by children. Household work is carried out by the women.

2. Emotional Security:

In a joint family members help each other in times of difficulty, elders give suitable advice to youngsters.

3. Social security:

In a joint family system social security is provided to members who can't earn. Old people, widows, and children of deceased parents are maintained by the joint family.

4. Reduction of expenses:

In a joint family earnings of members are pooled. The expenses of maintaining the family are met by all. It will not be a burden on a single person and hence expenses can be reduced and money can be saved.

5. Social control:

Joint family closely supervises over the undesirable anti-social activities. It curbs undesired tendencies.

6. Heritage:

Joint family attaches a lot of importance to customs and traditions. They are respected and observed by all members from generation to generation.

Joint families may not be helpful for the following reasons:

1. Generation gap:

It is a common feature of joint family. It results in frequent squabbles among family members.

2. Curbs individuality:

In a joint family there is no scope for individuality. Likes and dislikes of an individual are not at all considered. It may affect the growth of individual personality.

3. Low status of women:

In a joint family, the status of women is very low. Their roles are confined to the performance of household activities, incidents like dowry harassment and dowry deaths are common among joint families.

4. Encourages Lethargy:

Joint family provides shelter and protection to every member irrespective of his earnings. Active members work hard and the lazy members enjoy equal share without working. Such members continue to be lethargic throughout their life which causes conflicts and litigation among family members.

5. Restricts Choice of Occupation:

In a joint family, the members are forced to restrict themselves to family occupation. It blocks individuals talents. In some cases the family occupation may not be able to provide sufficient income to all the members which may result in low standard of living.

Disintegration of Joint family:

In the contemporary scenario, joint family system has become a rare concept particularly in Modern cities the tendency is towards nuclear family.

Various reasons can be attributed for the disintegration of joint family:

1. Modernisation:

Modern thoughts have developed among people. It has created a high degree of individuality. People no longer feel comfortable with joint families. They find it very difficult to adjust with the attitudes and temperaments of others.

2. Increasing job opportunities:

Industrialization has created ample job opportunities. People find it lucrative work in organisations than depending on joint family occupations.

3. Spread of education among women:

With the spread of education, women are more and more conscious of their rights. They are no longer willing to confine themselves to household activities. Educated women often find it difficult to adjust with in-laws and they quite often question their authority which would lead to disintegration of joint family.

5. Problem of accommodation:

In industrial cities it is a major problem. Due to high cost of living people may not be able to find a sufficient accommodation which can accommodate all the members of a joint family.

6. Poverty:

There is a problem of over population in joint families. If all the members of joint family depend upon a same piece of land, or a common business, they may not be able to have a better standard of living. Hence some joint family members who find better opportunities migrate to cities.

Nuclear family:

The trend in the urban societies is towards nuclear family, wherein only Husband, wife and their unmarried children reside together.

The demerits of joint families can be overcome in nuclear families.

But there are typical problems associated with nuclear families which may be as follows:

i. Lack of emotional security.

ii. Egoistic nature of children and problem of adjustment.

iii. Lack of social control.

iv. Lack of parental attention which may lead to social problems like alcoholism. drug abuse, Juvenile delinquency etc.

Trends in the family system:

A lot of changes are taking place in the institution of family which quite often poses a threat to the very survival of family system in India. The following trends may be observed in the institution of family.

i. Unwed mothers.

ii. Live in relationship between a couple without the ceremony of marriage.

iii. Extra marital relations.

iv. Increased rate of divorce.

v. Boarding school education for children from a very young age which makes them looses their attachment with the family.

vi. Decision of young couples not to procreate. Eg.: This tendency is particularly observed among the highly educated couples who feel that they have no time to bring up children.

vii. Decision of youngsters to remain unmarried on account of high degree of dedication to profession.

Management Perspective:

The family background of an individual influences his behaviour to a great extent in organisation. Various incidents in organisations support this fact. It is usually observed that individuals hailing from joint family system can get along well with other employees. On the other hand people brought up in a nuclear set up may have a lot of ego problems and find it very difficult to get along with other employees.

Family background also influences attitude towards work Eg. : Values acquired in the family such as honesty, timely completion of work. Obedience to elders are also carried to the work place and practiced by individuals.