

# Comparison of joint family and nuclear family



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A classic definition of family, according to anthropologist George Murdock, is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation, and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually cohabiting adults." The U. S. Bureau of the Census has defined a family as "two or more persons related by birth, marriage, or adoption, who reside together." Thus a family can be two or more adult siblings living together, a parent and child or children, two adults who are related by marriage but have no children, or adults who adopt a child." A family is a set of human being related to each other in a non- professional manner, giving rise to a concrete cohesion within the family. Love, care, and affection are the most prominent human values, which are responsible for maintaining these bonds of relationships within a family. (Agarwal, V, 2005), not only these but a family also gives strength to an individual and because of its strength an individual can overcome from different kinds of problems too. A family gives strength to an individual; it is not only the strongest point but also the weakest point of an individual.

A person learns different things from his/her family, but learning different things also varies from family to family. There are two basic kinds of family in our society Joint Family and Nuclear Family.

A Joint Family (or extended family) is also known as a complex family, parents and their children's families often live under a single roof, which means that Joint family consist of two or multiple generations. In some cases Joint family can be said as a family where a collection of more then one nuclear families are interconnected either by blood relation or marital

relation reside under the same roof. All the members, regardless of which particular nuclear family (within that joint family) they belong to, live together and share happiness, grief, and virtually every kind of problem and joy together. The joint family in itself simulates a typical view of our multi-cultural, multi-lingual society in India and as well as in Bangladesh. (Agarwal, V. 2005) Joint Families are mostly found in Asia.

The term nuclear family developed in the western world to distinguish the family group and is considered as the simplest type of a family which consist of a married man and a woman with their offspring '. Nuclear Family can also be referred to as a conjugal family because of the accent is of the husband wife relationship and the nuclear family is the basic unit of all more complex forms'. (Nimkoff, F. M. & Middleton, R. 1960)

Family in the Western country like the United States have become more diverse with no particular household arrangement representing half of the United States population. The different types of families occur in a wide variety of settings, and their specific functions and meanings depend largely on their relationship to other social institutions. Non-scholars, especially in the United States and Europe, use the term " nuclear family" to refer to conjugal families. Non-scholars, especially in the United States and Europe, also use the term ". ' Extended Family' this term has two distinct meanings. First, it serves as a synonym of " consanguine family" . Second, in societies dominated by the conjugal family, it refers to kindred' (Retrieved April 7, 2007)

The behavior, lifestyle, thinking everything varies from family to family . i. e. a person from a joint family behaves, thinks in a different way then that of a nuclear family. People from joint family comes a cross many different things and by facing those different things they mostly learn how to meet the social challenges of the real world.

Living in a joint family in itself is a beautiful experience and among the two basic kinds of family, joint family is the one where a person gets different kinds of advantages such as a person learns to love and earn respect which is the key to have harmonious and never ending relationship. Mutual respect and love are biggest values a joint family can offer. Not only a person to learns love and earn respect but also an individual can share his/her joys and grieves; in joint family there are many people to enjoy about a particular delightful occasion and as well as provide support at the time of family problems. (i. e., incase if some one is ill). When a person lives in a joint family he/she can share many secrets with someone of his/her age (cousins), which he/ she cannot share with his/her elders or younger but cannot do the same when in a nuclear family. Another advantage of living in a joint family is of safety and development of children, in joint families a child can be nurtured properly and perfectly. The chances of a child to get spoilt are lesser than that of a nuclear family. For example, in many cases we have seen that the working women leave their child at home along with their servant or baby sitter and their company spoil the child, whereas in joint family the cases are reverse; there are enough people (such as grandmother, aunts etc) to look after the child.

Despite of all these advantages the concept of joint family is disappearing day by day from our society; and the reason behind it is the mentality of people are changing, they don't want to be dependent on anyone and don't want anyone to object them as in some cases it has been seen that the elders are objecting the younger for not doing any specific thing.

One of the disadvantages of living in a joint family is the unequal distribution of shares in home- economy. For example many families we have seen that there is a single point of income, such as a common shop, a single earning hand, or some revenue periodically generated from fixed assets like rents and royalties. In such cases, the eldest member (or the earner) is usually the one, who takes after the economic power and responsibility to manage home funds, divide the share of each nuclear family (within the joint family) rationally. Most of the times, his inability in doing so, becomes the reason for family-partitions. This is inability however arise due to various factor including dishonesty of himself (or his own nuclear family) or some other family member inappropriate distribution of responsibilities and rights for each nuclear family, for expenditure. Share of each nuclear family within the joint family must be decided setting up the balance among the needs (education, clothing, and special preferences), number of dependents, contribution to funds, and the special eventual expenditures. This balance is really pivoted on a very sensitive fulcrum, which should be the result of a healthy exchange of honest thoughts of each responsible person in the joint family.

Each individual's equal recognition is very important and also very important for not allowing any inferiority or superiority complex to creep into anyone's

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mind. This particularly must be avoided at the level where, parents start expecting their child to be as bright as children of other couple in the same joint family, for instance. This sometimes, gives rise to silent bitter feelings and these feelings may end up causing differences.

Differences in opinion create a barrier among the family members and this is one of the important things which should be taken care of, by all the responsible members of the joint family in a matured fashion. The healthy brainstorming over the issue in question may give rise to an even healthier environment of living. The other way to conquering this problem is having a heated altercation, which makes conditions bad to worse, ultimately resulting in separations. "(Agarwal, V. 2005)

So these are the most common problems which are the reasons behind partition or separation or for avoiding for living in a joint family, but on the other hand, by doing so a person is getting away from his/her loved ones and accepting different kind of risk by living in a nuclear family and are also forgetting their responsibilities towards their loved ones and towards their whole family. Living in a joint family can lesser pressure financially or can be advantageous for an individual as the members contribute according to their income but it can also create problems among the family members for not contributing equally or due to less amount of money.

People prefer to live in joint families but because of their misunderstanding (i. e. differences in opinion,) among the family members an individual might avoid to live in it. But by taking its advantages into consideration, people do like living in joint families too.

Living in a joint family is financially advantageous for all the members of the family. As by living together the members contribute according to their capability and in this way they lesser pressure from each other.

People in our society face a lot of problems; financial ones, social ones, family ones. One of the biggest problems is the decline of the family. In advantageous thoughts of nuclear family, two parents mean double the chances of a good income, over a single parent. It means twice the chance that a parent is home to teach the kids, be a good role model. It means less stress for both the adult and the kids. It means more diverse influences. A child needs “ a mother’s perspective” and “ a father’s perspective”, not just once, it’s not as balanced. Through most of our history and most civilizations, we have had extended families. Mom and dad lived with, or near, grandmother and grandfather, aunts and uncles, cousins; it was like having a gigantic family instead of a nuclear one. No strangers raising the kids, no worry of bankruptcy if someone loses a job, always someone there when you need them.

The “ nuclear”, “ isolated” or “ restricted” family is not a recent phenomenon, but has existed in many cultures throughout human history. Indeed, the extended family of several generations is found mostly in relatively advanced, stable, and affluent, but not yet industrialized societies. Very primitive and very sophisticated societies seem to prefer the nuclear family model.

However, nuclear families can vary in the degree of their isolation and restrictedness. For example, before the Industrial Revolution the Western

nuclear family was often embedded in a larger social unit, such as a farm or estate, an aristocratic court, or a village populated by relatives. Many older city neighborhoods also kept kinship ties strong, and thus even very small families remained open to the community. Family visits might be frequent and extended; children might freely circulate and feel at home in several households.

On the other hand, we have seen that, beginning in the late 17th century; a trend toward “ closeness” reduced the size of many larger households and changed the relationships between the remaining family members. They became more concerned about each other. They needed each other more. The idyllic home of the “ bourgeois” became an island of serenity in the gathering storm of modernization, a haven secure from the world “ out there”, from aggressiveness, competition, and class warfare. We have also seen how this home sheltered women and protected the children from sexual and other temptations. Other nasty social realities were also kept safely at bay. The family income was no longer earned inside, but rather outside the house. The division of labor between the sexes became more pronounced as men spent more and more time away from their families as wage earners in factories, shops, and offices. Their wives became almost the only companions of their small children whose care and education was now their main responsibility. (Formerly, these tasks had been divided between mothers, grandmothers, nurses, and servants.) Virtually the only middle-class men who still worked at home were doctors and lawyers in private practice. As a rule, however, the bourgeois family saw its “ head” and “



breadwinner” only when he returned from his work at night. This work itself remained an abstraction to both his wife and his children.

In a typical nuclear family, there are two parents, and either one or both have jobs. So if someone loses their job, either the family has no income, or only half of what it had. But imagine a family with three or more parents, some of whom work. A lost job is less of a disaster to the family then. One of the biggest problems families face today is that nobody can stay home to care for the kids. It is a statistical fact that the second parent usually has to go out and work just to bring home about the same amount of money that the first parent is paying in taxes. This hurts the children, who end up being raised by random babysitters and day-care centers. But in an extended family, it’s much easier to be sure that someone’s always around to care for the kids, provide a good role model. Perhaps two adults work and one stays home, or each works at different times.

In a nuclear family there will be less scope for children to get advice and encouragement from the experienced elders. There will be problems in bringing up the children and absence of care and affection of the elders to the children. It is another question whether the nuclear family itself, even when “ complete”, is still the best available option. Many people today are convinced that small, single households are uneconomical and wasteful, that they are still emotionally unhealthy, that they perpetuate outmoded stereotypical sex roles, and that they produce competitive, egotistical children in an age when universal cooperation seems the only hope of mankind. It is also argued that the modern family no longer has any other function than to provide love and intimacy, and that this is by no means

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enough to justify its existence. Indeed, since families have been largely relieved of their economic, educational, and protective functions by the state, sexual attachment has become the nearly exclusive basis of marriage, and this basis is notoriously weak. Frequent divorce and remarriage, however, while perhaps practical for the adults, hardly seem in the best interest of the children. Under the circumstances, it is only fitting that a number of thoughtful men and women should continue to search for more stable, “ new and improved” family models.

Living in a joint family not only is advantageous but also has disadvantages as well, but in order to achieve something one has to lose something too. The same is the case for joint families, by thinking about the advantages that a joint family provides one might to give up the idea of living in a nuclear family and unite with their loved ones. Living in a joint family is advantageous. In order to live happily and peacefully in a joint family an individual should not lose his temper and should overlook each others mistakes and also should understand each other. The family members should have good communication among themselves in order to ensure free flow of money around the family.