

[Let Joint Families Forge a Better Future](#)

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MY TURN

Let Joint Families Forge a Better Future

Bharat J. Gajjar

Right after the independence of India, in 1947, my father put four names outside our house. At that time we lived as a joint family. Both my father and my uncles' families lived in a big bungalow. I asked my father why he had put our names outside the home. He told me that legally we were no longer a joint family. He added that Jawaharlal Nehru's government wanted to give a tax incentive to smaller families. If we kept a joint family, we would have to pay more taxes. I asked him why a joint family was not preferred. Wasn't it the Hindu way of living? He said Prime Minister Nehru was a Westernized man who believed that India was poor and nonindustrial because the Hindus have a joint family system. He wanted to break up this system in order to make material progress in India.

I did not understand what my father was talking about then. After living many years in the West, I came to know what he really meant. In the West, family means a father, mother and children, and children leave the family when they become 18. In the East, family means parents, children, cousins, aunts and uncles. All the children live with the parents. The Christian way

of living is to have individual small families, and their attitude comes from the Bible. Jesus says, "Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth. I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law. A man's foes will be those of his own household. He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; and he who loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. He who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me. He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for my sake will find it."--Luke 12:51:53

This passage means something in spirituality, but it is interpreted differently, in a mundane way. It leads one to live a free and more individualized life. A good example of this is in the state of Kerala, India, where Hindus are converted to Christianity. Churches have become strong, but families have become weaker, resulting in a higher divorce rate.

What happens when families in the USA break up? The family suffers, but the material world gains. Instead of one peaceful family, now we have two miserable, broken families. They need two apartments and sell their home. The lawyers are busy, the counselors and doctors are busy, fast food places are busy, dating services and restaurants are busy. And on and on it goes.

When a person feels lousy and miserable, he embraces the material world to get happiness. A loving person with a loving family will not and will be less motivated to fight. Sadly, this is

only partially true. Look at some of the Indian people in the West. They have strong, loving families with well educated children and are successful. But they tend to dote on the material world. The Japanese have maintained a joint family system, and they are very successful. After 50 years of independence, India has made poor progress, in spite of Nehru's policies to divide families and push socialism. If India wants to make progress, she should keep the joint family system and enjoy an even more free and true enterprise. United we grow, divided we lose.