

Structure

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6.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you should be able to

- define the nature of the institution of family
- give a description of the types of family
- discuss the nature of nuclear family in Indian society
- outline the criteria used for identifying jointness in a family
- discuss the family systems in terms of a cyclical approach
- identify the major forces responsible for change in the institution of family.

6.1 INTRODUCTION

In Block I we talked of rural and urban social structure. We said structure refers to a pattern of arrangement of social relationships, which get institutionalised over time. In this Block we will look at some of the basic institutions of Indian society, namely, the family, marriage and kinship.

In the first unit of this Block we will look at the institution of family. We will describe the nuclear and joint family systems. We will also look into the question of changes in the Indian family.

6.2 THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY

Let us first define the nature of the institution of family. Broadly speaking, it refers to the group comprising parents and children. It may also refer, in some places, to a patri-or matrilineage or to a group of cognates, that is, persons descended from the same ancestor. In some other cases, it may refer to a group of relatives and their dependants forming one household. All this refers to the compositional aspect of this institution. Another aspect is that of the residence of its members. They usually share a common residence, at least for some part of their lives. Thirdly, we can also speak of the relational aspect of the family. Members have reciprocal rights and duties towards each other. Finally, the family is also an agent of socialisation. All these aspects make this institution different from other units of social structure.

Family is one of the most important social institutions. Most of the world's population lives in family units. The specific form and behaviour patterns found within a family have shown variations through time across countries of the world and even within a country. A sociologist looks at the institution both in terms of an ideal type and a reality. He/she ascertains the ideals of the family system partly because they are a guide to behaviour and also because these ideals act as values, a set of norms which are passed from one generation to another. A sociologist also studies the actual way in which a family is patterned and re-patterned within a society, in a particular group through time. She will also try to identify the forces, which have been responsible for changing certain aspects of the family units in a particular manner.

Now, in order to understand the nature of family in India, we will first look at the types of family in the manner outlined above.

6.3 THE TYPES OF FAMILY

Normally the basic unit of social structure contains the two primary links of kinship. These are of parenthood and siblingship. In simple terms, a family usually comprises various combinations and permutations of these relationships. In the Indian context, we generally speak of the contrast between nuclear and joint family types.

A classification of families into joint and nuclear types is usually based on the way in which families are organised. For instance, the most popular definition of a nuclear family is to refer to it as a group consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried, children. The joint family is commonly defined as the nuclear family plus all kin belonging to the side of husband, and/or wife living in one homestead.

Frequently, the term 'extended' family is used instead of the term joint family to indicate that the combination of two or more nuclear families is based on an extension of the parent-child relationship. Thus, the patrilineally extended family is based on an extension of the father-son relationship, while the matrilineally extended family is based on the mother-daughter relationship. The extended family may also

be extended horizontally to include a group consisting of two or more brothers, their wives and children. This horizontally extended family is called as the fraternal or collateral family.

In India, the family whether extended vertically and/or horizontally is called the joint family, which is strictly speaking also a property-sharing unit. Thus, the concept of joint family in India has legal and other references as well, which will be discussed in subsections 6.4.1 and 6.4.2.

The above definitions of the nuclear and the joint family are limited in the sense that they do not say anything more than the compositional aspect of the family. When we look at the wide variations through time in patterns of family living based on region, religion, caste and class in India we find that the nuclear and the joint family organisation cannot be viewed as two distinct, isolated and independent units but as a continuum, as something interrelated in a developmental cycle.

6.3.1 The Continuum of Nuclear and Joint Family Systems

We say that the nuclear and the joint family systems have to be viewed as a continuum. This means that these two types of family systems have to be looked at as something interrelated in a developmental cycle. The structure of a family changes over a time period in terms of size, composition, role and status of persons, the family and societal norms and sanctions. There probably is rarely a family in India, which remains perpetually nuclear in composition. Often additional members like an aged parent or unmarried brothers and sisters may come to live with a man, his wife and unmarried children. The nuclear family then, is a stage in a cycle with other structural types of families. Even when certain forces have enjoined the establishment of nuclear household, for a relatively long period of time, the ritual, economic and sentimental link with relatives who compose a joint family are often maintained. We shall discuss about these forces and impact of these forces in section 6.6.

While discussing the nature of nuclear family in India, Pauline Kolenda (1987) has discussed additions/modifications in nuclear family structure. She gives the following compositional categories.

- i) **Nuclear family** refers to a couple with or without children.
- ii) **Supplemented nuclear family** indicates a nuclear family plus one or more unmarried, separated, or widowed relatives of the parents, other than their unmarried children.
- iii) **Subnuclear family** is identified as a fragment of a former nuclear family for instance a widow/widower with her/his unmarried children or siblings (unmarried or widowed or separated or divorced) living together.
- iv) **Single person household**
- v) **Supplemented subnuclear family** refers to a group of relatives, members of a formerly complete nuclear family along with some other unmarried, divorced or widowed relative who was not a member of the nuclear family. For instance, a widow and her unmarried children may be living together with her widowed mother-in-law. In the Indian context, it is easy to find all these types of family. However, in terms of societal norms and values, these types relate to the joint family system.

6.3.2 The Hindu Joint Family

Much has been written about the joint family system, especially the Hindu joint family system. The **patrilineal, patrilocal** (residence of the couple after marriage in the husband’s father’s home), property owning, co-residential and commensal joint family, comprising three or more generations has been depicted as the ideal family unit of Hindu society. M.S. Gore (1968: 4-5) points out that ideally, the joint family consists of a man and his wife and their adult sons, their wives and children, and younger children of the paternal couple. In this ideal type the oldest male is the head of the family. The rights and duties in this type of family are laid down to a great extent by the hierarchical order of power and authority. Age and sex are the main ordering principles of family hierarchy. The frequency and the nature of contact/communication between members vary on the basis of sex. A married woman, for instance works in the kitchen with her mother-in-law and sisters-in-law. Younger members are required to show respect to the older members and can hardly question the authority or decision taken by elders even when it directly concerns them. Children of the joint family are children of all the male members in the parental generation.

Emphasis on conjugal ties (i.e. between husband and wife) is supposed to weaken the stability of the joint family. The father-son relationship (filial relationship) and the relationship between brothers (fraternal relationship) are more crucial for the joint family system than the husband-wife or conjugal relationship. The conjugal, filial and fraternal relationships can be expressed in simple kinship diagrams in figure 6.1: family relationships.

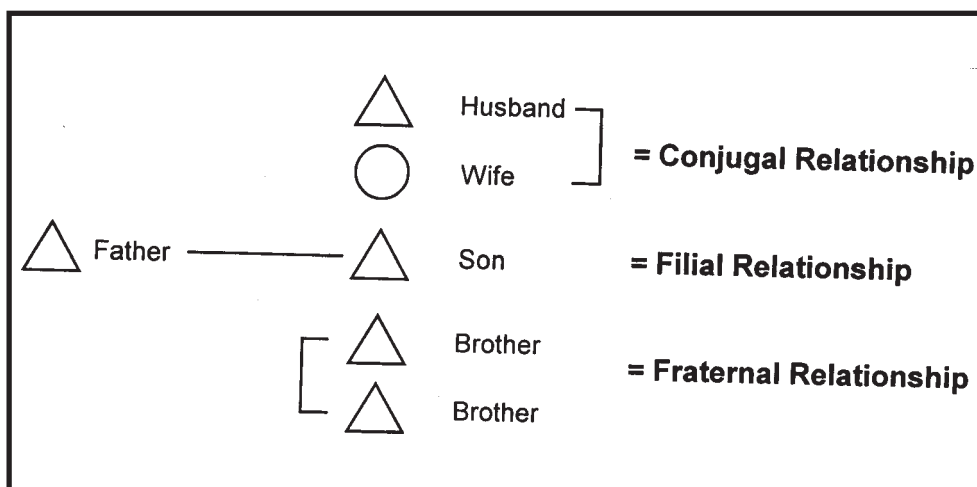


Fig. 6.1: Family relationships

In a nuclear family the husband and wife relationship is important for the survival of the system. Hence, in M.S. Gore’s view, it would be inappropriate to look at the joint family system as a collection of nuclear families. Having said that joint families are not merely a collection of nuclear families we must examine what constitutes jointness. For this purpose, in a separate section we will discuss the nature of joint family in India. This will also make it clear how and why Indian society has a continuum of nuclear and joint family systems and not two distinct forms of nuclear and joint family.

Check Your Progress 1

- i) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark T for true or F for false against each statement.
 - a) Joint family in India constitutes a mere collection of nuclear families.
 - b) The nuclear and the joint family can be looked at as a continuum in terms of a developmental cycle.
- ii) List the four major additions/modifications in the nuclear family structure, as suggested by Kolenda.
 - a)
 - b)
 - c)
 - d)

6.4 NATURE OF JOINT FAMILY IN INDIA

There are two aspects of joint family system in India based on

- i) What constitutes jointness?
- ii) Who constitutes a joint family?

Both the sub-sections will show us how the seemingly nuclear families in India are actually parts of larger family groups, which share the idea of ‘jointness’.

6.4.1 What Constitutes Jointness?

Let us look at what is jointly shared by the members of a joint family. Their jointness is reflected in the factors of **commensality**, common residence, joint ownership of property, cooperation and sentiment of jointness, ritual bonds like worship of common deity. We shall discuss them one by one.

- i) **Commensality:** Most of the studies of joint family use commensality (eating together) as a defining criterion. The joint family is the hearth group; members cook and eat food from the same kitchen.
- ii) **Common Residence:** In some studies the joint family as the residential family group is stressed. Though it is possible to find a joint family having the same hearth but not sharing the same dwelling or vice versa, by and large commensality and common residence are taken as essential ingredients of jointness (refer to Cohn 1961, Dube 1955, Mukherjee 1969, Kolenda 1968).
- iii) **Joint Ownership of Property:** Some scholars have regarded joint ownership of property or **coparcenary** as the essence of jointness, irrespective of the type of residence and commensality. In legal terms, this is the most crucial factor used for defining a joint family.
- iv) **Cooperation and Sentiment:** Scholars like I.P. Desai (1964) and K. M. Kapadia (1958) point out that jointness should be looked in functional terms. A functionally joint family lays stress on fulfilment of obligations towards kin.

A patrilineal joint family may consist of a number of households headed by males related through the father. They may be located even at distant places and may not even have property in common. But what is common is that they identify themselves as members of a particular 'family', cooperate in rituals and ceremonies, render financial and other kinds of help; and they cherish a common family sentiment and abide by the norms of joint living.

- v) **Ritual Bonds:** The ritual bonds of a joint family are considered to be an important component of jointness. A joint family, thus, is bound together by periodic propitiation of the dead ancestors. The members perform a '*shraddha*' ceremony in which the senior male member of the joint family propitiates his dead father's or mother's spirit, offering it the '*pinda*' (balls of cooked rice) on behalf of all the members.

Another ritual bond among joint family members can be a common deity worship. In many parts of South India, each joint family has a tradition of worshipping a particular clan or village deity. Vows are made to these deities in times of joy and trouble. The first tonsure, donning of the sacred thread, marriages etc. are celebrated in or near the deity's temple. Srinivasa of Tirupathi and Subramanya of Palani are two well-known Hindu deities who have a large number of South Indian families attached to them (Srinivas 1969:71).

Still another important bond is pollution. Birth and death results in pollution and the group observing pollution consists of the members of the joint family, patrilineal or **matrilineal**. The bonds created by ancestor worship, family deities and observation of pollution persist even after the joint family has split into separate or smaller residential and commensal units (Srinivas 1969: 71).

From the above discussion of joint family it becomes clear that common kitchen or hearth, common residence, joint rights to property and the fulfillment of obligation towards kin and ritual bonds have been outlined as the main criteria for defining what constitutes jointness. Many scholars have pointed out that of these dimensions, co-residence and commensality, are the immediately identifiable characteristics of a joint family. Such a consideration, they feel, would also accommodate family patterns found in non-Hindu communities like the Muslims, Christians, etc. It would also accommodate families, which hardly have anything by way of ancestral or immovable property (Dube 1974).

6.4.2 Who Constitute a Joint Family?

We can look at this issue in terms of

- i) kin relationship between the members
- ii) the number of generations in one unit
- iii) the sharing of common property.

Let us deal with each of these three one by one.

i) **Kin Relationship between the Members**

We can say that a joint family may consist of members related lineally or collaterally or both. There is more or less an unanimous agreement that a family is essentially defined as "joint" only if it includes two or more related married couples. Also it has been observed that these couples may be related (i) lineally (usually in a father-

son relationship or occasionally in a father-daughter relationship), or, (ii) collaterally (usually in a brother-brother relationship/or/ occasionally in a brother-sister relationship). Both these types refer to the compositional aspect of the patrilineal joint family. In matrilineal systems, found in South-west and North-east India, the family is usually composed of a woman, her mother and her married and unmarried daughters. The mother's brother is also an important member of the family; he is the manager of the matrilineal joint family affairs. The husbands of the female members live with them. In Kerala, a husband used to be a frequent visitor to the wife's household and he lived in his mother's household.

Pauline Kolenda (1987: 11-2) presents the following types of joint family on the basis of the relatives who are its members.

- a) **Collateral joint family:** It comprises two or more married couples between whom there is a sibling bond. In this type, usually a brother and his wife and another brother and his wife live together with unmarried children.
- b) **Supplemented collateral joint family:** It is a collateral joint family along with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives. The supplemented relatives are generally the widowed mother of the married brothers or the widower father, or an unmarried sibling.
- c) **Lineal joint family:** Two couples, between whom there is a lineal link, like between a parent and his married son or some times between a parent and his married daughter, live together.
- d) **Supplemented lineal joint family:** It is a lineal joint family together with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives who do not belong to either of the lineally linked nuclear families; for example, the father's widower brother or the son's wife's unmarried brother or sister.
- e) **Lineal collateral joint family:** In this type three or more couples are linked lineally and collaterally. For instance we can have a family consisting of parents and their two or more married sons together with the unmarried children of the couples.
- f) **Supplemented lineal - collateral joint family:** In this type are found a lineal collateral joint family plus unmarried, widowed, separated relatives who belong to one of the nuclear families (lineally and collaterally linked), for example, the father's widowed sister or brother or an unmarried nephew of the father.

Activity 1

Classify fifteen families in your neighbourhood into the categories in terms of the relatives who compose it.

ii) The Number of Generations in One Unit

A joint family is also seen in terms of generations present in it. Some researchers, like I.P. Desai (1964) and T.N. Madan (1965) emphasise that the number of generations present in a family is important for identifying a joint family. A joint family is commonly defined as a three generational family. For instance a man, his married son and his grand children constitute a joint family.

iii) The Sharing of Common Property

Researchers, like F.G. Bailey (1963), T.N. Madan (1961), have advocated the limitation of the term joint family to a group of relatives who form a property owning group, the coparcenary family. M.S. Gore (1968), for instance, defines a joint family as a group consisting of adult male coparceners and their dependants. The wives and young children of these male members are the dependents.

The female members have not been included in the category of the coparcenary. They have rights of residence and maintenance only as dependents. In 1937 an attempt was made to confer the same right, i.e., the right of inheritance of property on a Hindu widow as her son would have in the estate of her deceased husband. The Act enabled her to enjoy the income only from the immovable property of her husband during her lifetime.

Until the passing of the Hindu Succession Act, 1956, two systems of inheritance dominated among patrilineal Hindus. In one system (called the Mitakshara school, adopted in most regions) a son has a vested interest in his father's ancestral property from the moment of his birth. The father cannot give away any part of this property to the detriment of his son's interest. Under the other system (the Dayabaga school, adopted in Bengal and Assam) the father is the absolute owner of his share and has a right to alienate his property the way he wants.

Among the patrilineal Hindus, some movable property is given to the daughters at the time of marriage as *stridhana*. With the passing of the Hindu Succession Act of 1956, a uniform system of inheritance has been established. The individual property of a male Hindu, dying intestate (having made no will), passes in equal shares between his son, daughter, widow and mother. Male and female heirs have come to be treated as equal in matters of inheritance and succession. Another important feature of the Act is that any property possessed by a female Hindu is held by her as her absolute property and she has full power to deal with it the way she likes. This Act has also given a woman the right to inherit from the father as well as from the husband. However the benefit conferred on a woman is limited when compared to the rights of the male members who still have rights to coparcenary ancestral property by birth. Daughters are not part of the coparcenary and have no birthrights.

The difficulty of looking at joint family as a coparcenary family unit is that it does not take into account those joint families, which possess little in the form of immovable or moveable property.

6.4.3 Variability in and Prevalence of Joint Family Living

- i) **Variability:** We identified a joint family in terms of what is shared and who shares it. We went through this exercise in this manner so that we can identify and analyse the multitude of factors that make a joint family. But we must remember that a joint family is a composite whole of both the "who and what" components. The exact composition or members and what is actually shared by these members in a particular family will vary through time and will also vary between families.

The following factors relating to the compositional aspect explain these variations within a family and between families.

- a) **The culturally patterned time of break-up:** It differs across caste, community and region. The time, when a married son or brother breaks away to form a separate residential and commensal unit, may vary within a family and between families.
 - b) **Demographic profiles:** Based on such factors like average life expectancy, average age at marriage, average number of children born per couple, age of father at the birth of various children etc., we will again find variation in the pattern of joint family living.
 - c) **The influence of education, spatial mobility and diversification of occupation** also bring about variation (CSWI 1974: 59).
- ii) **Prevalence:** By comparing seventy six studies which included family types across villages, caste communities and other population, Pauline Kolenda (1987: 78) outlined the pattern of prevalence of joint family in India. She observed that (a) joint family both lineal and collateral was more characteristic of higher twice-born castes and least characteristic among the economically poor and the untouchables, (b) there are regional differences in the proportion of joint families. For instance, the Gangetic plains showed higher incidence of joint families than Central India, i.e., in Madhya Pradesh, Western Rajasthan, parts of Maharashtra, and (c) there seem to be differences in the customary time of break-up of the joint family in various groups and places in India.

In conclusion, we can say that there is something like a patterned cycle of rearrangement of family living through time. As mentioned before, the family in India has to be viewed as a process, in terms of a developmental cycle. Some studies have described the Indian family types as stages in a family cycle (Desai 1964, Madan 1965, Cohn 1961). In the subsequent section we shall discuss this developmental cycle approach to the study of family types in India.

Check Your Progress 2

- i) List out the five criteria of jointness. Use two lines for your answer.

- ii) Name in three lines, the six major types of joint family structures as shown by Kolenda.

6.5 DEVELOPMENTAL PROCESS OF THE FAMILY

What is means by the developmental process? It denotes a movement, which occurs in a particular pattern. Developmental process of the family denotes that elements of family life take shape in a particular manner and direction. It relates

essentially to the process of fission and/or fusion occurring in the residential and compositional aspects of family living. We now look at the ideal of joint family living and elaborate the processual view of family life.

6.5.1 The Ideal of Joint Family Living

The Indian patri-virilocal family can be viewed in terms of a cycle. A nuclear family develops into a joint family after the marriage of a son and coming of a daughter-in-law. After the death of the father, brothers often separate. In some places, like Andhra Pradesh, sons are expected to stay together with the parents till all the children in the family are married. After this they tend to separate. Thus, the process of fission takes place and the joint family is broken into relatively smaller family units. The parents may then choose to live with one of the sons. Some parents live alternately with all the sons. There may be other kin members who come to live with members of a nuclear family. For example a widow may come to live with her brother, his wife and children if she has no children of her own.

In spite of the alterations that occur in the compositional and/or the residential aspect of family living, what holds a family together is the recognition of oneness between the father and the son's households or between the brothers' households. A son's family is in a sense an extension of the father's family. In fact they are considered as 'one family'. It is in this family that the incoming wife has to be incorporated. Formal obligations towards relations by marriage and towards the daughters of the house are expected to be shared by the members of this 'one family'. In the developmental cycle of this 'one family', the emergence of fission in the form of nuclear households can be related to many factors.

One important factor is the high bargaining power of the wife (CSWI 1974:59-61). It has been pointed out that nuclear families develop out of joint families where the wife has high bargaining power. This means that in groups where the wife has a right to legal divorce, where bride price is given and where there is economic and social support to a woman from her natal family, there are considerable possibilities for the formation of nuclear households or fission in the 'one family'.

Those who have studied the family as a process point out that a particular type of composition of a household should be looked at as a stage in the developmental cycle. The presence of nuclear households should not be taken as indicative of change in the institution of joint family. Such families should be viewed as units, which will grow up into joint families when the sons grow up and marry. This may or may not happen in reality. Rather at the level of norms and expectations, most families try to achieve this ideal. We should also look at the other side of the coin. That is the side in which the concept of joint family living is not found for several reasons.

6.5.2 Inapplicability of the Ideal of Joint Family Living

The idea of the developmental cycle of the family does not apply universally to all groups. For instance, among artisans any kind of joint family living may be more advantageous than among very poor agricultural groups where organisation of labour or pooling of labour offers little advantage (CSWI 1974: 59).

An illustration of this point can be given from the study by Cohn (1955) of the Chamars of Senapur, who are landless labourers. Among them the achievement of a joint family is difficult because of demographic, economic factors as well as due to the role of women and mobility. Let us look at these factors.

- a) **Demographic factor:** With low life expectancy there is much less chance of three generations existing at the same time.
- b) **Economic factors:** With no property, contribution to the income of the family is the major asset for this group. Since old people may not have the capacity to work and contribute to the family resources, they are not considered as essential and important persons in the family.
- c) **Role of women:** Due to the poor financial position of the family, women are required to take up paid employment outside the home. So the traditional division of labour in a joint family where women look after the home and children and men go out to work cannot operate. Women's economic activities make the continuity of the joint family difficult
- d) **Mobility:** Movement of individuals from one place to another, in search of better economic opportunity, also makes joint family living difficult.

Having discussed the factor of non-occurrence of joint family in certain groups, now we shall also look at the areas of changes in the family,

6.6 CHANGES IN THE FAMILY

In order to measure the overall changes taking place in the family as an institution in India, we need to identify the major forces or factors that have brought about changes in the family structure. A host of interrelated factors, economic, educational, legal, demographic, have affected the family in India. The impact has been differentially felt by different groups through time. Let us look at each factor separately keeping in mind that all these factors had a cumulative effect on different aspects of family living.

6.6.1 Factors of Change and Process of Disintegration of the Joint Family

Generally the factors leading to changes in the family are discussed in the context of the issue of disintegration of the joint family. In addition, we will discuss these factors also in the context of social changes occurring since the British rule in India.

- i) **Economic Factors:** Monetisation (introduction of cash transactions), diversification of occupational opportunities for employment in varied spheres, technological advancements (in communication and transport) are some of the major economic factors, which have affected the joint family system in India.

The economic system established by the British encouraged monetisation i.e., cash payment for services rendered and goods sold. The British also threw open opportunities for employment in government service. Those who were attracted by the employment opportunities and facilities provided by the British, often left their traditional occupations and moved to cities or towns where

these occupations were available. This meant residential separation from their ancestral home. If they were married, they sometimes took their wives and children (and even one or two relatives) along with them.

Since Independence, opportunities for and diversification of occupations have increased. With a constitutional commitment to promote equality between the sexes and to integrate women into the development process, a further impetus has emerged to draw women into varied kinds of occupations. In families where both the men and women go out to work, role relationships between different members of the family are affected.

- ii) **Educational Factors:** Again it was during the British rule that opportunities for higher education emerged in a significant way. All castes and communities had access to the facilities provided by the British with regard to education. Some of those who were able to gain access and exposure to English-medium education (exposure specially to the individualistic, liberal and humanitarian ideas) began to question some of the Hindu customs and practices relating to child marriage, denial of rights of education to women, property rights of women and ill-treatment of widows. Educated young men not only desired to postpone their marriage to a much later age than what was prescribed by family tradition, but also wanted to marry women with some educational background. Educated women (especially college educated) were expected to have a different kind of influence on family matters than uneducated or less educated women.
- iii) **Legal Factors:** Legislations regarding employment, education, marriage, and property, have affected the family system in many ways. Labour laws passed for the benefit of employees like the Indian Workmen Compensation Act (1923), the Minimum Wages Act 1948, helped to reduce the economic reliance of members on the joint family for economic support. In 1930 the Hindu Gains of Learning Act was passed whereby it was declared that the property acquired by a Hindu out of his education was his personal property though his education was paid for by the joint family. The distinction between self-acquired property and joint family property was drawn. In 1937, during the British rule a law was passed by which a woman acquired a limited right to her husband's property. She could hold the property of her husband after his death as a limited owner during her lifetime. But after she died the property devolved to the heirs (usually the sons) of the husband.

With regard to marriage, the Child Marriage Restraint Act was passed in 1929, to curb infant marriages. It prescribed the minimum age (18 and 14 years respectively) at marriage for boys and girls. This Act also aimed to give women an opportunity for education. Now in India the prescribed minimum age at marriage is 21 for boys and 18 for girls.

After Independence the Hindu Succession Act (1956) was passed which gave a daughter and a son equal rights to the father's property. These legislations challenged the inheritance patterns that prevailed in joint families prior to the passing of this Act and the dependent position of women within the family.

- iv) **Urbanisation:** The process of urbanisation has also affected the pattern of family life in India. It denotes the movement of people from rural to urban areas and a shift from agricultural to non-agricultural occupations. It also

implies the adoption of an urban way of life. Urban life reflects increased density of population, heterogeneity of population, diversification and increased specialisation of occupations, complex division of labour. It also includes increased availability of educational and health facilities. Limited availability of living space, impersonality and anonymity also characterise urban life.

Partly as a result of population pressure on land, there has been a continuous influx of people into cities seeking education, jobs, medical care etc. What impact does migration to cities have on the families in villages? Residential separation due to mobility of members from one place to another affects the size and composition of the family. A man may take his wife and children along with him to establish a nuclear family in the city. There have been many studies, which show that migration to cities from villages and small towns has contributed to the rapid disintegration of large size family units. These observations have been mainly based on census data, which show a high percentage of nuclear families in cities (Mies 1980: 74). In the city, with problems of finding accommodation and limited space available for living, it becomes difficult for an average urbanite to maintain and support a large family.

The other factors which have been held responsible for encouraging smaller units are i) opportunities for higher education ii) heightened ambitions iii) increased occupational mobility iv) growing sense of individuality (i.e., thinking in terms of individual needs and ambitions rather than in terms of kinship needs and larger familial requirements).

6.6.2 Factors of Change Leading to Reinforcement of the Joint Family

So far we have talked about the forces that were seen to negatively affect the joint family functioning as commensal, co-residential and large size unit. Sociologists while trying to measure the changes taking place in family life observe that urbanisation and industrialisation have, in fact, served to strengthen some aspects of joint family system. Here we will discuss three important studies to illustrate our point.

- i) K.M. Kapadia (1972), for instance, has drawn our attention to the fact that families, which have migrated to cities, still retain their bonds with their joint family in the village or town. Even after they residentially separate themselves from a joint family and form a nuclear family, they do not function as an isolated or completely independent unit in the city. These, families retain their kinship orientation and joint family ethic. This is evident from the physical presence of relatives at the time of certain events like birth, marriage, death, illness and so on. Sometimes members from the families living in a city go to the village to participate in such events or sometimes members from the rural family come to the city to involve themselves in functions or ceremonies or activities of their kin members.

The joint family ethic is very much evident in the performance of certain role obligations. These may include physical and financial assistance to kin members. A family in the city has the duty to give shelter and sustenance to all subsequent immigrants from the rural family, mostly young men in pursuit of education and work or relations seeking medical treatment in urban centres. So it can happen that in the course of time, a kind of joint family is formed in

the city, which is linked to the family in the village by close family ties, by a system of mutual rights, duties and obligations and also by the undivided family property.

- ii) Again the thesis that the joint family is dysfunctional to the process of industrialisation has been challenged by those who point out that some of the successful industrial establishments in the country are managed by the individuals who strictly live by joint family rules. They maintain coresidence, common hearth, contribute and share economic resources. In his study *The Indian Joint Family in Modern Industry*, Milton Singer (1968) points out that the joint family continues to be the norm among industrial entrepreneurs, despite changes in their material conditions of living. He observes that changes have taken place, within three generations, in residential, occupational and educational spheres. Social mobility has increased and ritual observations have been reduced in number and/or in importance. However, these alterations, he points out, have not transformed the joint family into isolated nuclear families. On the contrary, a modified joint family organisation has emerged in the urban industrial setting where even members from the ancestral home or village move into the urban setting. Thus, according to Singer, the industrial centre has simply become a new area for the working of the joint family system.
- iii) Kolenda in her study *Regional Differences in Family Structure in India* (1987: 4) observes that industrialisation serves to strengthen the joint family because an economic base has been provided to support it or because more hands are needed in a renewed family enterprise or because kin can help one another in striving for upward mobility.

No doubt the joint family that functions today in urban settings is different in many ways from the joint family which functioned in pre-independent and non-industrial India. For instance many of the coresidential, commensal joint families in urban areas remain joint because it is the norm or due to some advantages, or because of shortage of accommodation. Yet, there may be considerable separation in the management of household expenses on entertainment, education of children etc. Certain expenses may be regarded individual, like those on clothes, education, and vacation. These internal arrangements are different not only between urban and rural families but also between families in an urban area.

Among many families, across caste, class, region and communities, it is possible to find that sons along with the members of their nuclear family unit define the household of the parents as the 'main home' or 'common home'. This distinction may be given to a) the household of the eldest brother or to b) that of the brother with whom the parents live or, to c) that of the brother who lives on the ancestral or parental property. Also presence of a parental home (where one son and a parent live) or of a joint household of two brothers helps to keep the households (of parents and sons and of brothers) closer to each other, for it provides a kind of common meeting ground for all. Married daughters or sisters also come to this home. There may also be a greater sense of economic obligation between members of this "family" distributed in more than one household, residence and hearth (Dube 1974: 94).

Activity 2

Ask three members of three different generations, belonging to your family or your neighbourhood or friends, the advantages and disadvantages of living in a joint household. Based on their comments, write a note on this topic and compare it with those written by other students at the study centre.

6.6.3 Emerging Patterns of Family Living

Today there are varied patterns of family living. In urban areas both male and female members of the family may go for gainful employment outside the home. In some families the parents of the husband may live with his wife and children. While in some others, members of the wife’s family may be living with the couple and their children. With both the husband and the wife going outside the home for gainful employment and with the absence or limited availability of child care facilities, presence of kin members to look after the home and children comes handy for the smooth functioning of the household. Those working couples who prefer to live in nuclear families and who fear or resist interference from kin members, try to organise their household with professional help from outside the family (like cooks, maid servants, crèches).

Aged parents, who formerly used to look towards their eldest son or other sons for support in old age, are now adjusting themselves to the new demands of family life by making economic provisions for their old age. Even within a city parents and married sons may reside separately. Another trend in family life in India is that girls are prepared to support their parent or parents in old age, and it is not impossible to find a widowed mother or parents staying with a married daughter (mainly, in the absence of sons) to help her to manage the household. Measures have been provided at the legal level to ensure that dependant old parents are looked after by a daughter if she is self-reliant even after her marriage. Bilateral kinship relations are more and more recognised and accepted today in many nuclear households in the cities.

Besides the above aspects, emerging patterns of family living include instances of domestic violence, utter lack of social and physical security for unmarried women (see Jain 1996a: 7).

Check Your Progress 3

i) What is meant by the cyclical view of family? Use three lines for your answer.

.....

ii) List in three lines some of the factors, which have negatively affected the joint family system.

.....

- iii) State whether the following statements are true or false. Mark a T for true or F for false against each statement.
- a) Migration from a village to a city has affected the size of the families in which this migration occurred.
 - b) A joint family is totally dysfunctional in industrial towns and cities.
 - c) The Hindu Succession Act of 1956 gave women the right to inherit a share of the parental property.

6.7 LET US SUM UP

This unit has discussed the social institution of family in India. It has described the types of family in India and emphasised the continuum of the nuclear and the joint family system. Then, it described the nature of joint family in India and focused on what constitutes jointness and who constitute a joint family. It also discussed variability in and prevalence of joint family living in India. Then it looked at the family in terms of the developmental cycle approach and discussed the changes in the structure of joint family living. Finally, it outlined some of the emerging patterns of family life in contemporary India.

6.8 KEYWORDS

Commensality	Relating to those who are traditionally allowed to eat together.
Coparcenary	Joint ownership of property amongst the male members of the family, in a patrilineal society.
Matrilineal	A principle to trace descent through the female line.
Patrilineal	A principle to trace descent through the male line.
Patri-virilocal	The term refers to the residence of a couple after marriage with the husband's father.

6.9 FURTHER READING

- Chakroborthy, Krishna 2002. *Family in India*. Rawat: New Delhi
- Dube, Leela 1974. *Sociology of Kinship*. Popular Prakashan: Bombay
- Gore, M.S. 1968. *Urbanization and Family Change in India*. Popular Prakashaa: Bombay
- Kolenda, Pauline 1987. *Regional Differences in Family Structure in India*. Rawat Publication: Jaipur

6.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- i) a) F
- b) T
- ii) a) Supplemented nuclear family
- b) Sub nuclear family
- c) Single person household
- d) Supplemented sub nuclear family

Check Your Progress 2

- i) Commensality; Common Residence; Common Property; Cooperation and Sentiment and Ritual bonds.
- ii) Collateral joint family, Supplemented collateral joint family, Lineal joint family, Supplemented joint family, Lineal collateral joint family, Supplemented-lineal-collateral joint family.

Check Your Progress 3

- i) In the cyclical view the nuclear and the joint family can be viewed as a continuum. A nuclear family develops into a joint family after marriage of a son and coming of a daughter-in-law. After the death of the father the sons may separate to form separate nuclear units. Later on each of these nuclear families may develop into a joint family.
- ii) Factors affecting the joint family system are (a) western secular education, (b) market cash economy, (c) salaried occupations, (d) laws, and (e) urbanisation.
- iii) a) T
- b) F
- c) T