

MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND KINSHIP



Notes

Marriage and family have been important social institutions since immemorial and have helped maintain order, stability and equilibrium in human society. Family is the primary agency of socialisation, and value systems are inculcated within the family context. All the gender roles are socialised within the family. Marriage is another social institution where the relationship between a man and a woman is socially approved. In short, marriage is the social recognition of the practice by which men and women live together as husband and wife to raise a family. According to Paul B. Horton and Chester L. Hunt, "it is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family". Children born out of marriage are considered the legitimate offsprings of the married couple. This legitimacy is considered important during issues of inheritance and succession. Thus, marriage is not only confined to sexual gratification but has great cultural significance in maintaining the institution of the family. It is believed to be a universal social institution in India. However, Kinship bonds are created due to the emergence of different kinds of relationships between human beings and are instrumental in allocating various gender roles. In this lesson, you will learn about the various social institutions like marriage, family and kinship and also understand the gender differentials prevailing in these institutions.



OUTCOMES

After studying this lesson, learner:

- understands the concept of marriage, family and kinship;
- discusses different forms of family and household in India;
- explains kinship, and its different types
- explains the impact of globalisation on Indian families.
- recognises the unequal division of labour in the family;

**Notes**

- provides suggestions for promoting just and equitable distribution of resources.
- practices gender equality and empowerment of women by ensuring dignity at work, freedom and protection of well-being.

5.1 CONCEPT OF MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Marriage is a social institution in India. It is the social recognition of the practice by which men and women live together per socially sanctioned norms and practices. Marriage, as an institution, plays a prominent role in the procreation and upbringing of children. In India, Hindu marriage is considered a sacred bond. Its aim is not only to secure sexual gratification but, as K.M. Kapadia says, 'Hindu marriage is a socially approved union of men and women aiming at dharma procreation, sexual pleasure and observance of certain obligations. Ancient Hindu texts point out three main aims of marriage, which include; dharma (fulfilment of religious duties considered as the highest aim of marriage), Praja (progeny) and Rati (sexual pleasure)".

Similarly, family is the basic unit of socialisation and kinship systems are often considered the organising principle to make social relationships.

5.2 FORMS OF FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD IN INDIA

Since Vedic times, the institution of family has been a part of the Indian way of life. However, the concept of family in India is not nuclear but an extended one. Sir Henry Maine coined the term joint family to describe the patrilineal type of extended family where all the male members of the family hold joint ownership rights over the family property. According to Irawati Karve, "A joint family is a group of people who live under one roof, eat food cooked on one hearth, hold property in common, participate in common worship and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred."

According to the Hindu Succession Act 1956, the word 'common' or joint property indicates that all family members have a share in the paternal property across generations. Therefore, such property cannot be disposed of without the coparceners' consent.

5.2.1 Structural Aspects of Joint Family

In a joint family structure, the husband's relationship with his wife, unmarried sister and children have specific positions. A joint family may consist of related members linearly, collaterally or both. The couples may be related linearly (generally in a father-son relationship or sometimes in a father-daughter relationship) or (ii) collaterally (generally in a brother-brother relationship or sometimes in a brother-sister relationship).

Pauline Kolenda presents the following types of joint families based on relations between their members.



Notes

- (a) **Collateral Joint Family:** It comprises two or more married couples with a sibling bond. In this type of family, a brother and his wife and another brother and his wife live together with unmarried children.
- (b) **Supplemented Collateral Joint Family:** A collateral is a joint family with unmarried, divorced or widowed relatives. The relatives in a supplemented collateral family are generally the widowed mother of the married brothers, the widower father, or unmarried siblings.
- (c) **Lineal Joint Family:** In this family, two couples having a lineal link (i.e. between parents and their married son or between parent and his married daughter) live under one roof.
- (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 married brother or sister.
- (e) **Lineal Collateral Joint Family:** In this type, three or more couples are linked linearly and collaterally. For example, there can be a family comprising of parents and their two or more married sons staying together with the unmarried children of the couple.
- (f) **Supplemented Lineal-Collateral Joint Family:** This type of family is a lineal collateral joint family, including married, widowed and separated relatives who do not belong to either of the nuclear families that are linearly and collaterally linked—for example, the father's widowed sister or brother or an unmarried nephew of the father.

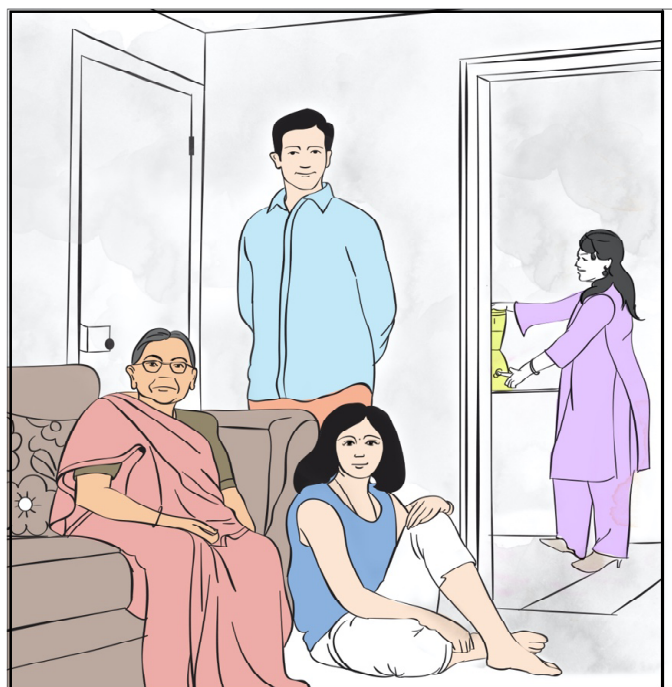


Figure 5.1. Joint Family in India



Notes

The traditional joint family has several structural features:

1. **Authoritarian Structure:** The joint family in India is traditionally based on the principle of patriarchy, where the eldest male is considered the symbol of power and authority. This power rests with the eldest male due to his age and seniority. The head of the family or patriarch takes all decisions and may or may not consult other family members. However, families based on democratic values provide all members equal decision-making rights.
2. **Familistic Organisation:** This refers to prioritising the family's interests above individual ones. This indicates that family values and goals are more important than individual goals, due to which conflicting situations may arise.
3. **The filial and fraternal relationship gets priority over the conjugal relationship.** For example, in a joint family, the relationship between father and son or of two brothers based on filial bonds is preferred over the relationship between husband and wife, based on conjugal bonds.
4. **Principle of Seniority:** The delegation of authority in a traditional joint family is based on the principle of seniority. Though the eldest male (or female) may delegate the authority to someone else, such delegation is based on the principle of seniority, which may limit the scope for the development of individualism (Ahuja, 1997)
5. **Division of Labour in the Joint Family:** The division of labour within the family is generally based on sex. While men are considered to handle economic responsibilities, women have their role out of responsibilities in the domestic sphere.

5.2.2 Types of Family

There are various types of families prevalent in India based on different criteria:

Based on marriage -

1. **Monogamous Family:** This family consists of one husband and one wife. When a single husband and wife live together, they form a monogamous family. This family system restricts married couples from living with more than one partner. This type of family is considered an ideal type of family.
2. **Polygamous Family:** Polygamous family is subdivided into polygynous and polyandrous families.
 - (a) **Polygynous family:** This family comprises a man with more than one wife living with their children. This family is found among specific religious communities like the Muslims and certain tribal groups in Africa, Asia and Australia.



Notes

- (b) **Polyandrous family:** In this kind of family, a woman marries more than one man and may live together or with each of them separately in turns. Such families are not commonly found but are found among certain tribal communities like the Todas of Nilgiris, Nayars of Kerala and among Tibetans.

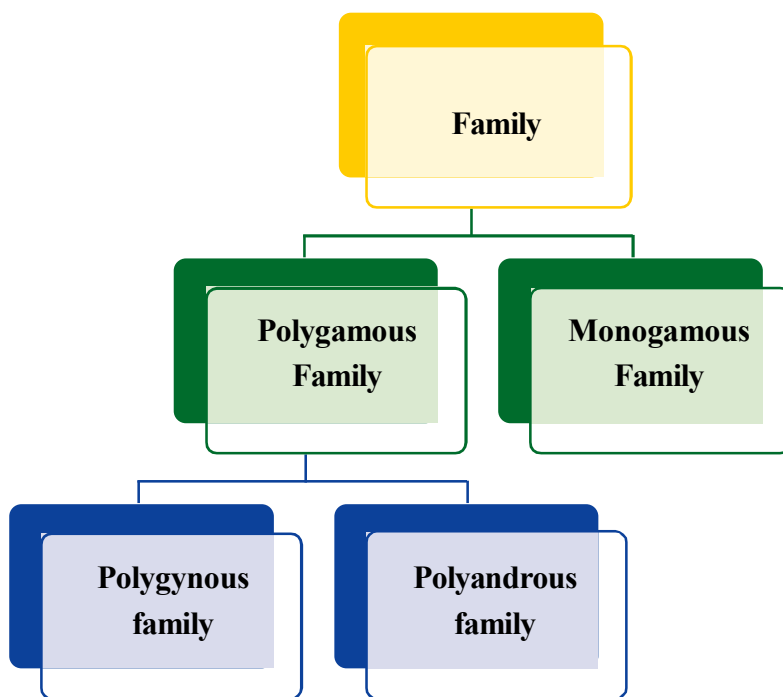


Figure 5.2: Kind of family based on marriage

Based on residence:

- (a) **Patrilocal Family:** In this type of family, the married woman stays with her husband's family. This is based on patrilocal residence and is very common in India.
- (b) **Matrilocal Family:** In this type of family, the husband stays in his wife's house. This kind of family is found among some communities like the Nayars of Kerala.
- (c) **Avunculocal Family:** In this kind of family, the married couples live in their maternal uncle's family. Figure 5.3: Kinds of family based on residence

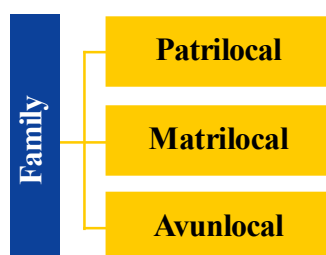


Figure 5.3: Kinds of family based on residence



Notes

Based on lineage

- (a) **Patrilineal Family:** In this type of family, people belonging to their father's lineage reside as a family.
- (b) **Matrilineal Family:** In this type of family, people belonging to their mother's lineage reside as a family.

Based on residence:

- (a) **Patrilocal Family:** In this type of family, the married woman stays with her husband's family. This is based on patrilocal residence and is very common in India.
- (b) **Matrilocal Family:** In this type of family, the husband stays in his wife's house. This kind of family is found among some communities like the Nayars of Kerala.
- (c) **Avunculocal Family:** In this kind of family, the married couples live in their maternal uncle's family.-

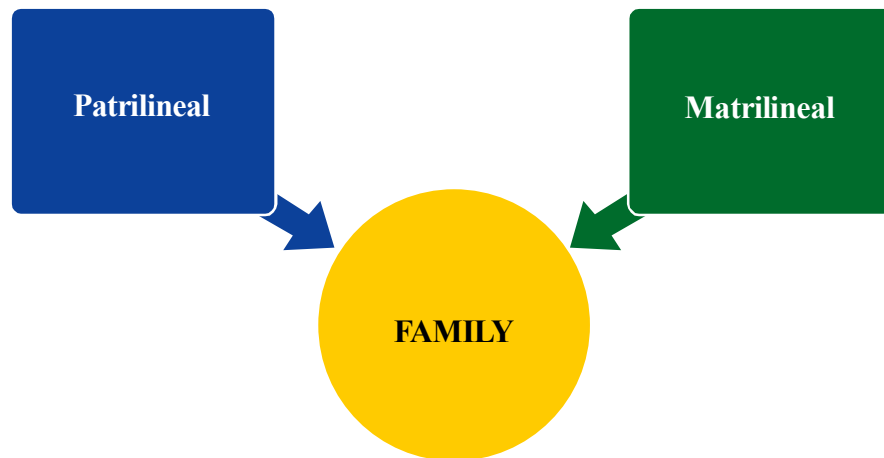


Fig 5.4: Kinds of family based on lineage



INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.1

1. Explain the concept of marriage.
2. Define Joint Family.
3. Mention the types of the family based on relations.
4. Mention the features of the joint family

**Notes****5.3 KINSHIP**

Kinship denotes the recognition of relatives through a blood relationship (technically called consanguinity) or marriage (called affinity). Kinship may be defined as a social relationship based on family relatedness. The kinship system may be considered the conventional system of statuses and roles that governs the behaviour of people who are related to each other through marriage or descent from a common ancestor. Kinship serves two important and related purposes:

- (i) It provides a way of transmitting status and property from one generation to the next and
- (ii) Establishes and maintains influential social groups.

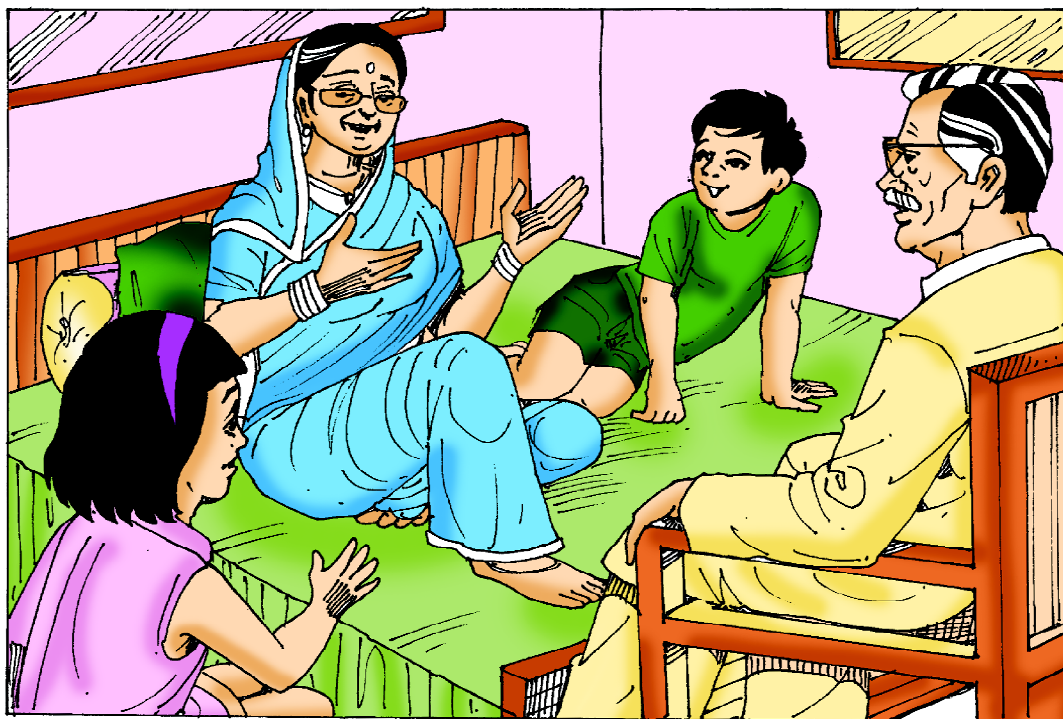


Fig 5.5 Interaction between family members

5.3.1 Types of Kinship

There are two kinds of kinship structures within the family

- (i) **Consanguineal Kinship:** This kind of kinship bond is developed through blood relations. For example, parents and their children. Thus father, son, daughter, brother etc., are referred to as consanguineal kin.

**Notes**

- (ii) **Affinal kinship:** A kinship bond developed through marriage is called affinal kinship. For example, relations between two families come in contact through marriage. The girl establishes relations with her husband's family members and vice versa.

**INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.2**

1. Explain the meaning of kinship
2. Mention the types of kinship

5.4 GLOBALISATION OF INDIAN FAMILY: GENDER PERSPECTIVE OR GLOBALISATION, GENDER ROLES AND INDIAN FAMILY

There is no doubt that the joint family system is changing, which may lead to several challenges for society. The impact of industrialisation and globalisation has transformed family relationships, including weakening family bonds. In addition, the changes in the joint family system have led to the alteration of gender roles within the household and in the larger society. The factors leading to changes in the joint family are analysed, particularly from the perspective of the disintegration of the joint family.

Economic factors: The process of social change due to industrialisation led to the mobility of individuals as there was a diversification of occupational opportunities for employment in varied spheres. This has affected the joint family system in India. In addition, the constitutional provisions in India have promoted gender equality and prohibited discrimination based on sex. Such provisions have enabled men and women to have economic freedom, thereby promoting mobility.

Educational factors: British rule in India promoted opportunities for higher education in India. All castes and communities had access to education. English education exposed the people to individualistic, liberal and humanitarian ideas which questioned traditional religious ideas and practices such as child marriage, unequal property rights to women, etc.

Legal factors: The introduction of Legislation on employment, education, marriage and the property has affected the family system in several ways. The labour legislations like the Workers Compensation Act (1923), The Minimum Wages Act (1948) etc., have helped promote social security to workers' families, thereby reducing their dependence on family members. The Hindu Gains of Learning Act of 1930 and the Hindu Succession Act (1956) were legislations for protecting the property rights of Hindus. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 also challenged the traditional ideas of Hindu marriage. 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.



Notes

Urbanisation: The process of urbanisation has also brought significant changes in the family system. It has resulted in large-scale migration. Separating family members from their residences due to migration to urban centres has affected the size and composition of families in India. Though the joint family system is disintegrating in India, it would be wrong to conclude that the traditional joint family is breaking down and the parent's or patriarch's domination is disappearing. The trend towards nuclear families in urbanised areas has not affected the conjugal system of the rural community. Therefore, it cannot be predicted that the traditional joint family in India will be completely disintegrated. K.M. Kapadia (1972) believes that "families who have migrated to cities still retain their bonds with their joint family in the village or town. Even after residentially separating themselves, they do not function as an isolated or completely independent unit as they retain their kinship orientation and joint family ethics". Though social mobility has increased, these alterations have not led to the transformation of joint families into nuclear families. However, the urban areas witnessed a new kind of joint family where members from their villages had migrated to cities. Thus, according to Singer, the industrial centre became a new area for working the joint family system.

Analysing all these factors of change in the family system, it can be said that though the traditional type of jointness (that is, jointness in residence, functioning and property) in Indian families is shifting to nuclear families based on smaller residence size, yet, the principle of functional jointness persists which retains the sentiments of the joint family for the coming years. The present Indian family is not structurally isolated because it forms an integral part of a more comprehensive system of kinship relationships. The social relationship between a member of families is based on binding obligations and emotional support with strong conjugal, filial and fraternal bonds with each other.

5.5 UNEQUAL DIVISION OF LABOUR AND RESOURCES IN FAMILY

You will find that gender norms are often expressed within the household domain and are reflected in larger social institutions. A household is a basic unit where individuals cooperate and compete for resources. The gender roles attributed to the household members are often socially constructed rather than biologically determined, which may manifest in women's access to education, employment and health.

Unequal distribution of resources

One of the most important social institutions is the household. It is a basic unit of society where people cooperate and compete for resources. Gender norms are expressed within the household, reinforced, and reflected in larger social institutions. Women have been the victims of gender bias within the household. Cultural norms and institutional community practices restrict them from receiving education in comparison to their male counterparts. For example, the girl child is socialised to have secondary status in comparison to the male children. In many

Gender Issues and
Social Change

Notes

rural areas, they are deprived of higher education or even basic primary education.

Property ownership: Property ownership, specifically access to land, is of immense significance in a country like India. Concerning ownership rights, which are usually acquired through inheritance or sale /purchase, they have always been the prerogative of males. Women have been excluded and are denied access to land in the patriarchal system of India.

It is widely recognised that women's empowerment lies with women's agency, i.e. women's ability to decide goals and act upon them (Kabeer, 1999). Agency is often measured in terms of women's participation in household decision-making. However, in many communities in India, the sole decision-making within the household rests with the patriarch or male head of the household. Patriarchal families have been prevalent in India; primarily, males are the sole decision-makers. Though matriarchal families exist within some communities in India, like the Khasis of North East and Todas of Nilgiris yet the extent to which the females take the decisions is a questionable issue.

5.6 ENSURING EQUITABLE DISTRIBUTION OF RESOURCES AND DEVELOPING A PERSONAL CODE OF CONDUCT

Gender differences and gender inequality have been socially constructed within the household domain. The concept of women's empowerment is related to gender equality. This implies that empowered women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment), but they must also have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (as is provided through leadership, opportunities and participation in political institutions). However, these goals cannot be achieved in isolation. There should be an interplay of many institutions to overcome gender biases.

- **Role of a family:** As the primary agency of socialisation, the family needs to propagate gender equality by removing all kinds of discrimination between boys and girls. Socialisation patterns need to be gender neutral with equality of opportunity for both sexes. The recent World Development Report 2012 by the World Bank states that "To equalise voice within households, measures that increase women's control over household resources and laws that enhance the ability of women to accumulate assets, especially by strengthening their property rights, are of particular importance".
- **Role of community:** However, the ability of an Indian village woman to "bargain" with the community for a more significant share in community resources or for greater social freedom (a change in social norms) would be more limited than that of a man. For several reasons, her personal property and overall economic status, say, landed property, would be less dependent Globalisation: It is a process of increasing economies' economic and financial integration worldwide. It refers to worldwide changes across boundaries

*Notes*

in various spheres such as economic, cultural, technological, cultural, etc.

- **Role of State :** The state has the power to enact laws and formulate policies and programs in women's favour; to increase women's access to productive resources, employment, information, education and health; to protect from gender violence; to influence the discourse on gender relations in the media and educational institutions, etc.

5.7. PROMOTING WOMEN'S EMPOWERMENT: PERSONAL FREEDOM AND SHARED DECISION MAKING

Gender gaps in human capital can be narrowed through many promotional programmes, but gender inequality can persist with an unequal capacity to exercise agency. By agency, one means an individual's capacity to make choices and transform these choices into an appropriate action plan. Women's ability to choose and act at any time reflects the earlier foundations laid in life through socialisation. Therefore, women's empowerment can be fully realised by promoting women's agency. This can be achieved through the following:

Firstly, women's economic empowerment with improvement in material conditions to exercise agency through higher incomes and greater access to services and resources. Women should have the ability to have bargaining power within the household and the ability to accumulate assets.

Secondly, expansion in women's rights for family formation and control over household resources through appropriate legal frameworks also contribute to exercising agency.

Thirdly, a change in social norms can also help in promoting agency. Norms can constrain women's agency when they prevent laws, services and incomes from benefiting women. Therefore, it is essential to address discriminatory social norms that lead to gender inequality. This can be achieved through attitudinal change and addressing institutional barriers to promote gender equality.

Policies aimed at increasing women's participation in societal institutions can be done by addressing the information problems or the underlying beliefs that women cannot make decisions. Some of the important policy initiatives can be reforming formal and informal legal frameworks, harmonising laws to provide equality to women and men, and prohibiting discriminatory and harmful practices. Others include economic support and incentives for individuals, families and communities to change behaviours and address discriminatory attitudes - e.g. support to encourage parents to invest in the education of their daughters as well as their sons and community mobilisation, awareness, and empowerment initiatives to change discriminatory attitudes, social norms and practices through, for example, media campaigns reinforcing the value of daughters.

Gender Issues and
Social Change**Notes****INTEXT QUESTIONS 5.3**

1. Highlight the factors which have led to the decline in a joint family?
2. Explain how a household creates an unequal division of labour?
3. Explain various institutions' roles in promoting equitable resource distribution.

**WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT**

- Marriage and family are important social institutions that have helped maintain order and discipline.
- All gender roles are socialised within the context of family and household.
- The concept of family in India is not nuclear but an extended one. A joint family may consist of members related to each other through lineal or collateral bonds or both. The couples may be related to each other through (i) lineage (for example, father-son relationship or father-daughter relationship) or (ii) collaterally (for example, brother-brother relationship or brother-sister relationship).
- The changes in joint families have altered gender roles within the household and society.
- Kinship denotes the recognition of relatives through a blood relationship (technically called consanguinity) or marriage (called affinity). Kinship may be defined as a social relationship based on family relatedness.
- A household is a basic unit where individuals cooperate and compete for resources. The gender roles attributed to household members are often socially constructed rather than biologically determined.
- Women empowerment is understood in terms of gender equality which implies that in order to be empowered, women must not only have equal capabilities (such as education and health) and equal access to resources and opportunities (such as land and employment) but also must have the agency to use those rights, capabilities, resources, and opportunities to make strategic choices and decisions (such as is provided through leadership, opportunities and participation in political institutions)
- The family, community and state can play an important role in removing gender biases and promoting equality.

*Notes***TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. Define joint family and mention the types of joint family.
2. What are the factors responsible for the disintegration of a joint family?
3. Explain how the household division of labour creates an unequal distribution of resources.
4. How can the family, community and state ensure gender equality?

GLOSSARY

1. **Monogamous Family:** When a single husband and wife live together, they form a monogamous family. In this kind of family, there is no provision to have more than one partner
2. **Industrialisation:** Industrialisation is a period of social and economic change where an agrarian society transforms into an industrial society.
3. **Globalisation:** It is a process of increasing economies' economic and financial integration worldwide. It refers to worldwide changes across boundaries in various spheres such as economic, cultural, technological, cultural, etc.
4. **Urbanisation:** Cities have grown due to industrialisation and migration from rural to urban areas.
5. **Ethics:** related to the morality of proper conduct
6. **Social norms** are customary behaviour that governs people in groups.

**ANSWERS TO INTEXT QUESTIONS****5.1**

1. Marriage is the social recognition of the practice by which men and women live together as husband and wife to raise a family.
2. Irawati Karve defines a joint family as "a group of people who live under one roof, eat food cooked at one hearth, hold property in common, participate in common worship, and are related to each other as some particular type of kindred".
3. Based on marriage family is divided into monogamous and polygamous. The basis of the residence family is divided into patrilocal, matrilocal and avunculocal and based on lineage. The family is divided into patrilineal and matrilineal.

Gender Issues and
Social Change

Notes

4. The structural features of a joint family are an Authoritarian Structure, familistic organisation, conjugal relationship, principle of seniority and division of labour.

5.2

1. Kinship denotes the recognition of relatives through a blood relationship (technically called consanguinity) or marriage (called affinity).
2. Kinship is of two types (i) consanguineal and (ii) affineal.

5.3

1. The factors responsible for the disintegration of a joint family are; Economic factors, education, legal factors and urbanisation
2. Gender norms are expressed within the household, reinforced, and reflected in larger social institutions. Cultural norms and institutional community practices restrict them from receiving education compared to their male counterparts.
3. **i) Role of the family:** The family being the primary agency of socialisation, needs to propagate gender equality by removing all kinds of discrimination between boys and girls; **Role of community:** Material and social support from outside the community and family, such as from women's groups, other Non-Governmental Organizations and the State like earning opportunities, housing, legal support and (say, from women's groups) emotional (confidence building) and social support can contribute in promoting gender equality and women empowerment.
- ii) Role of State:** The State has the power to enact laws and formulate policies and programmes in women's favour; to increase women's access to productive resources, employment, information, education and health; to protect from gender violence; to influence the discourse on gender relations in the media and educational institutions, etc.