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FAMILY

*F*amily is an important social group for an individual and society. Every individual in this world is a part of one family or the other. All of us are born and brought up in a family. With the birth of children, the size of family gets enlarged. Sometimes, the family may include a number of relatives belonging to different generations.

Family is often the focal point, the centre around which our whole life revolves. We begin our day with the family members, go out to perform our professional and social duties and come back to be with the family members.

You might have realised that even if you are away from your family due to certain compulsions, it remains your earnest desire to share every little joy and sorrow with the family members. The desire to be with the family reflects the strong emotional bond you share with your family members.

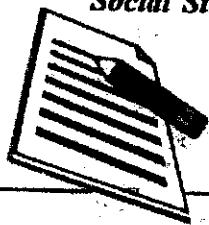
In this lesson, you will get to learn about various aspects of family and the significant role it plays in an individual's life.



OBJECTIVES

After reading this lesson, you will be able to:

- define family;
- explain the sociological significance of family;
- describe its characteristics;
- explain the different functions of family;
- describe the various types of family;
- explain the meaning and problems of joint as well as modern family; and
- describe the changes in family and the factors behind these changes.



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13.1 MEANING AND DEFINITION OF FAMILY

Family is the basic unit of society. In its minimal form, family may consist of a husband, wife and children. In its widest sense, it refers to all relatives of several generations connected to each other by blood, marriage or adoption.

A family unit takes birth with the living together of a legally wedded couple under one roof. The married couple not only shares common residence but also co-operates with each other physically, emotionally, socially and economically. They fulfill each other's varied needs and aspirations. The birth of children gives completeness to the family. It further strengthens the affection between husband and wife and their respective families.

In simple words, family is a socially defined set of relationships between (at least) two persons who are related by birth, marriage or adoption.

A family is a kin group based on the institution of marriage, shares a household and is a co-residential group. It can be defined as more or less a durable association of persons united by marriage, blood or adoption to provide for procreation, upbringing and socialization of children.

However, you must understand the difference between a family and a household. A household need not include only family members. It may sometimes include all such persons who may or may not be related to each other but share the same dwelling unit. The dwelling unit may be a house, an apartment, or a room. A person living alone is considered living in a household but not in a family.

13.2 SOCIOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILY

The study of family is significant because it has been regarded as the cornerstone of human society. It plays a vital role in the formation of human society by binding men, women and their children in a stable relationship with each other. It is called the nursery of human nature because the manner in which the children are brought up in a family decides to a great extent, the way they react to different situations. In other words, the family lays down the foundation of human personality.

Family is also called the transfer-point of culture. As we are aware, culture is the man-made part of environment. A child becomes familiar with every aspect of culture in the family itself. When he becomes an adult, he imparts this knowledge about social norms, customs as well as material aspects of life to the younger generation.

An adult person is part of two types of families. The family in which one is born is

called the *family of orientation*. A person is identified as son or daughter in this type of family. Such a family exerts formative influence on his life and personality.

The family which a person sets up after marriage is called the *family of procreation*. It is the family in which a married couple gives birth to children and brings them up.

Family of Orientation

Family of Procreation

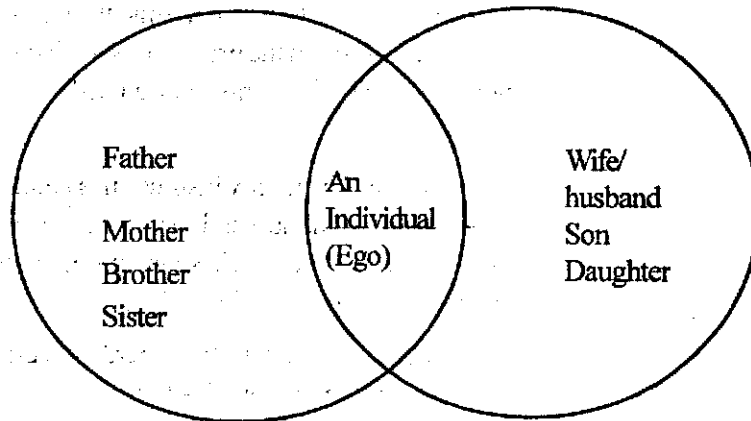


Fig. 1

The family is significant in every way for the individual as well as society and hence, its study is important in Sociology.

13.3 CHARACTERISTICS OF FAMILY

Family is the basic unit of social organization. It displays certain specific features or characteristics which are as follows:

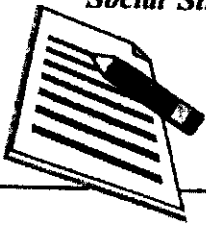
- (1) **Universality:** Family as a social unit is universal. There is not a single society in this universe where family is not found. The reason for its universality is that it performs many functions which are indispensable for the individual and society. The biological, economic, social and psychological functions are performed by the family so efficiently and simultaneously that it has become indispensable for everyone. In fact, society has not been able to find any alternative association which performs so many functions at one time with so much selfless devotion.
- (2) **Emotional Basis:** Family members are emotionally bound to each other. They provide love, care and protection to each other and are ready to make sacrifices for the welfare of family members.
- (3) **Limited Size:** A family is basically made up of a husband, wife and their unmarried children. It is a small group and its membership is confined to those

MODULE- II

Social Institution and Social Stratification



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who are related by either marriage or blood ties. Large families are getting fewer and fewer day-by-day.

- (4) **Nuclear Position in Social Structure:** Family is regarded as basic, nuclear or fundamental to all social groupings. In the simpler as well as in the advanced societies, the whole social structure i.e. stable set of social relations, is built largely on the basis of family.
- (5) **Social Regulations:** Family is run according to social norms. Its members are trained to follow social norms and customs in the process of socialization. Inter-relationships and interactions among family members are guided by social and legal regulations.
- (6) **Its Permanent and Temporary Nature:** The family institution is enduring and universal. But an individual family lasts till the husband and wife are together. After their demise or divorce, new families of their sons and daughters perpetuate the family name and tradition and the cycle goes on.

Apart from the above mentioned distinctive characteristics, there are certain **general characteristics** of the family which are mentioned below:

- (1) **Mating Relationship:** A family is born when a man and woman get married according to prescribed social norms. Marriage allows husband and wife to enter into socially approved sexual union to satisfy their sex-instinct. Satisfaction of this basic instinct is imperative for a healthy living.
- (2) **Common Habitation:** Family members usually share a common residence in which husband, wife, their children and other relatives live together.
- (3) **Reckoning of Descent:** Family is basically a bilateral grouping made up of husband, wife and relatives on both sides. But, the children inherit either father's name and property or mother's name and property, depending on the local tradition.
- (4) **Economic System :** Every family makes provision to look after the economic needs of its members. Usually, the elders of the family take up jobs and earn money to meet economic requirements of all the family members. Provision is also made for looking after the old and the sick members of the family.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.1

(1) OBJECTIVE QUESTIONS:

- (1) Write 'True' or 'False' against the statement:

Family members always share a common residence.



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(2) Fill in the blank:

Family members are related to each other by blood, or adoption.

(3) Mark the correct answer :

Family is the most important group in a person's life because

- (i) the members have selfless devotion for each other.
- (ii) the members are bound by blood, marriage or adoption to each other.
- (iii) family provides economic and social support to its members.
- (iv) family plays the most important role in the socialization of an individual.
- (v) all the above.

(II) Family is called 'the nursery of human nature'. Why? Explain in one sentence.

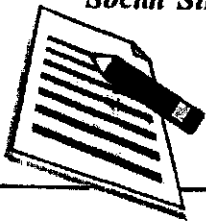
13.4 FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY

Family performs a number of functions in society. An individual and society at large are highly dependent upon the family for the fulfillment of their basic requirements. If these needs of the individual and society are not met properly, the very survival of both would be at risk. Therefore, the functions carried out by the family acquire immense significance. The important functions of family are being discussed here:

(1) **Biological Functions:** Biological functions of the family are of varied types:

- (a) The first and foremost biological functions of family is the gratification of sexual desires of husband and wife in an orderly and socially approved manner.
- (b) The next important biological function is giving birth to children. In the form of a child, the family gets a new generation which inherits the family legacy. The human race is perpetuated in this manner by continuous addition of new members born in families all over the world.
- (c) Providing physical protection to its members in all circumstances is yet another biological function of the family. Physical care and protection of every member right from the new-born baby to the old and sick member is an essential function of family. In short, the family takes upon itself the responsibility to keep its members physically fit and mentally alert.

(2) **Economic Function :** Family fulfills the economic needs of its members to a certain extent by providing them food, clothing and shelter till they become self-reliant. The head of the family takes up a job, business or occupation and



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meets the requirement of other members out of his earning. Sometimes, the family members collectively pursue a family occupation such as family business, cultivation, cattle rearing, cottage industry etc. This collective effort provides employment as well as income to all members of the family.

The other economic function is that the family provides successors, of the assets and liabilities of family, in the form of children.

- (3) **Socialization of Children** : it is one of the most important functions of the family to look after children and bring them up according to the culture of society. Family ensures that in the process of socialization i.e. social learning, the child becomes aware of the material as well as non-material aspects of culture. The child learns language, customs, etiquette, norms and values, beliefs and social roles. All these aspects are part of non-material culture. The knowledge about material culture which includes techniques of food-production, house-building, musical instruments and so on are also imparted to the younger generation in the process of socialization.

In fact, without socialization there would be no transfer of culture. Hence, the very survival of culture is dependent on the socializing function of the family.

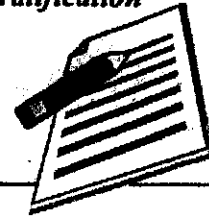
For the proper socialization of children, the conduct of the socializing agent, i.e. mother, father and other relatives must be proper and affectionate. Only then does the child learn the norms of society willingly and completely.

- (4) **Psychological Function**: Human beings want love and affection of their fellow humans right from infancy to old age. Attention and care of the family members provides emotional support, stability and security to a person. He feels assured that at least his family members are there to take care of him in good as well as bad circumstances.

The individual, in turn, devotes his time, energy and money to his family members. He toils hard for his family and dies one day leaving everything to them.



Attention and care of the family members



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INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.2

- (1) Write 'True' or 'False' against the statement:

Early care and education of the child is the function of family.

- (2) Fill in the blanks:

Providing emotional support in tense situations is the.....function of family.

- (3) Mark the correct answer:

The function of family is

- (i) to provide physical protection;
- (ii) to provide economic support;
- (iii) to socialize a child in the norms and values of society;
- (iv) to provide economic support;
- (v) all the above.

- (II) Identify any single economic function of family .

13.5 TYPES OF FAMILY

Family is of many types. There are various factors, which are taken into account while classifying the family.

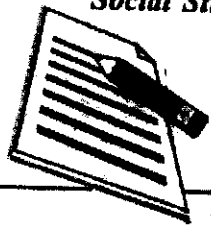
Based upon some important factors, families can be classified as follows:

- (1) **Residence:** Depending on the place of residence of newly-wedded husband and wife, the families are of following three types:

- (a) Patrilocal Family
- (b) Matrilocal Family
- (c) Neolocal Family

- (a) **Patrilocal Family:** When the newly married wife leaves her parents' house and goes to reside with her husband's parents in their house; such families are known as patrilocal families. Most of the Indian families are of this type.

- (b) **Matrilocal Family:** When the married couple reside in the wife's parental residence then such families are known as matrilocal families.



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Such families are formed when the wife doesn't leave her mother's house even after marriage and it is the husband who comes to reside with her, leaving his parent's residence. Tribes of north-east such as Garo and Khasi have matrilocal families.

- (c) **Neolocal Family:** When a newly-wedded couple sets up a new home, independent from either of the parents, then such families are known as neolocal families. In western countries, young couples prefer neolocal family i.e. they prefer to set up a new home which is separate from either of their parents' residence.

In some tribes of Australia, the married couple resides with or near a maternal uncle of the groom rather than with the parents of either of the spouses. Such families are known as avunculocal families.

- (2) **Authority:** Families are of two types seen from the point of view of authority.

These are : (a) Patriarchal Family

(b) Matriarchal Family

- (a) **Patriarchal Family:** The family in which father is the formal head and the ruling power in the family is called patriarchal family. The authority of the father is taken as absolute and final in such families. Women and children have to follow the decisions and dictates of the male members of the family. Traditional Indian and Chinese families are examples of patriarchal families. Most patriarchal families are patrilocal and patrilineal.

- (b) **Matriarchal Family:** The family in which the mother is the central figure and her authority is supreme, is called matriarchal family. In such families usually the mother wields power and authority in the house. Matriarchal families are found among Nayars of Kerala and Khasi and Garo tribes of Assam. Most matriarchal families are matrilineal and matrilocal.

- (3) **Size:** Family is divided into two types on the basis of size:

(a) Nuclear Family

(b) Joint/extended family.

- (a) **Nuclear family:** It is made up of a husband, wife and their unmarried children. This type of family is small in size. In urban areas, nuclear family is more popular. The size of the family is kept small because of lack of living space, economic problems, a feeling of individualism and other factors. It is the basic grouping of married couple and their children and is also known as immediate, primary or conjugal family.



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- (b) **Joint/extended family:** It is composed of blood and marital relatives of three or more generations who identify themselves as members of a particular family. The members of the joint family provide financial and other kinds of help to each other and follow joint family norms. They usually live under one roof and function under one common authority.

Extended family is an extension of the nuclear family, very often by addition of other closely related people. Such addition may be along collateral lines by including more than one spouse or several blood relatives.

Polygamous families where a person can marry more than one wife or husband are examples of such families.

The extension of a primary family can also be along three or more generations. This is the prevalent form of joint family in India.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.3

1. Write 'True' or 'False' against the statement:

In the lineal joint family, a person lives with his one son and grandson.

2. Fill in the blank:

Mother is the supreme authority in thefamily.

3. Mark the correct answer:

The type of family in which the newly wedded couple lives with the husband's maternal uncle is known as

- (a) Matrilocal Family
- (b) Patrilocal family
- (c) Avunculocal family
- (d) Neo-local family

- II. What is a joint family? Write in one sentence.



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13.6 JOINT FAMILY IN INDIA

13.6.1 Meaning

The traditional family structure in India has been thought to be that of joint family since ancient days.

Joint family in India has been defined as a group of people belonging to three or more generations who live under the same roof, eat food cooked from the same hearth, and participate in common activities. These people, depending upon the nature of kinship system, have common rights in the property.

However, others feel that it is not always necessary to share residence and kitchen for members of a joint family. Sociologists feel that fulfillment of following three conditions is enough to call a family as *joint*. These conditions are: generation depth, rights and obligations, and property.

Two or more families having kinship relationships who may live separately, but share emotional bonds, joint property and function under one authority can also be termed as constituting a joint family.

13.6.2 Characteristics

In brief, the joint family in India is marked by the following characteristics:

1. **It has an authoritarian structure-** The power to take decisions regarding matters related to family and individuals lie in the hands of head of the family. His/her decision is taken as final and everyone has to abide by it.
2. **It has familistic organization-** It implies that the interest of the family as a whole is more important than the individual's interest. One has to sacrifice one's personal wishes, likes and dislikes, these go against family norms or rules or traditions.
3. **Status of members is determined by their age and relationship :** The status of a person higher in age is higher in a joint family than a person lower in age.

Similarly, a person is respected more because of the higher status in terms of marital or blood ties. A husband, an uncle, an aunt and the in-laws are respected because of higher status in a relationship. A person's ability and achievement are not given importance in determining status.



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4. **Blood relationship gets preference over marital relationship** : It implies that the husband-wife relationship is subordinate to father-son or brother-brother relationship.
5. **The family functions on the ideal of joint responsibility** : Everyone shares the problems of other members of the family and tries to help in whatever manner one can.
6. **All members get equal attention** : The family income is pooled together and needs of the individual members are met according to their needs and not according to their contribution. However, the description of the joint family along with its characteristics as given above constitutes an ideal picture. In reality, therefore, joint family functions in less than ideal-manner having lost many of its ideal characteristics, at least partly.

The joint family system is useful for agricultural and business - based families because both activities require manpower and pooling of economic resources such as land and money.

After going through this section, you should be able to answer the following questions.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.4

1. Write 'True' or 'False' against the statement :

Common residence is an essential characteristic of joint family

2. Fill in the blank:

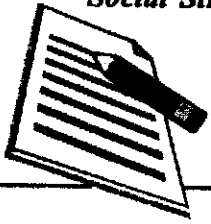
In the joint family, blood relationship gets preference over relationship.

3. Mark the correct answer :

In the joint family

- (i) One has to follow the dictates of head of the family.
- (ii) Status of members in the joint family is not determined by money earned or achievement in any profession.
- (iii) Everyone shares joys and sorrows of other members of the family.
- (iv) All the above.

- II. Write two characteristics of joint family in India.



13.7 CHANGES AND FACTORS OF CHANGE IN THE FAMILY

Family, traditional as well as modern, has been undergoing changes under the impact of following factors : (i) Industrialization (ii) Urbanization (iii) Western culture (iv) Modern education (v) Legislative measures (vi) Quarrels in the family (vii) Emergence of various associations to perform different functions of family.

The structure i.e. composition and inter-relationships within the family have undergone significant changes under the impact of the above mentioned factors. The functions of family too have changed significantly in the modern era. The changes are discussed below:

- Size of the family has been considerably reduced under the impact of urbanization and industrialization. In urban areas, it is very difficult to find large accommodation for large-sized families. Moreover, the income of an individual is not sufficient to meet the requirements of large families. Hence, families in modern times consist basically of husband, wife and their unmarried children. Such families are known as nuclear families.
- Rise of nuclear families has changed the inter-relationship among its members. The members of nuclear family interact with each other on more equal terms. They no longer have to follow the dictates of the elders blindly. In nuclear families, the husband, wife and children discuss their problems and likes and dislikes with each other. The decisions regarding family matters and individual's life are taken collectively.
- Sometimes, conflict between older and younger generation is seen in the family because of their inability to understand each other's point of view. As a result, the level of discipline and devotion towards each other has declined.
- Some parents do not take care of children adequately because of their jobs, busy schedule or desire of freedom from responsibilities of children.
- Boys and girls do not find it necessary to marry the mates selected by their parents. They choose their marital partners on the basis of mutual attraction, career and occupational similarity, financial benefits and so on. Class, caste and compatibility between family-values are no longer very important.
- Kinship-ties are not very strong in today's family set-up. The family members have become more self-centred and self-reliant. They do not spare much time, energy and money for their relatives or kinsmen.
- The families have become child-centric. Parents spend most of their time, energy and money on their children. Due to break-up of joint family, they no longer have to compulsorily contribute towards the welfare of brothers and

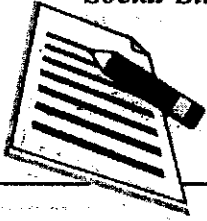


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sisters. The entire life of the parents revolves around their children and all their future plans are made keeping their children in mind.

- The functions performed by the family have been reduced to a substantial extent. Other agencies which cater to the needs of the family members have come up although their roles are specific and not holistic as is the case with the family. The *creche*, day-care centres for children, old-people's homes, nursing homes, hostels, restaurants, banks, clubs and so on, are a few examples of agencies which have taken up varied family functions thereby reducing the ambit of its reach and relevance. However, the emotional support and the selfless devotion of family members are still hard to find elsewhere.
- Family is no longer the unit of production in most of the societies. With the arrival of factory system of production, home is not the place for the production of goods. As a result, family members have to look for jobs outside their homes. This change has increased the physical and mental distance between family members.
- Family is facing the problems of instability in western societies. Separation and increasing rate of divorce due to mutual disagreement has become common. This has put maximum emotional and social strain on children of divorced parents. They don't have anyone to support them in their formative years. Those parents who take care of children after divorce also face severe strain on their time and energies.
- Some couples are living together without getting married as in western countries. They fear that if they get married to each other, then it will sooner or later result in divorce. Such living together without marriage is termed as a *live-in-relationship* or cohabitation. This is an alternative to family life in their view.
- Some married and employed couples are opting not to have children despite sufficient financial stability. They consider children as a burden on themselves. Such families are termed as DINK (double income no kids) families.
- In Israel, a unique family system known as *Kibbutz* is found. A *Kibbutz* is a community of families and individuals which co-operate in the raising of children. The children reside in Children Homes away from parents. Each *Kibbutz* operates as a single household of 50 to 2000 people where children are treated as the responsibility of the whole community while the parents live in separate residences. The children spend weekends with their families.

However, in spite of structural and functional changes, the family still plays a significant role in ensuring socialization of children and providing emotional support to its members. The task of procreation and upbringing of children is done most satisfactorily by the family only. The psychological satisfaction and social respect



earned through marriage and successful family life is considered unparalleled in terms of quality. As a result, the family remains a universally indispensable institution.

INTEXT QUESTIONS 13.5

1. Write 'True or 'False' against the statement:

Early care and education of the child is the essential function of family

2. Fill up the blank :

The modern family has become centric.

3. Mark the correct answer : A family-

- (i) provides the best environment for procreation and upbringing of children
- (ii) provides selfless and life-long support of every kind to its members
- (iii) gives social identity to its members
- (iv) cares for its members in sickness, misfortune and old age
- (v) all the above.

- II. How the status of women has changed in the family? Write in one sentence.



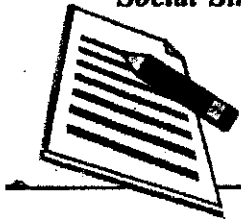
WHAT YOU HAVE LEARNT

- Family is the basic unit of society and the most important group for an individual.
- Family is a group of persons united by ties of marriage, blood or adoption.
- Family is holistic association, which is selflessly devoted to the welfare of its members all over the world.
- Specific characteristics of family are the following :
 - (i) Universality
 - (ii) Emotional basis
 - (iii) Formative influence
 - (iv) Limited size
 - (v) Nuclear position in social structure
 - (vi) Responsibility towards the members



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- (vii) Social regulation
- (viii) Permanent and temporary nature
- General Characteristics of family are the following :
 - (i) Mating relationship (iii) Reckoning of descent
 - (ii) Common habitation (iv) Economic system
- Functions of family are the following :
 - (i) Biological function
 - (ii) Socialization of children and enculturation
 - (iii) Economic function
 - (iv) Psychological function
- The functions performed by the family are essential for survival of society, culture and human race.
- Types of family are the following on the basis of different factors such as -
 - (i) Residence
 - (a) Patrilocal family
 - (b) Matrilocal family
 - (c) Neolocal family
 - (d) Avunculocal family
 - (ii) Authority
 - (a) Patriarchal family
 - (b) Matriarchal family
 - (iii) Size
 - (a) Nuclear family
 - (b) Joint/Extended family
- The traditional family structure in India has been that of joint family right from ancient times.
- Joint family in India displays following characteristics -
 - (i) Authoritarian structure
 - (ii) Familistic organization
 - (iii) Status - determination by age and relationship
 - (iv) Blood relationship gets preference over marital relationship
 - (v) Joint responsibility

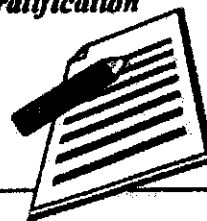


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- (vi) Equal attention to all the members
- Following factors have brought changes in the family -
 - (i) Industrialization (iv) Modern education
 - (ii) Urbanization (v) Legislative measures
 - (iii) Western culture (vi) Quarrels in the family
- (vii) Emergence of different associations to perform different functions of family.
- Changes that have taken place in family structure and functions are
 - (i) Size of family has been reduced
 - (ii) Interaction on equal terms among its members
 - (iii) Conflict between old and new generation
 - (iv) Freedom in the selection of marital partners
 - (v) Kinship ties are no longer very important
 - (vi) Family is no longer the unit of production in most societies
 - (vii) Problem of instability, increasing divorce and consequent problem in upbringing of children of divorced parents.
 - (viii) Some employed couples are opting not to have children and they are termed as DINK families.

GLOSSARY

- Avunculocal Family - The family in which a married couple resides with or in the locality of husband's maternal uncle.
- Cohabitation - Living together of a couple without getting married.
- Colateral joint family - The joint family where extension of the family is along horizontal lines i.e. families of brothers live together.
- DINKS - The families where husband and wife both are earning members but they don't have any children (double income no kids)
- Family of orientation - A family in which one is born

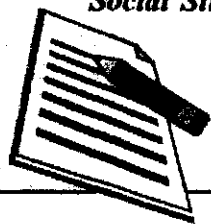


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- **Joint family** - Family composed of blood and marital relatives of three or more generations
- **Kibbutz** - A community of families consisting of about 50 to 2000 members where children are a collective responsibility
- **Lineal Joint Family** - The joint family where extension of family is along vertical lines i.e. parents live with one of the sons and his family.
- **Matriarchal Family** - A form of family in which mother is the formal head and wields dominant power in the family.
- **Matrilocal family** - The type of family in which the married couple reside in the wife's parental household or community.
- **Neolocal family** - A form of family in which a married couple is normally expected not to live with either of the families of origin but to establish a separate or new residence.
- **Nuclear family** - The basic type of family composed of a married couple and their offsprings.
- **Patriarchal family** - A form of family in which the father is the formal head and the ruling power in the family.
- **Parilocal family** - A form of family in which a married couple resides in the husband's father's home or locality.

**TERMINAL EXERCISE**

1. What do you mean by family? Describe in your own words.
2. Explain the role of family in personality formation.
3. State the general characteristics of family.
4. What are the economic functions of family?
5. What are the characteristics of joint family in India?
6. The family is facing the problem of instability. How?



Notes

**ANSWER TO INTEXT QUESTIONS**

- | | | | |
|------|-----------|-------------------|-----------------|
| 13.1 | (1) False | (2) Marriage | (3) all |
| 13.2 | (1) True | (2) Psychological | (3) all |
| 13.3 | (1) True | (2) Matriarchal | (3) Avunculocal |
| 13.4 | (1) False | (2) Marital | (3) iv |
| 13.5 | (1) True | (2) Child | (3) v |