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**FAMILY**

Family means a group of people related by blood or ancestry also it can as well be defined that family is a group of related people, generally who live together. However it emerges as the basic unit of social organization.

**FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY.**

As a social institution the family has certain functions to perform for the society and the individual. It plays important role for survival, protection and support, socialisation and societal identification of the individual. The Family serves the society as an instrument of sexual control and cultural transmission.

Different sociologists have classified the functions of the family differently. K. Davis has mentioned four main functions of family. These are (i) reproduction (ii) maintenance, (iii) placement and (iv) socialisation of the young.

Groves has classified the functions family in the following way.

* Protection and care of the young.
* Regulation and control of sex impulses.
* Conservation and transmission of social heritage and
* Provision of opportunity for the most intimate contacts.

Maclver divides the functions of the family into two categories: Essential and Nonessential functions.

**ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

**1. SATISFACTION OF SEX NEEDS:**

This is the essential function which the family performs. The sex instinct is the natural and biological urge of human beings. The satisfaction of sex desire requires that male and female should live together as husband and wife.

Hence, family is the only place where husband and wife can satisfy their sex instinct. Family satisfies sexual desires of male and female through the institution of marriage. Without family the satisfaction of sex needs is impossible. The modern family satisfies sex instinct in a greater degree than the traditional family.

**2. REPRODUCTION:**

The task of race perpetuation has always been an important function of the family. An ongoing society must replace its members. It primarily relies on the biological reproduction of its own members.

The family is an institution par excellence of the reproduction and the rearing of children. It secures a legitimate and responsible basis for procreation by regulating sexual behaviour. It provides care and personal protection to the newly born human beings and children.

**3. SUSTENANCE FUNCTION:**

The family provides the daily care and personal protection to its dependant members namely aged, children etc. The family is an insurance for the individual in times of crisis. Family provides protection and shelter to orphans, widow and her children.

**4. PROVISION OF HOME:**

Establishment of household life or provision of a home is another essential function of the family. The desire for a home is a powerful instinct for men as well as women. Family provides an opportunity for husband and wife to live together happily. Man after the hard work of the day returns home where in the presence of his wife and children he sheds off his fatigue.

Although there are hotels and club which provide recreation, the home is still the heaven where its members find comfort and affection. Home is the foundation of family, the meeting place of husband and wife, the birth place and play ground of children. The family is a psychological relief station in which one can safely relax.

**5. SOCIALIZATION:**

Man is a social animal. But he is not born human or social. He is made social through the process of socialisation. Socialisation refers to the process through which the growing individual learns the habits, attitudes, values and beliefs of the social group into which he has been born and becomes a person.

From the point of view of society, it is the process through which society transmits its culture from generation to generation and maintains itself. If a society is to endure and function successfully through time, it is to socialise the new recruits.

The family presents itself to the child as an educative group of most fundamental kind. It presents itself as a concrete manifestation of the cultural process. It is the first social environment which trains and educates the newborn child.

As Mack and Young say, “The basic socialisation of the child takes place in the family. It carries out the socialisation of the individual. It hands over the social heritage to the generations to come. The family is described as the “transfer point of civilisation”. The content of socialisation is the cultural traditions of the society, by passing them to the next generation, says Parsons. The family acts as the cultural mediator.

**NON-ESSENTIAL FUNCTIONS:**

**1. ECONOMIC FUNCTIONS:**

Family serves as an economic unit. The earlier agricultural family was a self-supporting ‘business enterprise’. It was producing whatever the family needed. Today the importance of family as an economic unit has been lessened as most of the goods for consumption are purchased readymade from the market.

The family still remains as an important economic unit from the point of view of ‘consumer’s outlay’. In other words, the modern family is a consuming unit and not a self-sufficient ‘producing unit’.

**2. PROPERTY TRANSFORMATION:**

The family acts as an agency for holding and transmission of property. Most families accumulate much property such as land, goods, money and other forms of wealth. The family transmits these property.

**3. RELIGIOUS FUNCTION:**

Family is a centre for religious training of the children. The children learn various religious virtues from their parents. The religious and moral training of children has always been bound up with the home. Though formal religious education has reached into the earliest years the family still furnishes the matrix of religious ideas, attitudes and practice.

**4. EDUCATIVE FUNCTION:**

The family provides the bases of all the child’s latter formal education learning. Family is the first school of children. The child learns the first letters under the guidance of parents. In the words Mazzin, the first lesson of child begins between mother’s kiss and father’s care. The child learns language, behaviour and manners from the parents. The virtues of love, cooperation, obedience, sacrifice and discipline are learnt by the child in the family.

**5. RECREATIONAL FUNCTION:**

The family provides recreation to its members. The members of the family visit their relations. They enjoy various occasions in the family jointly and derive pleasure. Now recreation is available in clubs and hotels rather than at home.

**6. WISH FULFILLMENT:**

The family gives moral and emotional support for the individual member, providing his defence against social isolation and loneliness and satisfying his need for personal happiness and love. The wife finds in the husband love, security, protection and strength, while the husband expects from her affection, tenderness, help and devotion.

To conclude, there are certain core functions with which the family is always and everywhere concerned. As Kingsley Davis says, there is no other social group which can perform this peculiar combination of great functions as its main societal task.

### The family has given up some of the functions that it performed in the past. But by and large, the family remains the most important primary group in society for accomplishing certain essential functions.

### TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FAMILY.

### POLYGYNY TRADITIONAL FAMILY:

Scholars of the African traditional family agree that the one widely known aspect that distinguishes the African traditional family, say from the European one, is the perversity of polygamy3. Although polygamy is the act of an individual being married to more than one spouse at the same time, the more commonly practiced in Africa is **polygyny** ….the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently – is permitted. The presence and absence of polygyny was a significant determinant and indicator of the nature of virtually every African social group; whether tribe, clan, or extended family, whether matrilineality or patrilineality was practiced, bride price existed, and how children were raised

Polygyny was widely practiced in Africa and it often formed the backbone of the traditional African family patterns. According to Mair, “the polygynous joint family, consisting of a man, his wives, and their children, is the ideal for most Africans.” Studies conducted from the 1930s to 1950s indicate that polygyny was common virtually in all regions of Africa.

In spite of the perversity of polygyny, there was evidence that it was on the decline. The major reason cited is that with increasing modern influences, marrying more than one wife became an economic burden. Even traditionally, ordinary citizens could not achieve marrying more than one wife. Often only Kings, chiefs and men who had wealth could afford it. Polygyny though set the tone and often determined the strength of the society and pattern of social organization of the traditional African family.

In the late and early 19th century, a detailed study conducted found that, “Polygyny, the type of marriage in which the husband has plural wives, is not only the preferred but the dominant form of marriage . Commoners had two or three, chiefs had dozens, and the Kings had hundreds of wives. What was the structure of the polygynous family?

### MATRILINEALTRADITION AFRICAN FAMILY:

Among the Bemba people of Northern Zambia, marriage is matrilocal. “That is to say a man goes to live in his wife’s village, at any rate for the first years of his married life.”This is also true of marriage among other Zambian tribes like the Bisa, Lala, Lamba, Chewa, Kaonde, and many others. Among the Chewa of Eastern Zambia, the custom of man living with his wife’s parents temporarily or permanently was known as Ukamwini.

During the period earlier than 1940s, marriages remained completely matrilocal during the couple’s entire life. But however, after a few years of contact with white civilization and subsequent social change, the custom has gradually changed. The husband could take his wife home if the marriage was thought stable especially after the couple has had two or more children.

The basic family unit among the Bemba was not the nuclear family. But rather the matrilocal extended family comprised of a man and his wife, their married daughters, son-in-laws, and their children. “The basic kinship unit of Bemba society is not the individual family, but a matrilocal extended family composed of a man and his wife, their married daughters, and the latter’s husbands and children.”

A young Bemba couple live in the same hut with a child of pre-weaning age whom they may have. But this is not an independent nuclear family unit. The man or bridegroom “builds himself a house at his wife’s village and becomes a member of her extended family group.” The wife cooks at her mother’s house with other female relatives who are mainly unmarried and married sisters. Meanwhile, the husband works under his father-in-law’s orders with other young son-in-laws. “A matrilocal family of this kind forms the nucleus of a village community (umushi) which other relatives of the head of the family afterwards join.”

### Conclusion

The traditional African family is a very broad concept which has challenging variations across the continent. These variations are caused by differences in tribal customs or culture according geography, history, religion, external influence of colonialism, inter migration, political and economic structures and influences.

**NUCLEAR FAMILY.**

A nuclear family is defined as a family that comprises of the father, mother, and children. In a nuclear family, the children could be biological or adopted. The father is the head of the household in a patriarchal society while the mother is the economic head of matriarchal societies. Children are the seeds or fruits of marriage and are catered for by the parents. Each member of the family has his or her responsibilities, duties and roles. These roles and responsibilities are gender based.

**Roles and responsibilities of my father.**

* My father is the head of the family, the caretaker and the breadwinner of the family of the family.
* He is at top of the hierarchy and gives the order and authority in the house.
* He has the responsibility of protecting the family and providing for their needs.
* He also gives the hand of his children (female children) in marriage, he with his kinsmen decides on marriage rites and dowry.

**Roles and responsibilities of my mother.**

* My mother is the second in charge in terms of authority.
* She stands in when my father is not available or when he is indisposed.
* Her roles are to support the family economically and in making decisions.
* She is the one that is mostly around in the house, raises and takes care of us her children.
* She cooks the meal, does the laundry and also concerned with the upkeep of the house.
* Most times, she is the first to wake up and the last to sleep in the house.
* Thus she serves as the pivot in the family.

**Roles and Duties of the children.**

* The children are the offspring and product of the union between the father and mother.
* They have different roles and duties due to the differences in age and gender.
* The female ones are expected to learn from their mothers, they are seen in the kitchen and they do laundry in the house.
* The female children can take up the roles and responsibilities of their mother when she is unavailable.
* The male children in the house are close to the father, learn from their fathers and they take up the masculine roles.
* Generally, the children run errands for the family.

**MY FAMILY TREE.**

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