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WHAT IS FAMILY?

In the context of human society, a family (from Latin: familia) is a group of people related either by consanguinity (by recognized birth) or affinity (by marriage or other relationship). The purpose of families is to maintain the well-being of its members and of society. Ideally, families would offer predictability, structure, and safety as members mature and participate in the community.In most societies, it is within families that children acquire socialization for life outside the family. Additionally, as the basic unit for meeting the basic needs of its members, it provides a sense of boundaries for performing tasks in a safe environment, ideally builds a person into a functional adult, transmits culture, and ensures continuity of humankind with precedents of knowledge.

Anthropologists generally classify most family organizations as matrifocal (a mother and her children); patrifocal (a father and his children); conjugal (a wife, her husband, and children, also called the nuclear family); avuncular (for example, a grandparent, a brother, his sister, and her children); or extended (parents and children co-reside with other members of one parent's family).

Members of the immediate family may include spouses, parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, sons, and daughters. Members of the extended family may include aunts, uncles, cousins, nephews, nieces, and siblings-in-law. Sometimes these are also considered members of the immediate family, depending on an individual's specific relationship with them, and the legal definition of "immediate family" varies. Sexual relations with family members are regulated by rules concerning incest such as the incest taboo.

The field of genealogy aims to trace family lineages through history. The family is also an important economic unit studied in family economics. The word "families" can be used metaphorically to create more inclusive categories such as community, nationhood, global village, and humanism.

FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY

(A) Essential functions of family: Maclver has divided functions of family into essential and non-essential types. Under essential functions he includes mainly three functions such as, stable satisfaction of sex needs, production and rearing of children and a provision of home. But besides these Maclverian functions of family, family may also perform some other essential functions. But it must be remembered that essential functions are those functions which are basic or fundamental in nature and no other institutions can perform these functions as successfully as family can. However family performs the following essential functions:

(1) Stable satisfaction of Sexual needs: This is the most important essential function of family. Family has been performing these functions since the inceptions of human civilization. It is a well-known fact that sex urge is the most important and powerful instinct and natural urge of human being. It is the primary duty of family to satisfy the sexual urge of its members in a stable and desirable way.

(2) Procreation and Rearing of Children: It is another important sectional function of family .Necessary arrangement of stable satisfaction of sexual urge resulted in procreation. Family provides the legitimate basis for production of children. It institutionalizes the process of procreation. By performing this function of procreation family contributes to the continuity of family and ultimately human race. Hence perpetuation of human race or society is the most important function of family. Not only is the production of children but also child rearing another important function of family. Family is the only place where the function of child rearing is better performed.

(3) Provision of Home: Family performs another important function of providing a home for common living to all its members. It is only in a home that children are born and brought up. Even if children are born in hospitals in modern time still they are taken care of and properly nourished in a home only. Because family and a home have no substitute. In a home all the members of family live together and a child is brought up under the strict vigilance of all its members.

(4) Socialization: It is another important essential function of family. It is said man is not born human but made human. New born human baby became human being after they are socialized. Family plays an important role in the socialization process.

(B) Non-essential or secondary functions of family: Famous Sociologist Maclver has divided functions into essential and non-essential functions. Under non-essential or secondary functions he includes economic, religious, educational, health and recreational functions. Along with the essential functions family also performs these non-essential functions. These functions are non-essential or secondary in the sense that these are also performed simultaneously by other social institutions in family. These functions are as follows:

(1) Economic functions: Since ancient times family has been performing several economic functions. It is an important economic unit. In ancient time family was both a production and consumption unit. It used to fulfill almost all the economic needs of its members such as food, clothing, housing etc.

(2) Educational functions: Family performs many educational functions for its members. As an primary educational institution family used to teach letters, knowledge, skill and trade secret to all its members. It looks after the primary education of its members and molds their career and character. Mother act as the first and best teacher of a child. Besides he learns all sorts of informal education such as discipline, obedience, manners etc. from family.

(3) Religious functions: Family is the Centre of all religious activities. All the family members offer their prayers together and observe different religious rites, rituals and practices jointly. All the members believe in a particular religion and observe religious ceremonies at home. Children learn different religious values from their parents. Living in spiritual atmosphere spirituality develops among the children. Family transmits religious beliefs and practices from one generation to another. But at present family became more secular in their outlook. Common family worship became very rare and absolute. Still family continues to play an important role in shaping religious attitude of its members.

(4) Health related functions: Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It look after the health and vigor of its members. It takes care of the sick old and aged persons of the family. By providing necessary nutritive food to its members family takes care of the health of all.

(5) Recreational function: Family-performs several recreational functions for its members by entertaining them in various ways. In ancient period family was the only Centre of recreation. All the members together organize family feasts, visit the family relations, organize family picnics etc.

(6) Cultural functions: Family also performs several cultural functions as well. It preserves different cultural traits. Man learns and acquires culture from family and transmits it to succeeding generations. That is why family is considered as Centre of culture.

(7) Social functions: Family performs a number of social functions. It teaches about social customs, mores, traditions, norms, etiquette to the coming generations. Family exercises social control over its members and bring them into conformity with accepted standards. Senior members of family directly control the behavior of children and thereby they became a good citizen.

AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

Traditional African family patterns are slowly but progressively being altered as a result of the process of modernization which is exhibited through trends like urbanization. Family patterns that were the norm in traditional rural African societies are gradually being altered and substituted by modern values. Sub Saharan Africa has one of the fastest annual population growth rate . It has the fastest rate of urbanization presently taking place in the world. The transformation of societies in the sub-continent from rural to urban settings has immensely contributed in triggering changes in family structure. This has triggered the distortion of cultural /traditional norms and values that characterized rural communities in the region. African families are increasingly faced with the challenge and pressure emanating from the competition prevailing between traditional and modern family values. Hence, Contemporary family patterns in the region are increasingly subjected to transform and adapt to changing times. Discussions of family patterns in contemporary Sub Saharan Africa are usually made in reference to the process of acculturation, urbanization (the movement from rural to urban areas), which have helped to shape modern family structures, as well as fostered the prevalence of demographic changes. Family in sub Saharan Africa is experiencing changes which are felt in fertility rates that is the number of children women give birth to, and age at marriage to name a few.

DISCUSS YOUR NUCLEAR FAMILY

A nuclear family, elementary family or conjugal family is a family group consisting of two parents and their children (one or more). It is in contrast to a single-parent family, the larger extended family, and a family with more than two parents. Nuclear families typically center on a married couple; the nuclear family may have any number of children. There are differences in definition among observers; some definitions allow only biological children that are full-blood siblings, but others allow for a stepparent and any mix of dependent children including stepchildren and adopted children. Some sociologists and anthropologists consider the nuclear family as the most basic form of social organization.

In my nuclear family, we are five in number consisting of my Dad, Mum, Older brother, Younger sister and I.

DRAW YOUR FAMILY TREE

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| **DADDY** | **MUMMY** |

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| **UMAR** | **ME** | **IMAN** |