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QUESTIONs;

1. What is family
2. Discuss the functions of the family
3. Discuss the African traditional family
4. Discuss your nuclear family
5. Draw your family tree

(1)

**What is family?**

Family is the basic social group united through bonds of kinship or marriage, present in all societies. Ideally, the family provides its members with protection, companionship, security, and socialization. The structure of the family and the needs that the family fulfills vary from society to society. The nuclear family—two adults and their children—is the main unit in some societies. In others, it is a subordinate part of an extended family, which also consists of grandparents and other relatives. A third family unit is the single-parent family, in which children live with an unmarried, divorced, or widowed mother or father.

**A Brief History:** *This will help in broadening our perspective on what family really is; Anthropologists and social scientists have developed several theories about how family structures and functions evolved. In prehistoric hunting and gathering societies, two or three nuclear families, usually linked through bonds of kinship, banded together for part of the year but dispersed into separate nuclear units in those seasons when food was scarce. The family was an economic unit; men hunted, while women gathered and prepared food and tended children. Infanticide and expulsion of the infirm who could not work were common. Some anthropologists contend that prehistoric people were monogamous, because monogamy prevails in nonindustrial, tribal forms of contemporary society.*

*Social scientists believe that the modern Western family developed largely from that of the ancient Hebrews, whose families were patriarchal in structure (see Patrilineage). The family resulting from the Greco-Roman culture was also patriarchal and bound by strict religious precepts. In later centuries, as the Greek and then the Roman civilizations declined, so did their well-ordered family life.*

*With the advent of Christianity, marriage and childbearing became central concerns in religious teaching. The purely religious nature of family ties was partly abandoned in favor of civil bonds after the Reformation, which began in the 1500s. Most Western* nations *now recognize the family relationship as primarily a civil matter.*

**(2)**

**Functions of the family**

**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. A 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 a 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 a 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. Socialisation:**

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.

**6. 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’.

**7. 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.

**8. 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.

**9. 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.

**10. 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.

**11. 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.

**(3)**

**African Traditional Family;**

Family was very important in Ancient Africa. The structure of the traditional Ancient African family depended heavily on the gender expectations placed on men and women at the time. It was also tied strongly to their religion, and Ancient African society operated in general.

According to traditional African beliefs, when a man married a woman, he would have to play the role of the woman’s father, husband, brother, and lover. Similarly, when a woman married a man, she would have to play the role of the man’s wife, sister, mother, and lover. A married couple in Ancient Africa were seen to complete each other – this is because, in Ancient Africa, the union of a man and woman in marriage was seen as a sacred act.

It was viewed as sacred because only a man and a woman could have a child together. The act of having children was seen as very holy, and any union which led to this was clearly very holy as well.

However, before a man or woman could consider starting a family, they would have to complete certain “rites of passage” first. Rites of passage were particularly important for boys, as they were not seen to be men until they had completed them.

Each tribe had their own rite of passage; some required that a boy go out and kill a specific animal, while others may have to sleep in the wilderness, all by themselves, for weeks on end. One particularly nasty rite of passage required that the boy stuck their hand in a glove full of scorpions, and deal with the pain without treatment until the swelling had gone down.

If a boy failed to complete their rite of passage, they may not be allowed to get married and may never have been considered men; boys who did not complete the rites of passage were cast out of their villages also and left to fend for themselves in the wilderness.

**(4)**

**MY NUCLEAR FAMILY;**

A nuclear family, elementary family or conjugal family is a family group consisting of two parents and their children. It is in contrast to a single-parent family, the larger extended family, and a family with more than two parents.

In describing my nuclear family, I must say that the society constantly view an ideal nuclear family as a relationship denoted by a heterosexual, monogamous and legally married couple (i.e., male and female) with children, living apart from relatives. Within my family structure from this description, my father is often the breadwinner and the head of the household while my mother operates in a role that is slightly below that of my dad. Meanwhile, she is the home maker and unlike most typical Nigerian families, she is also an equal contributor despite the fact that my dad is the bread winner. My family structure tends to be neither patriarchal nor matriarchal in structure.

**(5)**

**My family tree.**