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QUESTION

- 1) What is family
- 2) Discuss the functions of a family
- 3) Discuss the African Traditional family
- 4) Discuss your Nuclear family.
- 5) Draw your family tree.

i] WHAT IS A FAMILY?

'Family' is a single word which is gotten from the Latin word 'familia' which means family in English. It has different meanings. People have different ways of defining a family. Families differ in terms of economic, cultural, social, and many other facets. The dictionary defines family in several ways. One definition is 'a fundamental social group in society typically consisting of one or two parents and their children.' Although this is a good definition, there are however several modern family structures that are excluded by this definition, such as childless couples or other differences on the family unit. Another definition of family is 'two or more people who share goals and values, have long term commitments to one another and reside usually in the same dwelling.' This definition encompasses the vast majority of modern family units. The family is the most basic unit of social organization and is based around the traditional role of raising children.

2} DISCUSS THE FUNCTIONS OF A FAMILY

Family is the most universal and fundamental social institution which performs a variety of functions in human society.

ESSENTIAL/ PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

The essential functions of family are:

i] STABLE SATISFACTION OF SEX NEEDS

This is the primary and essential function of family. Sex instinct is the natural urge of human beings. The satisfaction of this requires that both male and female should live together as life partners. It is through the family that the husband and wife can satisfy their sex instincts easily and comfortably. Without family, the satisfaction of sex need is almost socially quite impossible. A family not only satisfies but also provides the appropriate mechanism through marriage to regulate sexual behaviour of husband and wife. Ancient Hindu Philosopher Manu and Vastayan opines that satisfaction of sex needs is the primary objective of family, if it is suppressed it creates personality maladjustments.

ii] REPRODUCTION AND REARING OF CHILDREN

This is another essential function of the family. Necessary arrangement of stable satisfaction of sexual urge resulted in procreation. The family along with controlling the sexual behaviour in relation to the satisfaction of sexual needs, secure a legitimate basis for procreation. Since the inception of family, it has been performing this fundamental function. This function contributes to the continuity of family and ultimately perpetuates the human race as a whole. Not only the bearing of children, but the family also has the function of rearing the children. Protection and care of children is important of a family. It is regarded as an institution for the procreation

and grooming of children. It is true that no other institution can take required care of a child like a family will. At birth, a child is completely helpless and cannot survive on earth without the help of his/her family. It is the family that provides care, food, protection and security for the child and also fulfils all other needs to make the child fit in the society. In the process of grooming the child, values and principles are taught.

iii] SOCIALIZING FUNCTIONS

The family is one of the primary agents of socialization. It is said that man isn't born human but made human. New born babies becomes human after they are socialized. Children are taught norms, values, beliefs; they are taught what is right and what is wrong. Children develop specific traits of character, attitudes, habits and values. The older ones in the family pass the family culture down to the younger ones through the socialization process. Thus, family acts as an instrument of culture transmission.

iv] PROVISION OF A HOME

Family members have a particular home or dwelling place provided by the family. Here, both husband and wife live together and they are free to do whatever they please. In the case of a family consisting of children, aunts, uncles etc. they also dwell in the home with the husband and wife. It is in this home that the child is brought up and trained according to the family's values. Even if the child is born in the hospital, he/she is carried home after some days for proper care and nourishment. This is because family and a home have no substitute. All the members of the family depend on the home for comfort, peace and protection.

NON-ESSENTIAL/ SECONDARY FUNCTIONS

i] EDUCATIONAL FUNCTIONS

Family performs many educational functions for its members. Family teaches letters, knowledge, skill and trade to all its members. The mother acts as the best teacher of a child. The child receives all the informal education needed such as discipline, obedience, how to take care of his/her surrounding, cooking etc. from the family. Although in these present times, some functions of the family is being taken over by schools, colleges and universities, it still continues to play an important role in providing the first lessons and primary education to its members.

ii] HEALTH RELATED FUNCTIONS

Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It looks after the health and vigour of its members. It takes care of the sick, old and aged persons of the family. By providing nutritive food to its members family takes care of the health of all. However, modern families sometimes delegate some of its health related functions to hospitals.

iii] RELIGIOUS FUNCTIONS

Family is the centre of all religious activities. Family members offer prayers and observe different religious practices jointly. They all believe in the same fate and observe religious ceremonies at home. Children learn religious values from their parents and living in a spiritual environment instigates spirituality among the children. Family transmits religious beliefs and practices from one generation to another.

iv] RECREATIONAL FUNCTIONS

Family performs several recreational functions by entertaining its members in various ways. In the past, the family was the only means of recreation. All the members together organized picnics, family feasts and also paid visits to other family relations. Family organizes different festivals too as a source of recreation. Also, the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is another source of entertainment. After the days' work, family members gather to exchange their different views. Modern club replaces many recreational functions of family but at the same time, it is said that present family acts as a modern club without its evil effects.

3} AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY

Some African traditional family systems are slowly but progressively being altered as a result of process of modernization which is exhibited through trends like urbanization Polygamy was very common and a way of life. Men were distant from their family and led the house. Wives were close to other wives, they were practically sisters or best friends. Children were very close to each other and there tended to be a lot in a family. More children = higher ranking. In some ethnic groups, the greater the number of children a man has, the higher his standing is in the eyes of his peers. Families of ten or more were not uncommon. Families depended on each other {close knit family}. African families were characterized by the prevalence of collectivism as opposed to individuality. In most African traditional family, there was a considerable importance attached to the respect of elders and ancestors unlike modern families.

In a polygamous family, each wife is responsible for feeding and caring for her own children, though the wives will often help each other when needed. The wives also will take turns feeding their husband so that the cost of his food is spread equally between them. Husbands are the authority figures in the household, and many of them are not used to their ideas or wishes not being attended to. In most African traditional family, the father has his crops to tend to, while his wives will have their own jobs, whether they be tending the family garden, processing palm oil, or selling vegetables in the local market. It wasn't that important for children to attend schools but if they did the older boys would help their father with his work while the girls and younger boys would go to their mothers. Women were believed to be inferior, at marriage they tend to have lower status than all the members of their husband's

family, women were voiceless and powerless. However, African societies have experienced slight distortion from in the patriarchal tradition, following the advent of urbanization, as well as due to the drop in the importance attached to land and cattle in the economy.