**NAME : MBA UCHENNA ABALI**

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**COURSE TITLE: INTRODUCTION TO SOCIOLOGY 2**

**COURSE CODE: SOC 102**

**QUESTION:**

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**

**WHAT IS FAMILY?**

'Family' is a single word, with many different meanings. People have many ways of defining a family  and what being a part of a family means to them. Families differ in terms of economic, cultural, social, and many other facets, but what every family has in common is that the people who call it a family are making clear that those people are important in some way to the person calling them his family. A family is a basic social unit consisting of parents and their children, considered as a group, whether dwelling together or not. Family can be said to be a group of people that come together to form a relationship through blood, marriage or either adoption. A family may stay together or not stay in the same building or not.

**THE FUNCTIONS OF THE FAMILY.**

Family is the most universal and fundamental social institution which performs a variety of functions in human society. Different sociologists have viewed or classified the functions of family into different types. Famous sociologist Maclver classified the functions of family into two broad categories such as essential and non-essential functions. These two functions are also widely known as primary and secondary functions. Under essential or primary functions Maclver includes mainly three functions such as (i) stable satisfaction of sex needs (ii) production and rearing of children and (iii) provision of a home. Under non-essential or secondary functions he includes religious, recreational, educational, economic and health related functions. But one thing is clear that though sociologists have classified the functions of family into different forms still all of them gives stress on the same aspects in a different manner. However, these different functions of family are as described below:

1. **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 so 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 this 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. Through the mechanism of marriage family regulate the sexual behaviour of it’s members. Because satisfaction of sex instinct brings the desire for life long partnership of husband and wife. Satisfaction of this sex needs in a desirable way helps in the normal development of personality. Ancient Hindu Philosopher Manu and Vatsayan opines that satisfaction of sex needs is the primary objective of family. If it is suppressed it creates personality maladjustments

#### **(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 the production of children but also child rearing is another important function of family. Family is the only place where the function of child rearing is better performed.It provides food, shelter, affection, protection and security to all its members. It plays a vital role in the process of socialization of child. It provides healthy atmosphere in which the personality of the child develops properly. Family takes care of the child at the time of need. Hence it is rightly remarked that family is an institution par excellence for the procreation and rearing of children. It has no parallels.

#### **(3) Provision of Home:**

Family perform another important function of providing a home for common living to all it’s 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 it’s members. All the members need a home to live happily with comfort, peace and protection. A home provides emotional and psychological support to all it’s members. Man’s necessity of love and human response got fulfilled here. Family provides recreation to it’s members. In a home family performs the role of a modern club. Man got peace by living in a home.

#### **(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.It is one of the primary agents of socialization. Living in a family human baby learns norms, values, morals and ideals of society. He learns culture and acquires character through the process of socialization. His personality develops in the course of his living in family. From family he learns what is right and wrong and what is good or bad. Through socialization he became a social man and acquires good character.

### **(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) 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

#### **(2) 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 behaviour of children and thereby they became a good citizen

#### **(3) Health related functions:**

Family as a primary social group performs several health related functions for its members. It look after the health and vigour 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.Of course modern family delegates some of its health related functions to hospital. The child is born today in a hospital or in a clinic and taken care of by nurses.

**THE AFRICAN TRADITIONAL FAMILY**

The African Traditional family still maintains its strong bond through traditional practices such as the upbringing of children and maintaining strong family values. Traditionally, African family practices polygamy because of the idea that the larger the family or clan, the more workers there are to work on the family farms. Hence, more wealth can be possessed by the family. The tribe is bigger in terms of size compared to clan but the latter has greater influence on the family. Four factors that link their kinship were profession-derived names, tribal marks, distinguishing personal names and determining the child’s legitimacy as a clan member.

The clan’s name is also included in a person’s name like his which is Miyim which denotes that he comes from the clan’s profession as hunters. He also has a tribal marking on his right cheek usually given to children at about the age of seven. Tribal marks were widely used during tribal wars to distinguish members of different clans. Only legitimate children will bear the clan’s name. The naming ceremony is very important as a child will not be considered as a part of the clan till his or her legitimacy is established. The test of a child’s legitimacy in traditional Hausa customs is by dropping the child’s umbilical cord into a can filled with water and milk. The clan chief will only accept the child as a part of the clan if the cord floats. If it sinks, the child will be considered as illegitimate and disowned.

A Nigerian ethnic group called the Ijaw will throw babies in the river to test their legitimacy. The infant will only be considered as legitimate if it floats. The children are then taken care of by their fathers’ brother, not by the biological parents. Nonetheless the real parents do not forget their children for they will continue to visit their children. This practice was done in order to prepare the girls to become wives and mothers and the boys to become husbands and fathers.

The Hausa people are patrilineal. Hence, their household family consists of relatives of the father. However, some tribes in Ghana and Northern Zambia practice matrilineal marriage as the extended family comprises of a man and his wife, their married daughters, son-in-laws, and their children.

FAMILY STRUCTURE

Each of the many family systems in Africa can be defined in terms of two broad kinds of relationships. Relationships of descent are genealogical—that is, based on the connections between generations. Relationships of affinity are marital—based on marriage. The interweaving of these relationships creates the family that an individual sees every day, as well as the wider network of kinship that surrounds each person. Everyone is part of some sort of descent system, either patrilineal, matrilineal, or both. In patrilineal systems, property and political power pass through the male side of the family; the female side determines descent in matrilineal systems. In these relationships, senior generations have more power or status than junior ones. Younger people are expected to show respect toward older family members. In the past, this power could take the form of ownership.

Marriage systems in Africa are highly diverse. In sub-Saharan Africa, some pairings of men and women are temporary, others permanent. Depending on the culture, a couple may live in the husband's home or the wife's home. Among some groups, such as the ASANTE, each spouse continues to live in the home in which he or she was born. Children may stay with their parents until they marry, or they may spend part of their adolescence in the home of another relative. In some cultures, young people leave their families at puberty to live in villages of adolescents .African marriage can be polygymous—that is, a man may have more than one wife. In practice, though, only the senior or wealthy individuals in a society have been able to have multiple wives. When polygyny occurs, the family unit is based on mothers. Each wife has her own house and property that are generally transferred to her own children. The mother and child, rather than the husband and wife, thus form the basis of family and kinship in such communities. Christian marriages in Africa, as elsewhere, are generally monogamous, with a man having only one wife. In some African societies, nuclear families are contained within larger social groups that may include kinfolk, neighbours, people of the same age or gender, and others. The nuclear family does not always have its own property or decide what tasks its members will perform. Rather, relationships between husbands and wives and between parents and children often unfold within larger domestic units called households, which may consist of joint or extended families. In a household community, several generations and several nuclear families live and work together. In joint family households, all members live together in a single large homestead or compound. In extended family households, the nuclear families within the household each live in separate compounds. A joint or extended family is under the authority of its senior member, typically a grandfather or great grand-father. Such families may be patrilineal or matrilineal. Most members of a joint or extended family household are born and raised within it or marry into it. Some, however, such as adopted children or adults, may be unrelated to the others. In sub-Saharan Africa, distant relatives are sometimes invited to settle with a household, but they usually have lower status than their hosts. A household might also include servants or, in the past, slaves. The household functions as an economic as well as a family unit. It can be described in material terms—for example, by acres of land, number of buildings, or certain tasks performed by certain members. A family compound among the Tswana of Botswana might include the huts and grain sheds of a man and his wife (or wives) and children, an unmarried brother, and an elderly mother. In rural areas, household members work together to produce food and other goods; in a town or city, the members might work to pay rent and buy groceries. In either case, the household needs to maintain itself, which means that productive new members must be added to replace the elderly, the disabled, and those who die. In this way, households are more flexible and inclusive than other family groups.

**MY NUCLEAR FAMILY**

A nuclear family is a family unit consisting only of a father, mother, and children.

**Description**

My father is the breadwinner and the head of the household while my mother is the homemaker and operates within a subordinate role to the husband. This particular family unit tends to be patriarchal in structure. Roles are located to us in order to ensure effective running of the family. We are six in my family, my parents and four children. I'm the youngest one in my family, I do some of the minor chores that are not stressful but my elder siblings do the other work.

**MY FAMILY TREE**

