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**ASSIGNMENT**

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**

**Que 1; 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.

According to Sociologists, the family is an intimate domestic group of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties. It has been a very resilient social unit that has survived and adapted through time. So, the element of time referred to above, is again present here.

The family acts as a primary socialization of children whereby the child first learns the basic values and norms of the culture, they will grow up in. a child needs to be carefully nurtured, cherished and molded into responsible individuals with good values and strong ethics. Therefore, it is important to provide them the best childcare so that they grow up to be physically, mentally and emotionally strong individuals.

Similarly, The United States Census Bureau (2007) defines the family as a relatively permanent group of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage or adoption and who live under the same roof.

Stephen (1999) defines the family as a social arrangement based on marriage including recognition of rights and duties of parenthood, common residence for husband, wife and children are reciprocal economic obligations between husband and wife.

The family is seen as the main pillar block of a community; family structure and upbringing influence the social character and personality of any given society. Family is where everybody learns to love, to care, to be compassionate, to be ethical, to be honest, to be fair, to have common sense, to use reasoning etc., values which are essential for living in a community. Yet, there are ongoing debates that families’ values are in decline. Moreover, the same family is viewed as an ‘oppressive and bankrupt institution’.

George Peter Murdock (1949) defines the family as a universal institution. According to him, the family is a ‘social group characterized by common residence, economic corporation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship and one or more children owned or adopted of the sexually cohabiting adults. However, K. Gough (1959) criticizes Murdock definition and argues that the family is not universal. The critics were founded in the Nayar society.

**Que 2; 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.

**(1) Stable satisfaction of Sexual needs:**

This is the most important essential function of family. Family has been performing this function 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 behavior of its 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.

#### (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.

**(3) Provision of Home:**

Family perform 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. All the members need a home to live happily with comfort, peace and protection. A home provides emotional and psychological support to all its members. Man’s necessity of love and human response got fulfilled here. Family provides recreation to its 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) Secondary functions of family:

Famous Sociologist MacIver 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. In the then days family was self- sufficient. But now a days almost all the economic functions of family is performed by other agencies and family only remain as a consumption unit. It does not produce anything. All the members of family now working outside the home.

But in spite of all family still performing some economic functions of purchasing, protecting and maintaining property. It also equally distributes property among its members.

#### (2) Educational functions:

Family performs many educational functions for its members. As a 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. Of course, at present many of the educational functions of family are taken over by school, college and universities sill family continues to play an important role in providing the first lessons and primary education to its members.

#### (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 a 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 looks 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.

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.

#### (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.

Family organize different festivals which is another source of recreation. The relationship between grandparents and grandchildren is another source of entertainment. After day’s work all the members used” to assemble and exchange their view. Of course, 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.

#### (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.

**Que 3; The African 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 polygamy. 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 which is the legal marriage of one man to two or more women concurrently – is permitted. This author argues that because of its perversity, 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. The Baganda people of Uganda provide the best illustration.

In the late and early 19th century, a detailed study conducted among the Baganda 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 for the Baganda. Commoners had two or three, chiefs had dozens, and the Kings had hundreds of wives. What was the structure of the polygynous family?

Although among the Baganda, the nuclear family of the mother, father, and their children constitutes the smallest unit of the Baganda kinship system, the traditional family consists of several nuclear units held in association by a common father. Because the Baganda people are patrilineal, the household family also includes other relatives of the father such as younger unmarried or widowed sisters, aged parents, and children of the father’s clan sent to be brought up by him. Included in this same bigger household will be servants, female slaves, and their children. The father remains the head of the nuclear family units.

Having so many people in this household should not be confused with other types of large families like, ’the joint’ family, with its several married brothers and their families living together or the ‘extended’ family, consisting of a group of married off spring living in one household under a patriarch or matriarch. The Baganda are also patrilocal. Therefore, the new families tend to generally live near or with the husband’s parents.

**Que 4; 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. My nuclear family is made up of my dad, my mum and my 3 siblings

Que 5; draw your family tree

