

What is family?

Family is defined as a specific group of people that may be made up of partners, children, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins and grandparents. An example of a family is a set of parents living with their children. The definition of family is the group of people who share common ancestors. It can also be defined as group of people who are closely related to one another (by blood, marriage or adoption); kin; for example, a set of parents and their children;

Functions of a Family

The functions of a family are so diverse that it is divided into two namely;

Primary functions

Secondary Functions

PRIMARY FUNCTIONS

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 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. Ancient Hindu Philosopher Manu and Vatsyana 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 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.

Secondary functions of a 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. 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 do 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 distribute property among its members.

(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 moulds 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 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.

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 it's 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 grand children 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

African Traditional Family

The African Traditional Family is otherwise known as the Extended/wider family as it comprises more people. Natives says at “for African people the family has a much wider circle of members than the word suggests in Europe or North America. In traditional society, the family includes children, parents, grandparents, uncles, aunts, brothers and sisters who may have their own children and other immediate relatives” . The relationships within extended family would be based on kinship (biological or putative blood relationship) and affinity (relationship between blood relationships of one marriage partner and those of the other marriage partner). Such a family would include adopted and fostered children.

In the traditional society polygamous marriages were a preferred form of marriage. Such marriages contributed to the extension of relationships of the family by incorporating more people. researchers assert that a wider family would include the deceased members of the family as well as those who are yet unborn. The unborn children were an important element in such a family, because they were assuring the survival of the family.

The members of the extended family could live together in a traditional compound consisting of several houses, live close to one another or be separated by some distance. In case of geographic separation, they would gather together to make important decisions concerning the family. Usually the members of the wider family would belong exclusively either to a paternal or maternal descent.

My Nuclear Family

My nuclear family is made up of my father, Mother and myself and my four siblings

Family Tree

