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**Level: 100 level**

**Matric. No. : 19/law01/064**

**College: Law**

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**Course: Sociology(SOC 102)**

1. What is a family?

A family refers to people related by blood or genetic bonds. They usually have the same values and share the same ancestors.

1. Discuss the functions of the family.

Procreation of children is the primary biological function of a family. Children born to a lawfully wedded couple only receive legitimacy from society. Thus, it is the family which ensures the continuity of human race.

It is the responsibility of a family to provide basic needs to its mem­bers. These include food, shelter, clothing, health and education. The head of the family, whether male or female, is expected to provide these to the members till they attain adulthood.

In the changing times the functions of family are fast getting new dimensions. Even the Trobrianders living in isolated islands are taking to modernization. In our country too, the tribals residing in inaccessi­ble areas have been witnessing a transformation.

Traditional occupations are changing, and education has given a new worldview to these isolated peoples. In such a situation the family has taken up new challenges and new functions.

1. Discuss the African Traditional family.

Family plays a central role in African society. It shapes such daily experiences as how and where individuals live, how they interact with the people around them, and even, in some cases, whom they marry. It can determine a person's political identity and the way money and property are transferred. In rural areas, the family typically remains the basic unit of agricultural production.

However, no single type of family exists in Africa. Societies have defined family in many different ways, and many bear little resemblance to the Western idea of the nuclear family.

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.

Relationships of Descent

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. Among some peoples in the Congo Basin, for example, a man could sell his sister's child into slavery.

Relationships of Affinity

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 polygynous—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, neighbors, 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.

Households

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 greatgrand-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. 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.

1. Discuss your nuclear family.

The Nuclear Family is a family consisting of a husband, a wife and their unmarried children.My family is a nuclear family; I have a mother, father and sisters who live at home.. Since I have heterosexual parents I am inexperienced with what it would be like to have same-sex parents. The roles within my family are mixed. The roles are mostly shared and both of my parents help around the house. My parents both support my sister and I and they both go to work as well as take care of us. Family and culture are major social constructions that have influenced me. Family is a major social institution in our society that controls how children are brought up, and are taught how to behave and act in the world. It is a major support system, and a guide to be introduced into our society.

1. Draw your family tree.

My Dad