

Family and Society

Introduction

Family is referred to a basic unit of the society and the social structure, the precise definition of which can differ largely from time to time and from culture to culture. How a society defines family as a primary group, and the tasks it expects from the families to perform, are by no means continuous. There has been much modern discussion on the nuclear family, which comprises only of parents and children, but the nuclear family is by no means universal. There has been prevalence of nuclear family system within the society, but in majority of the cases, nuclear families give rise to joint families, when children get married and stay with their parents. In pre-industrial societies, the ties of kinship bind the individual both to the family of orientation, into which one is born, and to the family of procreation, which one forms at marriage and which often includes one's spouse's relatives (The Indian Family System, n.d.).

The nuclear family also may be extended through the acquisition of more than one spouse, or through the common residence of two or more married couples and their children or of several generations connected in the male or female line. This is known as the extended family; it is prevalent in many parts of the world, by no means entirely in pastoral and agricultural economies. The primary functions of the family are reproductive, economic, social, and educational in nature; it is through the kin itself variously defined that the child first gets acquainted with the culture of his group (The Indian Family System, n.d.).

Sociological Significance of the Family

The sociological significance of the family is an imperative area that is needed to be understood. It is regarded as the foundation of human society. Family contributes an important part in the formation of a human society, because men, women and children are bind in a relationship only through family. Within their family, they learn various kinds of cultures, norms and values that individuals are required to practice in order to become an efficient member of the community. For instance, parents of a person teaches him, that he should always interact with people in a polite manner, he should always treat others with respect, kindness and courtesy. When he understands these values in his family, only then he is able to implement them efficiently within the society (Family, n.d.).

There are two types of families to which an individual belongs, one is the family of orientation, which consists of his parents and siblings and the other is the family of procreation, which consists of his spouse and children. Family of a person is a significant area that would lead to his or her productive existence. The acquisition of good educational qualifications, job opportunities, values, norms, cultural traits and settlement is provided to an individual by his family members. Family is regarded to be the basic unit of the social organization (Family, n.d.).

Characteristics of the Family

The characteristics of the family have been stated as follows: (Family, n.d.).

Universality – Family as a social unit is universal, there is not a single society in the world where a family is not found, and hence, it is a worldwide concept. It is vital to understand the reason behind the universality of the family, the main reason is family performs many functions, which are imperative for the individual as well as the society. The biological, economic, social and psychological functions are performed by the family so they have become necessary for everyone, these functions are vital for the existence of an individual and family is a unit through which a person gets acquainted with these functions.

Emotional Basis – Family members are emotionally bound to each other, they provide all the care, affection and protection for each other and are always willing to make sacrifices for each other's wellbeing. For the existence of an individual, it is always necessary for the individuals to make contacts and communications with the other people, such as teachers, fellow students, supervisors, colleagues, employers, friends, neighbours and other community people. The dealings, workings and interactions of an individual with these individuals are always influenced by the family members, the family provides instruction, direction and guidance to a person about how to deal with the outside world.

Limited Size – The families are mostly limited in their size, they also vary in their sizes. Normally a family consists of husband, wife and their unmarried children. The number of children within the household usually varies, they may be one, two or more. Marriage is a concept that leads to extension of the family, when there are male children within the household, they grow up, get married and form their families, then nuclear family emerges into the joint family system. The joint family is a family system, which consists of grandparents, parents, aunts, uncles, cousins, siblings, all