
UNIT 1 CONCEPT OF FAMILY LIFE

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1.0 OBJECTIVES

In this unit you are invited to read and learn about the basics of family life. One of the expectations of the course on 'Social Work in Family Setting' is that certain basic concepts pertaining to family are clarified. After reading this unit you will be able to:

- understand the concept to family as a basic unit of society;
- meaning of family, importance of marriage and relationships; and
- concept of family values and bonding.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Family has been regarded as the cornerstone of society by many social thinkers. Marriage between an adult man and an adult woman is the basis of the formation of a family from time immemorial. It is in the family that children are born, cared, reared and provided education on life. Over the years, global societies have witnessed shifts in family patterns. Radical changes are being brought into lifestyles through progress and reforms. The recent phenomenon of globalisation and consumerism has created diversity of family and household forms. Along with these changes, social problems and personal difficulties continue to increase and multiply.

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It would be unimaginable for earlier generations to understand the extent of changes taking place in the areas of family life and life styles in many of our advanced countries. For people in several countries, the world of family looks very different than it was before World War II. However, the institutions of family and marriage continue to exist as basics of social organisation. In this unit, we shall discuss in detail the concept and meaning of marriage and family as primary institutions of social life in the Indian context. Although dramatic changes in the character of family can be seen in several societies abroad, most Indians hold on to the traditional family life, culture and traditions. It is bound to stay for a longer period for many more generations to come. Therefore, it is apt that we examine the basics of family life and its richness in forming responsible citizens of our society.

1.2 THE SOCIAL INSTITUTIONS OF FAMILY AND MARRIAGE

Family is the basic unit of any society. Family consists of father, mother and children. The stability of family life with parents and children is fundamental to all human society and its long-term survival. The sacredness of marriage, its permanence and its mutuality of love are the major forces for preserving this basic unit in society everywhere across the globe. Much discussion is taking place in many societies and cultures about the primacy of individual rights that outweigh any other consideration. The initiatives to promote common good of society based on mutual obligations and less emphasis on individual rights are slowly getting diminished. The process is moving towards a total emphasis on individual freedom and choice in this era of consumerism and globalisation without due consideration of the negative consequences it can have on the traditional and oldest social institutions of marriage and family. Such a process will also have negative consequences on community life and long term survival of nations that depend on mutual obligations and responsibilities to ensure stability and peace.

Basic Concepts

Before we proceed with further discussion on these important and essential social institutions, it is apt that we define the basic concepts of family, kinship and marriage.

Family

Many sociologists have regarded the family as the bedrock of society. According to George Peter Murdoc, ‘the family is a social group characterised by common residence, economic co-operation and reproduction. It includes adults of both sexes, at least two of whom maintain a socially approved sexual relationship, and one or more children, own or adopted, of the sexually co-habiting adults.’ As per this definition, the family members live together, produce offspring, work together, and pool resources together. The sexual relationships and reproduction of the offsprings by the male and female adults take place as per the norms of their particular society.

According to Anthony Giddens, ‘a family is a group of persons directly linked by kin connections, the adult members of which assume responsibility of caring for children’. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English describes family as a ‘set of parents and children’ or ‘the members of a household, especially parents and their children’. The United

States Bureau of the Census defines a family as two or more people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption and who live together.

The Vanier Institute of the Family (2004) defines family in a way consistent with traditional anthropological and sociological definitions of family. Family isany combination of two or more persons who are bound together over time by ties of mutual consent, birth and/or adoption or placement and who, together, assume responsibilities for variant combinations of some of the following:

- Physical maintenance and care of member,
- Addition of new members through procreation or adoption,
- Socialisation of children,
- Social control of members,
- Production, consumption, distribution of goods and services, and
- Affective nurturance-love (Karraker, Meg Eilkes & Grochowski, Janet R., 2006).

Kinship

The dictionary meaning of kinship is 'blood relationship'. Kinship can be of two types: (i) through marriage relationships and (ii) through lines of descent that connect blood relatives such as from the side of the father and mother, siblings, offsprings, etc. Therefore kinship comprises either genetic lines or lines initiated through marriage. In short, family is a group of kin.

The child may take the status of parents soon after its birth as it is in the case of caste or race. It may acquire the parental status sometimes later as it is in the case of succession or inheritance. The later one is often referred to as the process of "delayed ascription". Further the child in its later life may seek to acquire some achieved status that is different from those of parent. The relative advantages or disadvantages that the child enjoys in securing these statuses are mostly provided by his parents. For example, the son of an upper-class man has greater access in academic field than the son of a poor- class man. This is also true in the case of open-class occupational placement. This is often referred to as "fluid ascription". Here the element of achievement does not completely dismiss the element of ascription (Shankar Rao, C.N, 2001).

It is true that a number of important statuses of the child are dependent on the factor of kinship. The ascription of citizenship, religious affiliation, and community membership in most cases are a matter of identification with parents. The class or the caste position is transmitted from parents to the child. Due to kinship ties the child acquires not only a status in larger society but also a position in the family. The child acquires the status as a son or daughter. To his parents' kinsmen he may be a grandson, nephew, a brother, a cousin or a son. Mutual rights and obligations go along with kinship connections. Even in the modern society, if not extended kinship ties, the immediate family ties remain socially important. In some societies much of social life is governed by them (Shankar Rao, C.N, 2001).

MARRIAGE IS...

What is marriage? It's a union, first of all. It's a uniting, two hearts becoming one. Marriage is companionship and friendship. It's being together, acting together, doing things together, and not wanting it any other way.

Marriage is understanding. It's being blind to the fault of the other. It's being considerate in every way-considerate of the other's time, feelings, and desires.

Marriage is caring. It's being concerned. It's going out of your way to make sure the other person is well cared for. Marriage is kindness. It's saying kind words and putting those words into action.

Marriage is support. It's supporting your mate in their endeavours, in their projects, in good times and bad. It's giving them moral support, physical support, prayer support, all around support. It's cheering them on and encouraging them when they feel down. Marriage is stooping to lift the other. It's being strong when the other is weak. Marriage is protecting your mate from harm, physical and emotional.

Marriage is provision. It's doing your part to make sure the other has their needs met. It's pulling your share of the load. Marriage is hard work day after day. It's going out of your way to meet the needs of your mate in whatever way you can, even if you don't feel like it. Marriage is lending a helping hand.

*Marriage is sacrifice. It's giving of yourself for the one you love. It's being ready to give up your own ideas or desires to make your mate happy. It's giving and giving and giving again. **Marriage is yielding, bending, melting together.** Marriage is going the extra mile. Marriage is compassion. It's preferring the happiness of another to your own.*

Marriage is give and take. Marriage is taking turns; it's not one sided. Marriage is submission. It's giving the other person a chance. Marriage is living and loving and helping one another. Marriage is learning from one another. Marriage is humbling.

Marriage is being open-minded. Marriage is walking a mile in another's shoes. Marriage is listening and understanding.

Marriage is being there for the other in bad times as well as the good. Married love stands through thick and thin, no matter how hot the trials or how hard the test. Married love never loses hope. It's always there, always dependable, always ready with outstretched hands and open arms to take the other in- to love, to comfort, to hold, and to cherish. Marriage is learning to let the little things pass.

Marriage is communicating honestly and openly. It's being willing to humbly share your heart and deepest thoughts. Marriage is talking, praying, discussing, and agreeing together. Marriage does not let things build up between you by ignoring the other, but rather finds a way; it creates solutions. Marriage is joining hand in hand, heart to heart.

Marriage is discovery. It's discovering each other, learning about each other and all the funny things you say and do. Marriage is a good sense of humour. It's relaxing together, enjoying

each other.

Marriage is respect. Marriage is having faith in each other. Marriage is accepting another for what they are. Marriage is coming to the realization that you are not complete without your other half.

Marriage can be the most satisfying and strengthening experience you will ever have.

David Brandt Berg

Marriage

The Oxford Dictionary describes marriage as ‘the legal union of man and a woman in order to live together and often to have children’. It is a legal union which has the sanction of the society, the state and the religion (for those who believe and/or practice religion). Marriage is between a man and a woman and not between a boy and a girl. Every society (nation) has prescribed norms which define adulthood. In India the prescribed age for marriage is 18 years and 21 years respectively for a female and a male. Marriage is a social institution which allows the married man and woman to live together as husband and wife. It is expected that men and women marry not only to live together, but also to have children. According to Anthony Giddens, marriage can be defined as a socially acknowledged and approved sexual union between two adult individuals.

Interrelationship between Family, Kinship and Marriage

The family, centered on marriage, is the basic unit of society. Healthy marriages and families are the foundation of thriving communities.

When a man and a woman marry, they become kin to one another. This marriage bond connects together a wider range of people. Parents, grandparents, brothers, sisters, uncles, aunts and other blood relatives become relatives of the partner through marriage. Marriage is a stable and healthy union of bonding between a man and a woman who become husband and wife for the rest of their lives. This marital union guarantees the birth of children and a stable and caring environment for them.

Family relationships are found within wider kinship groups. Usually we find two common forms of families based on the number of members namely, (i) nuclear family and (ii) extended family or joint family. Nuclear family comprises of the father, mother and children (own or adopted). In extended or joint families we can find more members who are blood relatives such as grandparents, parents, brothers and sister of parents, their spouses, children, grand children and so on. There is a steady growth of old age homes in urban centers in India as a result of two reasons : (i) tendency to have small family norm (of having less children) and (ii) due to the migration of children (adults) to far-away places within and outside the country in search of job or to live with the spouse.

Check Your Progress I

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Define 'family'.

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1.3 CONCEPT OF FAMILY IN UN DECLARATIONS

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations in 1948 was a conquest for humanity. This declaration is based on the dignity of the person, and promotes and defends the respect for people of various nations and for every one of their members. This Declaration of Human Rights is the authoritative basis for all subsequent Human Rights Conventions and documents. The right to marry for any man and woman of full age (adult) is defined as a fundamental human right. The family is defined as the natural and fundamental group unit of society and is entitled to protection by society and state. The opening sentence of the preamble to the declaration states that these human rights are 'inherent' and 'inalienable', and stem from our human dignity. It may be noted that:

- These human rights have human dignity as their basis.
- They cannot be changed by political will or majority decisions.
- They are natural laws, pre-political and apolitical.
- They supersede national laws and no nation can enact laws that change this.
- This UN declaration is the source of all human rights documents, and protects the natural family based on biology.
- There is a right to marry for adult men and women, and to form a family (Art. 16).
- The family is the fundamental unit of society and is entitled to privileges and political protection.
- The formulations on the family and children's rights are repeated in legally binding conventions such as European Court of Human Rights (ECHR1950), and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966).

Family is the pre-eminent, most favorable and irreplaceable place for the recognition and development of a person as the person evolves on his/her way to complete dignity. It is in the family that the first steps in human development are initiated and the process of education and promotion of human being starts. An individual who does not receive this initial orientation in the family will be greatly hampered in achieving the human fullness which he/she is expected to achieve as a person.

Family is the basis of society. Respect for human rights is necessary for human development of persons in the society. These human development values include life itself, health, knowledge, work, the community, religion and culture. Family is the smallest community of persons. The values essential to the family can only be achieved when a man and a woman give themselves to one another totally in marriage, accept a community of love and life, are willing to fully accept the gift of new life in procreation and accept the responsibility of educating the offspring.

Parents give the child a home in which the child can grow and develop. All the rights that are necessary by nature for the development of the person in his/her wholeness become real in the family in the most effective way. The family, by its very nature, is a subject of rights, the foundational element of human society, and the most necessary force in the full development of the human person. The importance of the family's social mediation is undeniable. Family is the 'sanctuary of life'. It is more than any other human reality, a place where an individual can exist for himself/herself through the gift of self.

If the family is protected and privileged by human rights, they are valid in all places and at all times. The survival of a society depends on the strong institutions of marriage and family. If the traditional family structure disappears slowly from the society, people will no longer know what they mean when they talk about 'family'. Therefore, the family should not in any way lose its privileged political support. If it loses it, society will be eroded from within. The historical concept of family should not be allowed to disappear. If it does, it would be difficult to sustain this existing concept of society for longer.

There are attempts to redefine the concept of family at national and international levels. There are also initiatives in the legal judicial as well as parliamentary arena. Such efforts also draw power from public debate. It must be understood that political majorities cannot change human rights. They are inalienable and inherent. These rights belong to the human being because of his/her dignity and not because some political body granted them. Human rights are the rights to which everyone is entitled irrespective of who they are or where they are.

Attempts to re-define family

In several countries, the concept of a 'family' is redefined to include (with equal legal status as the traditional father-mother-children family) same-sex unions with or without adopted children, single parent with own or adopted children, children born out of wedlock (and not widow/widower), live-in couples or co-habitation and even to the extent of adoption of animals.

Social legitimacy does not necessarily have anything to do with legal legitimacy. It should be equally obvious that no political majority or minority can change the rights of the most

vulnerable in the society, i.e., the children. It is not appropriate to agree to the view of law in some smaller countries, that law must reflect the reality of social practices and the will of the majority on every issue. For example, it is estimated that over 50 per cent of Norwegian children are born out of wedlock. Statistically this fact can become the norm. In fact, there are arguments by pressure groups in some smaller nations that some of the international rights contradict their national public opinion and practices.

Children and their 'safe haven', the family, must not be manipulated or compromised in political and legal process for their own sake and for the sake of safeguarding international human rights. There must be no confusion about what a family is, and about children's rights. Children have the rights that adults do not have and these rights precede the rights of adults. A shift in political focus away from adult 'rights' to marry and form a family, to children's rights to parents and stable family life would also entail that the extreme individualist focus would have to be toned down.

The importance of families

The individuals and their families adapt a multiple of structure to meet the emotional, financial, and other needs of family members. Wald (2001:1) summarizes the significance of marriage and family for individuals in the following statement:

Being able to marry can contribute significantly to the emotional and economic well being of couples. Living with married parents provides a number of benefits and protections to children. Society benefits when people choose to marry.....promoting the emotional and economic well being of adults; enhancing the capacity of parents to promote the well being of children; and promoting stable relationships (Karraker, Meg Eilkes & Grochowski, Janet R., 2006).

As a child steps in this world, the first individuals he comes across are his family members. Family is the first place for an individual in this world. Starting from childhood until old age, a child learns everything from its family. It is a place where moral values are taught and the spiritual and cultural heritage of society is passed on. Family members are always available, whenever one needs them. They always support each other in different ways whether it is financial or moral.

Check Your Progress II

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answer with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) What are the major characteristics of the UN Declaration of Human Rights?

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1.4 FAMILY LIFE IN INDIAN CONTEXT

Society is an aggregation of small communities of families which live together and co-operate with one another to ensure their own growth and survival. Family is the smallest community of people consisting of an adult male and a female who make free agreement through the institution of marriage to live together, have children, rearing and educating them. These are also functions for which parents need the help of other families particularly from the kinship circles and the society at large.

The traditional Indian family still continues to be a 'joint family'. When sons and daughters (matrilineal) get married, they do not leave their family. They continue to live in it with the spouse and children. The joint family works as a clan in which each member knows his/her role and counts on the solidarity and support of other members in times of need. The father/mother (as the case may be) gets the respect and obedience from children and grandchildren. His/her authority reigns supreme. Although majority of the families in India belong to the patrilineal pattern, there are certain groups such as the Nairs in Kerala and the Khasi in Meghalaya who traditionally follow the matrilineal pattern.

In most Indian homes, parents are responsible for finding a partner for their child. This is usually seen as a sacred duty. In very few situations, do young people find their own partners. Most often such marriages are found more among the educated urban dwellers than the less educated ruralites. In arranged marriage, the parents take into consideration family background, financial, social, religious and educational status of the 'would-be' son/daughter in law. Thus the marriage involves the full participation of two families and children usually accept the choice of their parents with trust.

With the influence of better education and job opportunities and exposure to electronic media, youngsters do not accept blindly the authority of their parents. They are searching for more freedom and independence. Regarding selection of partners, young people of today tend to demand more freedom to express their desires and to make their own decisions.

With the fast changing social scenario as a result of industrialisation, urbanisation, consumerism, exposure to electronic media and availability of better professional and vocational education, the pattern of family life is also undergoing changes. Such changes are also affecting towns and villages across the country. With these changes, a new type of family life is emerging which is more independent and striving to become more self-sufficient.

More women are getting educated. More women are also taking up jobs outside than within family set up. Many of them prefer to marry at an older age than in the past. Women are also becoming more conscious of their dignity and want to be more independent and responsible in the family and society. They want to have a say in the matters of the family and decision making and often long for a career outside the family. In fact, a large number of legislations

are being enacted to improve the social conditions of women in India including their political participation at local, state and national levels.

Value System

India has a rich value system. This traditional value system is still important and should not be allowed to die out easily. Although there are pressure groups and issues associated with consumerism and expansion of electronic media which influence the lifestyles of people, we should not let ourselves be overtaken by such influences. Much havoc was done in the western countries, America and Australia, by the liberation ideologies of 1960s and 1970s which advocated freedom of sex, individual satisfaction over common good, feminism and the challenges on the very existence of traditional family system. As a result, many societies across the globe faced the breakdown of traditional family system. New models began to appear such as single parent families, people living together without marital contracts, cohabitation, same sex unions, divorced and re-married with children of previous marriage, grandparents living with grand children, emergence of old age homes, orphanages and destitute homes, addiction families, expansion of sex industry, sex shops, pornography and sex tourism. All these initiatives have caused much damage to the rich old customs and practices, morality, principles of life, character and value system.

New models of family life and relationships are necessary to meet the needs and expectations of new generation. It may not be wise to confront the youth of today with ready-made customs, practices and family patterns of the past. However, it is very important and necessary to educate them about the positive aspects of decent life, morality, brotherhood, regard for parents and elders, correct meaning and purpose of sex, marriage and family life. This will enable them to find new ways to practice the traditional values in harmony with the modern times.

Trends Challenging Values

Global society has been facing tremendous threats on its value system from certain groups, events and developmental initiatives which have far reaching impact. It is a matter of pride that by and large the Indian democracy has managed to withstand such threats and preserve its rich values and culture and traditional practices. This huge democracy of over one thousand million people is proving to be a model and hope for the rest of the world as far as preservation of value system is concerned. More and more women are getting educated, taking up jobs, and are involved in the political and socio-economic development of the country. Certainly the women empowerment process also has brought about lot of positive and negative trends in the country. Yet the overwhelming majority continues to remain steadfast in their lifestyle and preserve the family values, moral values and religious practices.

The advancements in science, education, media technology and influence of the western lifestyles have made some impact on the Indian society. As a result, certain unethical practices which challenge the age old value system also have crept into our society. This has increased the percentage of pre-marital and extra marital sex, teenage pregnancies and abortion, prostitution, mental illness, drug addiction, divorce, various sexual orientation, single parent households, suicides and demand for euthanasia. Although all these are part of today's society, the influence

it makes through the media tends to corrupt young people, which is thought to be disastrous for the society. In order to counter this deteriorating trend, there is a need to educate people about the consequences of such social problems. It is also necessary that we record some of the fading values which will serve as a reminder for the younger generations to come.

Family is Universal

Family has been seen by sociologists as a universal social institution. It is an inevitable part of human society. Generally, family has been regarded as a good thing for the individual as well as for the society. For the individual, family life is a must for survival, growth and a meaningful life in the society. Survival and sustainability of the society depends on the humans born and brought up as good citizens in the family. Therefore, any consideration for evolving alternatives to family would not be desirable. We have seen the women's liberation movements which began in the 1960s in Europe and America. Some of the feminist writers went to the extent of condemning family as an institution. Although such initiatives shook the foundations of family and its traditional view, hardly any positive outcome was noticed. In fact, the contribution of such initiatives brought about much chaos in the society which witnessed the increase in divorce rates, decline in moral values, destitution of the aged and children, sexual promiscuity and 'individual considerations' over 'common good' of the society. To sum up, break down of family leads to the breakdown of the society and continuation of human survival.

1.5 RELATIONSHIP AND BONDING IN FAMILY LIFE

Relationship and bonding are central to family life. Change in family and household composition has brought about shift in expectations of people from their relationships. Today relationship has become something active and not something which has been taken for granted. One has to work it out. It depends on winning the trust of the other person. In fact sustainability of most sexual relationships and marriages in developed countries depends on this shift in expectations from the partner. Relationship depends on the extent of communication and collaboration between people. Emotional communication is part and parcel of sexual relationship; love between spouses and between parents and their children. Although much transformation has taken place in developed nations, the traditional Indian society has not changed much. There is much bonding and very healthy relationship existing within families and between families both in urban and rural areas. However, one can also observe the influence of the western culture or life style gaining momentum in the Indian sub-continent.

The most important recipe for the success and sustainability of marriage and family life is healthy relationship and to be able to bond permanently. The ability to bond depends on the early experience of reliable love. A child who has never doubted the commitment of both the parents to each other and to himself/herself will naturally develop trust and openness.

In many parts of the world there are attempts to present sex as an activity with little regard to the relationship. Such attempts offend the dignity of the human being. In fact it strikes at the

heart of marital relationship. In course of time, it will undermine the family and ultimately the society.

Family life education is intended to help young people in exploring the meaning of human person, expressing oneself through a unique body in its intrinsically masculine and feminine form. Through one's body a person can live out to the fullest his/her highest calling: "To love". A family cannot come into existence without biological union that results in offspring. Only a female can conceive with the cooperation and sharing of a male. A child must necessarily have a father and a mother and a home to grow. This is the fact and the experience of all societies from time immemorial. This concept presents sexual union in marriage as an extraordinary act of total giving of self that has the potential to co-create a new human being. A true relationship leads to a meaningful and fruitful life.

Motherhood, Fatherhood and Parenthood

We know that natural law and divine nature assume the existence of a fixed human nature, consisting of two sexes (eunuchs are exceptions), where family is a natural and constant institution in human and social life. Motherhood and fatherhood are therefore constants and the family cannot be re-defined. It exists as a norm in all societies except in cases which differ from this norm due to widowhood or single parent families as a result of divorce or separation. In fact, motherhood and fatherhood exist as archetypes of human existence with much more than mere biological qualities.

There is no recognition of what a mother is unless one has personal experience of a 'real mother' naturally in relation to her children. Similarly, fatherhood can be known only through lived experience in a family setting.

Parenthood is different from motherhood and fatherhood. There are many child fathers and child mothers. Human being is the only living creature that lacks built-in mechanism to guide most aspects of one's behaviour. One has to use relationships with others in order to develop talents, skills and ideas. This is an essential condition for growth towards personal maturity. Family is the first environment which helps a person to relate oneself to others with natural love and cooperation. With the entry of a person of the opposite sex into one's life, a new kind of relationship and experience is developed which finds fulfillment in marriage. Together they learn to leave behind the 'I' and 'you' and think of themselves as 'we'. A trust and understanding grows. They become more open to each other, revealing and sharing more of their inner being, feelings, values and choices.

Every person is meant to be born in a family and called upon to build a new family. Only by accepting family life and its responsibilities seriously a person can learn to reach out to others in love, respect and with a sense of service. The joys and worries of planning, conceiving and bringing up children and social tasks and duties of family, compel the couple to forget self and become more involved with others. Therefore, we may say that a responsible parenthood is the real parenthood. One has to be responsible to oneself, family, spouse, children and the society.

Culture of Life

There is a need for a strategy and rationale for promoting family life because of the new trend which calls for greater 'individual rights'. There is a demand for individual right based on privacy, convenience and some even go to the extent of demanding the same under fundamental rights. The call for 'rights of individual' overshadows concern for common good.

Denying the rights of the terminally ill to choose death over life is not inhuman. The Indian constitution and legislations do not permit euthanasia. Similarly protecting the 'right to life' of an unborn child should not be considered as violence against women. It is the duty and responsibility of parents and young people to protect human life from conception to natural death. In abortion a weak and defenseless child is brutally murdered by those who are supposed to love and care for the child most: the parents and health care professionals.

Many young people are unaware that at conception a new life is formed. Conception takes place at the moment of fertilization, i.e., the moment when the father's sperm and mother's egg cell meet. People with vested interest may make various interpretations. Scientifically one thing is clear: conception refers to fertilization and not implantation. Implantation takes place about five days after fertilization. The zygote starts to grow as any other living being. It is human because the chromosomes combined at fertilization are that of the human father and human mother and not of any other living being. There are several anti-life forces at work in the world who try to put forward justification for violation of human rights by them and rationale for their struggle on preference for individual rights over common good.

It is therefore apt that we teach the young people a culture of life in the face of such public opposition through false propaganda about individual freedom to abort or to take life (euthanasia). Freedom is a divine gift and to live to its demands fully is our responsibility. It is a fact that there are various sexual orientations among people of various cultures. We have to understand how society perceives it. Also, due to change in family structure, there are less number of children in families and an increase in aging population.

In order to preserve a value based society, there is a need to promote a 'culture of life' and not a 'culture of death'. We need to have a culture of life in which virtues are cultivated.

The ability to bond requires a culture which allows the young man and young woman to wait until a commitment is made before embarking upon sexual intimacy. The wounds and emotional scarring caused by the casual experimentation into which young people are led deprives them, to a great extent, of the possibility of permanent bonding. Commitment and waiting for the right person to whom to commit are at the base of a stable and happy sexuality, marital life and strong family bonding.

In order to preserve the rich heritage and values of the traditional Indian family, there is a need to collaborate with broader community for stable and healthy family life. There is also a need to encourage governments and various social systems to have an open policy to promote stable family life keeping in view the needs of the society.

Check Your Progress III

Note: a) Use the space provided for your answer.

b) Check your answers with those provided at the end of this unit.

1) Name the section in the Indian Penal Code that deals with homosexuality.

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1.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have discussed the concept of family life from various angles. The UN Declaration of Human Rights 1948 and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child 1989 are two international documents which reflect the thinking of the world community about the concept and importance of family. The UN declaration has defined family as the natural and fundamental group unit of society which is entitled to protection by society and state. We have also examined some of the efforts by various pressure groups to re-define the concept of family which may enable certain sections of society to enjoy the state benefits which are available to natural and traditional family. One of the important areas of discussion in this unit is about the social institutions of family and marriage and the inter-relationship between family, kinship and marriage. Another area of discussion is on family life in the Indian context. The traditional Indian family still continues to be a joint family where the children and the aged continue to receive protection and care—a phenomenon which is declining in several nations. An attempt is also made to discuss about family values and the changing trends in values as a result of the fast changing social scenario across the globe. Relationship and bonding have been described as a recipe for the success and sustainability of marriage and family life. The discussion ends with an examination of the balance between ‘a culture of life’ and ‘a culture of death’.

1.7 KEY WORDS

- Euthanasia** : The bringing about of a gentle and easy death in case of incurable and painful disease often by removing life support system.
- Family** : The members of a household, especially parents and their children.

Kinship	:	Blood relationship through marital relationship or through lines of descent that connect blood relatives.
Marriage	:	The legal union of a man and a woman recognised by the society in order to live together and often to have children.

1.8 SUGGESTED READINGS

Familia Et Vita (2004), Vol VI, No. 3, 2001, Vol VII, No. 2-3, 2002, Vol VIII, No. 1-2, 2003 and Vol IX, No. 1-2.

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1.9 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress I

- 1) The family can be defined as a primary group which consists at least of two adults of opposite sex along with children, natural and adopted.

Check Your Progress II

- 1) Human rights are based on human dignity of the person and are inherent and inalienable. They are natural and are applicable in all human situations. The family is seen as a fundamental unit of society.

Check Your Progress III

- 1) Sec. 377 of Indian Penal Code.