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## UNIT 2      FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION – CONCEPT AND MEANING

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### 2.0 OBJECTIVES

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The aim of this lesson is to acquaint you with the concept and meaning of family life education. This will highlight how family life education is a value laden concept. This will also highlight its importance and scope in the present day context.

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- conceptualise and explain the meaning of family life education;
- analyse the relationship between the value system and family life education;
- appreciate the traditional Indian values as related to family life education;
- understand the needs for importance of family life education in an Indian household; and
- describe the scope of family life education.

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## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

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India has a long tradition of closely bonded family system. Today, however, some people argue that [modern] family as an institution is facing crisis. Let us take a more optimistic view. Families cannot be isolated from the impact of rapid social and technological changes, yet, they have ably demonstrated to turn difficulties into challenges by offering support and security to each of its members in a fast changing society.

Each family is identified with a unique sense of shared family traditions, shared experiences and continuity of behavioural patterns through generations. We believe that nurturing this quality of family contact and interaction becomes even more important in a time like today when many people feel lonely and rootless. Technological progress often contributes to development but sometimes it generates a sense of depersonalisation and deprivation from one's own identity. That is why family life education is essential and relevant in the present day context.

Every society over time has evolved its own ways of preparing its younger members for adulthood, primarily through an educational process. Traditionally, most elements of family life education have been informal, taking place within the home, at place of worship, at work and in day to day contacts with other people. In childhood, many values related to family life education have been imparted through stories from folk tales, epics, religious scriptures, etc. The hidden rationale behind these is to enable children to imbibe the right values for family life or to inculcate these values in them so that these act as guidelines for the rest of their lives.

In tribal communities, initiation ceremonies are performed which symbolise the entry of a child into adulthood. Thereafter, the child can have access to the knowledge and privileges that are permitted only to adults. On a similar note, in Southern India and many other parts of India, a ceremony is conducted at the age a girl enters puberty, which introduces her to all the intricacies related to family life education. So, through the process of socialisation, by observing people's behaviour and through their own experience, children and adolescents become familiar with the norms, customs and values of their own society. These experiences provide the guidelines for their own behaviour.

In the present context, families in many parts of the world are finding the task of helping young people to prepare for adult life increasingly difficult. Often it is found that they have as little awareness as their children about the problems they are facing. It is here that the role of schools and of voluntary organisations becomes important. These institutions replace traditional form of education and offer guidance to people to enable them to adjust to changes. The development of organised programs of family life education is one way of showing their willingness to work together with families, to assist young people in their transition from childhood to adulthood.

Very often it is observed that family life education is treated synonymous with sex education. In reality, however, family life education is a much broader concept. Sex education is only one of the components of family life education which also covers economic aspects, social aspects like marriage, responsible parenthood, besides aspects of sexual health. We will discuss all these things in detail under section 2.3. Like sex education, family life study is different from family life education.

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## 2.2 DEFINING FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

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Various international organisations and eminent persons working in the area of family life education have tried to define it in various ways. Some of the definitions are given below:

- 1) “Family life education refers to those educational concepts and experiences that influence attitudes towards family living, personal relationships and sexual development” (Department of Education, Virginia {USA}, 1978).
- 2) “One comprehensive and attractive approach perceives family life education as catering for individual needs leading to personal growth and enabling the individual to function as a responsible member of the family and society” (A curriculum on family education for youth organisation prepared by Malaysia Federation of Family Planning Association, 1985).
- 3) Family life education includes a study of self awareness, understanding of others, of sexuality, marriage and parenthood. The knowledge gained and skills developed will contribute to the individual’s ability to cope both with social change and with relationships in society as a citizen, spouse and parent. (*Formal definitions adopted at International Planned Parenthood Federation Seminar on Teachers and National Development with special reference to Family Life Education, Lesotho, 1978*).
- 4) Family life education may be defined as education for human development which seeks to ensure that each individual approaching adulthood is equipped with the skills and personal reserves to cope with the challenges of everyday life in society within acceptable societal structure and to adapt to change with experience and equilibrium (*Source: unknown*)

But none of these definitions seem to cover the entire aspect of family life education. The definition given by International Planned Parenthood Federation is closer to what we generally consider as family life education. All these definitions, however, ignored the economic factors involved in family life education.

Therefore, in this unit, we would like to describe family life education in the following way:

- The concept of family life education refers to a variety of formal and informal efforts by which persons become ready for the roles and responsibilities of family life.
- Rapid technological and social changes of today’s world have increased the need for individuals, families, and societies to enhance interpersonal and decision-making skills of each member of the family, especially those of the husband and wife, and reinterpret the meaning of mutual commitment, as well as maintain support for their economic self-sufficiency and emotional stability.
- Rising rates of marital breakdowns, family violence, falling indices of marital satisfaction and the time family members spend together suggest that people are either inadequately prepared or lack support in facing the challenges of marriage and of family life. Yet the sheer number of stable, satisfying, and growing marriages, especially, within the nuclear families, in the midst of personal and social pressures, and in spite of limited preparation

and support, suggests that many are seeking to build strong families. Likewise, improved relationship skills among the educated at high school, college, and in community setting, perhaps signal a growing desire to invest for the success in marital life by trying to avoid possible distrusts that are likely to arise within relationships.

### Meaning of Family Life Education

Family life education is a broad and flexible field. Anything which contributes to the total growth and well being of the family – physical, mental, emotional, economic, and spiritual – can be included under the umbrella of family life education. That is why family life education has its roots in many disciplines including sociology, social work, psychology, anthropology, biology, education and history. The goals of the programme are often broad based. Over all its objectives are to promote the freedom to choose parenthood and enrichment of human life.

Family life education is considered as a value related concept. Most of the values related to family life education are deeply rooted into the socio-cultural milieu of the people. The values are moral or ethical, cultural, religious, personal and social.

#### Check Your Progress I

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

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

1) Describe the meaning of family life education.

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## 2.3 CONTENTS OF FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

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The content of family life education are related to the needs of those for whom these are meant. It is vital to ask young people while preparing them for adult life regarding the type of educational input to be provided to them which will help them in taking decisions and developing their skills. This brings us to analyse various sub-components of family life education:

### Family: Meaning, Types and Functions

Family is the basic unit of society. Although social scientists have studied a great deal about various facets of family structures and organisation, they do encounter difficulties in

developing a broad, culture free generalisation that would be applicable to families in a wide range of societies. One major difficulty arises from the problems of definitions associated with the concept of “Family” itself. The important question of what constitutes a “Family” is not easy to answer because by itself the term “family” is ambiguous. To describe more precisely the concept of family, the types of families have to be examined.

Basically there are two types of families: the nuclear family and the extended family (joint family).

In extended family, parents, grandparents and even great grand parents live in the same house or in neighborhood. The family members of nuclear family, consists of a single family of husband, wife and children. This type of family is mostly found in urban and industrial societies. In some countries, young couples in a nuclear family setting are at a loss to whom to turn for advice in the absence of parents and elder relatives. Behavioural scientists refer to these as family discontinuities (e.g. first conception, birth of first child and so on.), family crises and other difficulties.

In terms of functions, the strength and solidarity of a society are highly dependent on how the family as a basic unit performs its basic functions. It is the responsibility of all members of a family to fulfill family functions, although parents generally shoulder a larger share of these functions. Failure on the part of the parents to perform their duties can lead to social problems for many generations to come. Social problems among children often can be traced back to the failure of parents/families to perform their functions. To have a truly happy family, the needs of each and every member must be met. These include the provision for basic needs of a person, which according to the Psychologist Abraham Maslow are: physiological, safety, love and belonging, self-esteem and self actualisation.

### **Family Roles, Relationships and Responsibilities**

People of other countries often express a surprise at the roles and relationship followed in an Indian family. They are surprised that in Indian family set-up, children below ten years of age too are expected to play important roles in socio-economic activities such as taking care of cows and buffaloes, collecting cow manure, fetching drinking water, washing clothes, taking care of their siblings and so on. It is also inconceivable to many of them that married children sometimes remain dependent on their parents and that aged parents too are dependent on their children.

In Indian settings, traditional family relationships are generally quite extensive. In addition, there are other types of family relationship, such as god-father god-son relationships and relationships arising from a network of inter- marriages between families. For instance, family ties are quite complicated as these are based not only on blood kinship but also on past associations as school mates, co-workers and so on. In short, family relationships are governed by various customs and traditions which are more binding than rules or laws.

A clear understanding of roles in the family is very important. Misinterpretation or lack of understanding leads to problems and sometimes to chaos. For any family to exist, there are certain tasks which must be performed by its members. The issue of roles within a family is further complicated by changes in the family system, that is, a change from extended to

nuclear/conjugal families. The participation of women in economic activities outside the home, the influence of western culture, access to higher education, opening up of the economy in general and related activities are affecting these changes.

## **Family Life Cycle**

A study of family life cycle provides a basis for the study of the composition, growth and development of families. An understanding of the stress and strains experienced at each stage of the cycle paves the way for better understanding and co-operation among family members. There are basically eight stages in family life cycle. These include the following:

### **Stage I: Bearing families**

At this stage, a couple learns to synchronize their ideas, habits, values and so on. The married partners are learning to live with each other for the first time. Differences are found to appear from time to time and it is important that a couple iron them out and establish a meaningful marriage.

### **Stage II: Child bearing families**

The couple enters this stage at the time of first conception. With the coming of a child, finance, leisure time, entertainment and privacy will undergo changes. Proper child care becomes very important at this stage. Attention is diverted or shared between the newcomer and the spouse.

### **Stage III: Families with pre-school children**

At this stage, parents need to cater for the critical needs and interests of pre- school children to stimulate their growth and development. By this time parents think about the question of having or not having more children. The energy depletion in homes where domestic help or help from relatives as in extended families is hard to come by is one major area of adjustment. It is common for women to assess that the demands of housekeeping, wage earning, mothering and being a wife are overwhelming on them. Husbands alone cannot afford any more to assume the traditional role of wage earner. They need to share the household work, and some may find this to be difficult. Misunderstanding between the couple can also result when too much attention is given to the children.

### **Stage IV: Families with school children**

Families with school going children have to pay attention to the child's education and growth needs. The parents are also expected to collaborate with the demands and expectations of the school in helping the child in his/her studies and in development aspects.

### **Stage V: Families with adolescents**

Adolescents have special problems that need the help of parents and this stage can be very crucial for them and their children. As the teenagers approach adulthood, parents must ensure a balance between freedom and responsibility by helping their children to plan and then to execute the plans which will be beneficial and productive in various life situations.

### **Stage VI: Families as launching centers**

After the young adults have gone into work or studies, parents begin to feel a certain sense of loneliness. It is often referred to as ‘the empty nest syndrome’. At the same time they also have the need to maintain a supportive home base for the children. Children need support and guidance for various cultural, religious and traditional family based events like marriage, birthday celebration and other ceremonies in the company of parents and relatives.

### **Stage VII: Families in the middle years**

This is a trying time for a couple who have to adjust to a different life again away from the children and away from work. It is important at this stage that hobbies are developed /or developed earlier in life can keep them occupied during the time after retirement. The reduction in the income makes it important to adopt a more modest standard of living.

### **Stage VIII: Families in the late years**

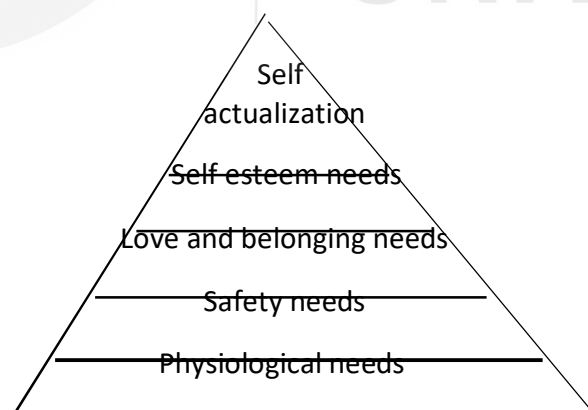
The family members need to learn to cope with bereavement and living alone at this stage. Society’s expectations will keep children away from the concerns of aged parents. Very often helpers like home nurses may have to provide the required services to the parents.

### **Family Resources**

Family needs are related to the basic human needs as described by Abraham Maslow in his Hierarchy of Needs. According to this theory all human beings have five basic needs. They are:

- Physiological needs – food, drink, sex, clear air, and good health.
- Safety needs – to have a roof over one’s head, housing, clothing, etc.
- Love and belongingness need – to have a family or community to belong to, to have a shoulder to lean on, the need for acceptance, giving and receiving love.
- Esteem – Self respect and respect for others.
- Self actualisation – Self fulfillment and reaching one’s potential, to become somebody in life.

This need hierarchy theory can be graphically represented in the form of a pyramid. Needs at the lower level are to be met before the higher level needs.



### **Maslow’s Need Hierarchy Theory**

Family needs are unlimited and resources are limited. Family or individual will use human and non-human resources to meet the unlimited needs. A family has to manage the use of its

resources in order to maximise satisfaction derived from them. Family resources are discussed here in the context of various stages of family life cycle and family size. It should be borne in mind that every event in different stages of family life drains family resources. The demand on the family resources is heavy, especially when there is an overlap of different stages. It is important, for any newly-wed couple to decide when to have the first baby, how many children to have in all and how they should be spaced. Family size affects the need satisfaction of the family members, as mentioned above. Every child has the right to have a balanced diet, adequate clothing, safe shelter, proper education, attention and affection, and medical attention as well as the right to meet all the basic physical, mental, psychological and spiritual requirements of a healthy and happy life.

## **Marriage**

Courtship and marriage are two issues which most adolescents begin to be preoccupied with. A significant percentage of adolescent marriages usually end up in separation and divorce for various reasons. Some adolescents are forced into marriage because of pregnancies; others marry to escape family pressures, and a few others want to escape from schooling while some others get married because of the prevailing custom. Appropriate educational programmes are needed to prepare young people for marriage. After all, marriage in India is considered as a permanent relationship.

While discussing marriage, the various questions regarding reasons for marrying are raised. For example, what are the most common types of marriages? How do people meet their marriage partner? How long does a couple usually know each other before marriage? What is the most common age for marriage for a man and for a woman? Is dowry or bride payment a good thing? What are the usual marriage ceremonies?

In India, marriages are usually classified as follows: Marriage by free choice of the partners or love marriage, arranged marriage and forced/arranged marriage. They can further be classified as monogamous or polygamous; civil, religious or customary.

## **Responsible Parenthood**

Early marriage and parenthood have been the established pattern in many societies and remain so, despite the efforts of a number of governments to raise the legal minimum age at marriage. In India, minimum age at marriage is 21 and 18 for boys and girls respectively. Adolescents need as much information as possible on what is expected of them when they marry and raise a family. As mentioned earlier, social, economic and cultural changes are affecting many aspects of family life including parenthood. As a result, young people today may have to wrap up issues that were previously unnecessary to take into account before getting married. These include discussions by both partners on the desirability of having children. If children are desired, will the father help in caring for them? Will the mother be allowed to work outside the home? Who will manage family funds? Becoming parents brings responsibilities which expand over the years. Having children is considered to be a natural pattern of family life and some couples do not seriously weigh the implications of parenthood. The implications are as follows:



1. To avoid the risks of hunger and financial insecurity, parents should plan the number of children, based on their ability to support and rear them to full maturity.
2. To reassure themselves of the benefits of parenthood in their old age, parents should provide their children with guidance and direction so that they may develop and inculcate the right values as they approach adulthood.
3. To help in achieving an orderly society, parents should strive to bring up a family whose members are cognizant of both their rights and duties, while recognising the benefits of the society as well as the tasks of supporting it.
4. Parents who respond properly to their partners' personal needs are, in effect, reducing (if not, eliminating) the probability of their ever becoming estranged.

Responsible parenthood cannot be discussed without bringing up the issue of family planning. Family planning is a means of enhancing the quality of life of families including regulating and spacing child birth, helping fertile couples to beget children and providing counseling for both parents and would be parents.

### Check Your Progress II

**Note:** a) Use the space provided for your answers.

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

- 1) Graphically illustrate the Need Hierarchy theory of Maslow.

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- 2) What are the various implications of responsible parenthood?

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## 2.4 TRADITIONAL INDIAN VALUES RELATED TO FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION

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In India, like some other Asian and Pacific countries, where status of women is lower than that of men, socio-cultural values like preference for son, early marriage, are quite evident. Continuation of family lineage, social security that comes from a cohesive family cohesion, performance of religious rights in accordance with certain religious traditions, making free labour and economic benefits available to parents in the form of increased income and dowry,

are all important motivations related to family in our country. In rural areas, children help parents in planting and harvesting of agricultural products, cooking, cleaning, fetching water and looking after cattle and younger ones in the family. The phenomenon of child labour (though illegal) prevalent in unorganised sector, supplements the income of poverty stricken households. Still in rural areas the girls are encouraged to marry young and to have children at a relatively tender age due to prevailing social customs, in spite of legal provisions regarding the minimum age of marriage. Though child rearing at an early age is socially acceptable, the practice may restrict women from educational, social and economic opportunities. Early marriage and unplanned birth of children are found to be responsible for ill health of both mother and the child. In this country child mortality due to various diseases is very high.

Historically, the traditional and ideal family in India is the joint family. A joint family generally includes three to four living generations, including uncles, aunts, nieces, nephews, and grandparents living together in the same household. The family supports the old; takes care of widows, never-married adults, and the disabled; assists during periods of unemployment; and provides security and a sense of support and togetherness. The joint family has always been the preferred family type in the Indian culture. However, the traditional joint families with their numerous advantages are on the decline. In both urban and rural societies the birth of a child is considered a blessing of God. Some of these values are deeply rooted in our culture and it is difficult to change them in the near future.

Marriage is deeply rooted in socio-cultural ethics. The traditional value of an Indian family is that a girl and a boy having somewhat similar social status bond better in a marriage. Level of income, of education and the question of compatibility between the two are of a secondary importance. Usually the boys are a couple of years older than the girls especially in the case of arranged marriages.

In urban areas, the prime consideration in the marriage of a girl now-a-days is the income of the boy and economic status of the parents of the boy. Traditionally it was taken for granted that marriages should be arranged by the parents. In many middle and upper middle class orthodox families, horoscope matching before marriage is conducted before performance of any religious ceremony. In traditional Indian society, dowry system was not practiced, but the system of dowry is increasingly practiced in the context of changing value system of middle class and of high society. Though dowry has been legally abolished, it still does exist with added vigour, making the life of the parents of girls and the life of the girls themselves miserable. At times attempts are made to justify dowry as the right of the girl to the parents' inheritance. In fact, very often dowry surpasses what the parents own and they are compelled to borrowed money.

India is an extremely pronatalistic society and male children have always been given preferential treatment. Because male children are desired more than female children, they are treated with more respect and given special privileges. Male children are raised to be assertive, less tolerant, independent, self-reliant, demanding, and domineering. Females, in contrast, are socialised from an early age to be self-sacrificing, docile, accommodating, nurturing, altruistic, adaptive, tolerant, and to value family above all.

The wife is blamed if she could not deliver a male child. In a traditional Indian family, home was considered as an ideal place for women and women were discouraged from working or even looking for job outside the home. Child rearing was considered as the principal responsibility of the wife. She is also entrusted with the responsibility of looking after the home and caring for the elderly parents and relatives. Decisions in the family are the prerogative of the father of the household. Education for girl children is discouraged. But gradually, the scene is changing fast. In India, it is believed that if women were to take up a job outside the family, the family would be neglected. Women from poor families are engaged to do all types of work for others.

In traditional Indian society, inter-caste marriage is discouraged. Social changes are gradually occurring but arranged marriages are still the norm. It may be noted that India has a significant population of about hundred million tribals. Among almost all tribal groups, marriage partners are the choice of the boys and girls and arranged marriages are very rare.

Traditional Indian society could be considered as a very reserved society so far as dissemination of information regarding sex role/sex relationships and sex responsibilities are concerned. Sex continues to be a taboo subject. Sex and sexuality issues are not openly discussed. Sex education is not readily available.

In the traditional Indian family, communication between parents and children tends to be one-sided. Children are expected to listen, respect, and obey their parents. Generally, adolescents do not share their personal concerns with their parents because they believe their parents will not listen and will not understand their problems.

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## **2.5 IMPORTANCE OF DIFFERENT TYPES OF VALUES IN FAMILY LIFE EDUCATION**

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By now you might have realised the important role that the value system plays in family life education.

Values have been recognised as a theme in family life education and as a problem confronting family life educators. Questions have been raised about the role of values in family life education and about the appropriate responses of family life educators to various values, issues and concerns. What values should be included or excluded from family life education programs? Should educators share their personal values with participants? What is the best way to handle controversial value questions? How should family life educators deal with potentially differing values?

### **Types of Values**

There are different types of values. Although it is not possible to provide an exhaustive list here, let us try to examine some of the most important types of values which include: moral or ethical, religious, aesthetic, health, economic, legal, cultural, educational, personal, and prudential value. Most of these types of values are relevant to the purposes and subject matter of family life education.

One of the major operating principles in family life education is to “respect differing individual and family values”. Special attention needs to be given to moral or ethical values

and to the relationship of these values to cultural, religious and personal values. So here we shall discuss only these four values, i.e., moral or ethical values, cultural values, religious values and personal values. We will also study how they act as operating principles in family life education.

### **Moral or Ethical Values**

Many family life educators are often uncomfortable with the word moral because the word 'moral' seems to be a relative term. It varies from society to society, culture to culture, place to place and from time to time. The words ethical and moral mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably. In literal meaning, these terms pertain to human conduct and character, and generally refer to moral rectitude of an action, whether they are good or bad.

Moral and ethical values are expressed in terms of principles or rules of right conduct. Values such as personal integrity, tolerance for diversity and differences, social responsibility, respect for persons, sense of justice have an important place in family life education.

The key point of ethics and morality is to go beyond the personal self interest and to consider, equally and impartially, the rights and interest of all involved in a situation. The intention here is to be able to overcome egoism and be able to see things from other people's point of view too. A second intention equally important is to consider whether or not potential harm to some people can ever be justified. Within family life education, there are many opportunities to discuss issues like violence within marriage, intolerance, caste complexes, etc.

### **Cultural Values**

In one sense, every value is a cultural value, because the central way in which one acquires a value is by acquiring a language. Language is a public cultural artifact. Among other things, language is used to express commitment to certain values and it would be difficult to imagine a culture that does not contain, for example, legal, economic, aesthetic, moral and intellectual values.

Two important points about cultural values are significant to family life education. First, all cultures have some commitment both to a set of dominant ideals and to a set of greatest fears. In general, the relevance and purpose of moral principles in a particular culture is to facilitate the attainment of the dominant ideals (e.g. to attain equality or familial continuity) and the avoidance of the greatest fears (e.g. to avoid exploitation or loss of autonomy). Family life educators who work with multicultural groups will need to be aware of and sensitive to not only expressions of cultural differences but also how these differences represent cultural attempts to accomplish their ideals and to avoid their fears.

The second point is that cultures do not remain stagnant. There are likely to be conflicts within the culture about its dominant ideals and fears. Some of these conflicts will have to do with topics central to family life education (e.g. which ideal is more important loyalty to family or personal autonomy). Because these intra-cultural conflicts are sensitive issues and often

problematic for families, family life education programs prepare individuals to deal rationally with these changing ideals.

### **Religious Values**

Although there are many differences among religions, a number of features appear to be common to many of them: (a) a belief in a supreme being or a set of beings (b) a set of concepts (usually a very complex set) that refer to the postulated relationships between the supreme being(s) and human beings; (c) a belief in some sort of existence after death. These features have important implications for family life education.

First, it is clear that many moral concepts and religious concepts such as respect for persons will overlap, leading at least some people to believe that moral/ ethical values and religious values mean the same thing. Such a belief results in potential view of what counts as justification of moral principles. Thus, some religions hold that moral principles have weight because they are “commandments” of one or more supreme beings rather than because they are part of an autonomous way of viewing human relations and human actions.

Obviously, family life educators will need to be sensitive to these potentially different beliefs, but it need not result in an impasse where the educator can do nothing. What is crucial is a willingness on the part of the educator to be open minded, and to be both willing and able to set an example of careful and balanced consideration of issues that are central to family life education.

### **Personal Values**

Much of the attention to values in family life education appears to be directed towards what is usually referred to as developing an understanding of one’s own personal values and of learning to respect the personal values of others. Hamm (1985) has made an important distinction between public or social morality and private or personal morality that has relevance for family life education.

According to Hamm, social moral judgement has to do with inter-personal behaviours and addresses itself to basic human needs and fears, wants and desires, which are either to be satisfied or avoided and is a pre-condition for human beings to have a choice at pursuing quality of life in its many forms. Some of the basic principles that are necessary for social morality include (a) justice as fairness (impartiality/ non-discrimination); (b) non-maleficent (restraint from harming or injuring others); (c) minimal beneficence (the moral risk in satisfying their basic needs); (d) freedom (no right to interfere with others) and (e) honesty (truthfulness and non-deception). In Hamm’s view, social morality refers to those things that are “good for all” and has as its summary notion ‘respect for others’.

Hamm has suggested that although personal morality shares some of the same features as social morality, personal moral judgements address those things that have to do with “my good” rather than with “good for all”. The summary notion in personal morality is self-respect. Accordingly,

self-respect must give way to social morality. This has important implications for family life educators who are concerned about the role of their personal values in family life education.

Hamm has claimed that this distinction is an important one because the subject matter and the strategies required for teaching social morality and personal morality are different. In general teaching social morality requires serious and systematic attention to the rules and the principles of social morality while education for personal morality requires some value clarification.

### **Family and Social Work Values**

Social work is rooted in humanitarianism and based on certain values. Social work thrives in its belief in the basic worth and dignity of the individual. Hence, the ‘worth and dignity’ of all the family members should be recognised and respected by everyone in the family. Family members should be respected, accepted, cared and showed concern for them in a non-dominating way. There should be honesty towards each other.

When distressful events occur with any member of the family, he should be encouraged and motivated to move ahead in his life. Other members of the family should boost up his morale and make him realise his inherent potentials. Values such as sense of responsibility, commitment, hard work, and respect for others have very important place in family life education.

Family life education helps to ameliorate or reduce many family-related social problems and improves family living and social well-being. It helps families across the life span in coping with difficult situations such as trauma, suicide, and death, and prepares to assess needs of the family and intervene appropriately. It is therefore appropriate to say that family life education makes an important contribution towards strengthening families to fulfill their significant role as the basic unit of society.

#### **Check Your Progress III**

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

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

- 1) Explain the importance of moral or ethical values in family life education.

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Let us now discuss some of the needs which give birth to family life education.

- 1) The educational role of family life education: The family has always existed as a basic social grouping among human beings irrespective of the difference in its structure and functioning. There is of course no universal pattern. Families may be nuclear or extended, monogamous or polygamous. But in most part of the world the structure or functions of the family are in transition and its educational role is one which is dynamic in nature. So everybody should acquire this knowledge.
- 2) Family life education acts as a crisis manager: Adolescents are growing up in a world in which they will have to make more decisions for themselves compared to previous generations. They tend to experiment more with their life, make choices and take risks, and learn from their own experiences rather than from those of others. This can lead to confusion, frustration, despair and risk taking of a kind which is ultimately self destructive. So family life education has an important role to play in order to help people avoid or deal with all sorts of crisis.
- 3) Family life education provides skills for preventive action and knowledge for decision making particularly among adolescents: Each new generation of children face health challenges, but those faced by today's school age group seem particularly daunting. Children are confronted at an early age by situations that require knowledge for decision making and skills for preventive action. Very often adolescents find themselves under strong peer pressure to engage in high risk behaviour like drug and alcohol abuse and sometimes sexual abuse which can have serious implications on their lives. These issues should be introduced to the young and adolescents through family life education and guided on ways of dealing such situations.
- 4) Family life education helps in understanding one's own role with the changing family structure and functions: The rate of social change in most societies needs to redefine the role of adult family members. Where tradition once established the norms for family behaviour, parents are now being challenged to re-examine their roles and to accommodate to the demands of changing family structure and functions.
- 5) Family life education helps in proper understanding of family life cycle: The impetus for family life education programme is based on the pervasive nature of the family life cycle. Each new phase of the cycle gives rise to new learning needs. In the past, these learning needs were met through informal learning activities such as reading, seeking advice from peers and professionals (doctors, religious leaders and priests) and reflecting on personal experience. Some of these activities are now being offered as family life education through formal learning programmes. National programmes of planned parenthood for example have been established in a number of countries to curtail population growth and to promote improved standard of living. The belief too, that parenting skills, knowledge and attitudes can be learned through programmes of education as opposed to learning through observation has given rise to a host of such programmes around the world.

### **Need of Family Life Education**

It is clear that family life education is a new field and one that is moving towards the “professional” end of the continuum. Some of the advantages of family life education are mentioned below:

- 1) Family life education is necessary for each individual: Every individual needs to know about family life education. Every individual spends eight to ten hours in work for earning a living. For this we study a number of courses over many years. But there is no course for the fourteen to sixteen hours which we spend every day with our family. This needs a formal and compulsory orientation for each and every individual. So every individual should be provided a family life education as a life enrichment programme.

There is a rapid change in the family structure all over the world from the extended family to nuclear family. But there is nobody for guidance. So there is an urgent need for this type of education to cope with the emerging trends.

- 2) Professionals working in this area and allied fields need training: People who are working with NGOs in this area, paramedical professionals and teachers need an orientation or training in family life education.
- 3) The activity becomes a full-time paid occupation: There are thousands of full time paid people practicing as Family Life Educators with specific qualification in various settings throughout the world and in India.
- 4) Training schools and curricula are established: Many departments and schools have been established at undergraduate and graduate levels of family life education and family studies. The first Ph.D programme in family life education and family studies was established in 1962 at Columbia University in New York. There is a unit for Family Studies at the Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Bombay.
- 5) Those who are trained have established professional associations: The established professional associations are consistently supportive of the development of the knowledge base and skills of the practitioners in family life education and that has played a key role in its definitions.

#### **Check Your Progress IV**

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

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

- 1) Describe any three needs of Family Life Education.

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## 2.7 LET US SUM UP

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In this unit, we started our discussion by stating that India has a long tradition of closely bonded family systems. Today, however, the society is in transition and many families find it difficult to help young people preparing for adult life. So, there is a need for family life education. We have enlisted various needs for family life education. It has various roles to perform. The roles it performs varies from educational to crisis management specially among adolescents. This is why family life education is a broad and amorphous field. Anything which contributes to the total growth and well being of the family can be included under the umbrella of family life education. So, family life education has various sub-components like family, its types and functions, family roles, relationship and responsibilities, family life cycles, family resources, marriage, and responsible parenthood.

As family life education is a value related concept, various types of values like moral or ethical, cultural, religious, and personal and their implications in family life education were discussed. At the end of the unit, various advantages of family life education have been pointed out.

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## 2.8 KEY WORDS

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- Nuclear Family** : Family comprising parents and children only.
- Joint Family** : Family comprising parents, children and other close relatives like grandparents, grandchildren, uncles, etc.

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## 2.9 SUGGESTED READINGS

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Areus, M.E. Schvaneveldt, J.D, Moss J.J. (eds) (1993), *Handbook of Family Life Education (Foundation of Family Life Education)*, Saga Publications Vol. 1, Vol. 2.

International Planned Parenthood Association (1985), *Growing Up in Changing World*, Part one, Youth Organization and Family Life Education: An introduction, London, IPPF.

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UNESCO (1988), *Family Life Education: Package One*, PROAP, Bangkok.

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## 2.10 ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

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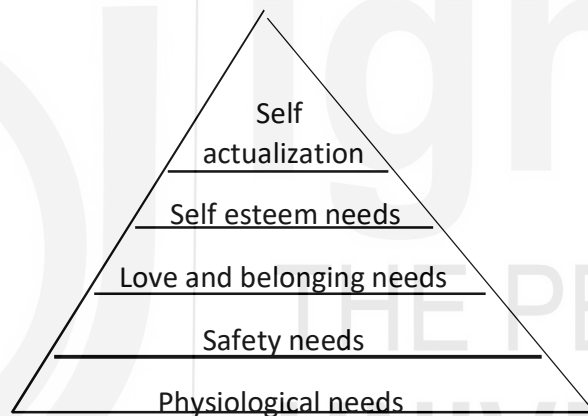
### Check Your Progress I

- 1) Family Life Education is a broad and flexible field. Anything which contributes to the total growth and well being of the family – physical, mental, emotional, economic, and spiritual – can be included under the umbrella of family life education. That is why family life education has its roots in many disciplines including sociology, social work, psychology, anthropology, biology, education and history. The goals of the programme are often broad based. Overall, its objectives are to promote the freedom to choose parenthood and enrichment of human life.

Family Life Education is considered as a value related concept. Most of the values related to family life education are deeply rooted into the socio-cultural milieu of the people. The values are moral or ethical, cultural, religious, personal, etc.

### Check Your Progress II

- 1) The Need Hierarchy Theory of Maslow is graphically illustrated below:



- 2) The various implications of responsible parenthood include:
  - a. To avoid the risks of hunger and financial insecurity, parents should plan the number of children, based on their ability to support and rear them to full maturity.
  - b. To reassure themselves of the benefits of parenthood in their old age, parents should provide their children with guidance and direction so that they may develop and inculcate the right values as they approach adulthood.
  - c. To help in achieving an orderly society, parents should strive to bring up a family whose members are cognizant of both their rights and duties, while recognising the benefits of the society as well as the tasks of supporting it.
  - d. Parents who respond properly to their partners' personal needs are, in effect, reducing (if not, eliminating) the probability of their ever becoming estranged.

### Check Your Progress III

- 1) Many family life educators are often uncomfortable with the word moral because the word 'moral' seems to be a relative term. It varies from society to society, culture to culture, place to place and from time to time. The words ethical and moral mean the same thing and can be used interchangeably. In literal meaning, these terms pertain to human conduct and character, and generally refer to moral rectitude of an action, whether they are good or bad. Actions which are likely to have helpful effects on the lives of the others are described, for example, as moral. Moral and ethical values are expressed in terms of principles or rules of right conduct. Values such as personal integrity, tolerance for diversity and differences, social responsibility, respect for persons, sense of justice have an important place in family life education.

The key point of ethics and morality is to go beyond the personal self interest and to consider, equally and impartially, the rights and interest of all involved in a situation. The intention here is to be able to overcome egoism and be able to see things from other people's point of view too. A second intention equally important is to consider whether or not potential harm to some people can ever be justified. Within family life education, there are many opportunities to discuss issues like violence within marriage, intolerance, caste complexes, etc.

### Check Your Progress IV

- 1) a) Family life education acts as a crisis manager: Adolescents are growing up in a world in which they will have to make more decisions for themselves compared to previous generations. They tend to experiment more with their life, make choices and take risks, and learn from their own experiences rather than from those of others. This can lead to confusion, frustration, despair and risk taking of a kind which is ultimately self destructive. So family life education has an important role to play in order to help people avoid and deal with all sorts of crisis.
- b) Family life education provides skills for preventive action and knowledge for decision making particularly among adolescents: Each new generation of children face health challenges, but those faced by today's school age group seem particularly daunting. Children are confronted at an early age by situations that require knowledge for decision making and skills for preventive action. Very often adolescents find themselves under strong peer pressure to engage in high risk behaviour like drug and alcohol abuse and sometimes sexual abuse which can have serious implications on their lives. These issues should be addressed to the young and adolescents through family life education and guided on ways of dealing such situations.
- c) Family life education helps in understanding one's own role with the changing family structure and functions. The rate of social change in most societies needs to redefine the role of adult family members. Where tradition once established the norms for family behaviour, parents are now being challenged to re-examine their roles and to accommodate to the demands of changing family structure and functions.