Unit I

Family

MEANING OF FAMILY

A family is formed by a married man and woman living with their unmarried children. Family is an intimate domestic group made up of people related to one another by bonds of blood, sexual mating, or legal ties.

According to sociologists, family is the most important institution of a society because survival of human race is related with it. It is the family that brings up an individual by taking care and by training him.

Family is the most pervasive and universal social institution. It plays a vital role in the socialization of individuals. Family is regarded as the first society of human beings.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Ogburn and Nimkoff**

“Family is a more or less durable association of husband and wife with or without children or of a man or woman alone, with children.”

**MacIver**

“a group defined by sex relationship sufficiently precise and enduring to provide for the procreation and upbringing of children.”

**Murdock**

“The family is a social group characterized by common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction.”

**TYPES OF FAMILY**

The definition of family befitting every culture is difficult. It is necessary to explain its structure. For this purpose, types of family are necessary to be explained.

1. **ON BASIS OF MEMBERSHIP**
2. **The Nuclear Family**

This family consists of husband, wife and children. This is the characteristic of modern societies however, urban societies consist of nuclear families because of its resembling structure and harmony with the urban societies.

**Characteristics of Nuclear Family**

**i.** It consists of husband, wife and children with no external interference and thus, having stability.

**ii.** Social interaction is intense and deep, closeness and sacredness is more and individual gets more attention and have a deep impression on the personalities.

**iii.** There is no cultural rigidity but there is a tendency to change, to innovate and to accept the changes easily that take place in society.

**b. Extended Family/Joint Family**

A family consisting of parent’s children and near relations likes grandfather or uncle etc. living in a same house. This was current in traditional families. Extended family generally consists of parents, children, grandsons, aunts and uncles etc. Such a family is a sign of unity and love and elders are thought a blessing of God.

**Characteristics of Extended Family**

**i.** Its number is more, consisting of three generations i.e., parents, children, grand-children.

**ii.** The eldest of the family, man or woman, is head of the family who decides family matters and all obey his or her orders.

**iii.** All economic affairs are common and are spent with the approval of the head of the family just as, in India Pakistan, agricultural activities are done collectively and income is used commonly.

1. **FAMILY PATTERN (ACCORDING TO DECENT)**
2. **Patrilineal Decent Family**

It is that type of family where decent comes from father and grandfather. With reference to property, only father side relatives have importance along with emotional attachment.

1. **Matrilineal Decent Family**

It is that type of family where decent is connected with mother and grandmother.

1. **Bilateral Decent Family**

In this family pattern, both father and mother decents are considered. The relatives of both father and mother have importance.

1. **FAMILY PATTERN (ACCORDING TO RESIDENCE)**
2. **Patrilocal Family**

If the new married people reside with father of the bridegroom, it is called patrilocal family.

* 1. **Matrilocal Family**

If the newly married couple lives with the parents of the bride, it is called matrilocal family.

1. **Neolocal Family**

If a newly married, couple resides separately from parents, is called neolocal family and this is found in modern industrial societies.

1. **FAMILY PATTERN (ACCORDING TO AUTHORITY)**

Family is an important unit of society. Its decisions are important. Who is to decide and who has the power to decide culturally? From this point of view, the family pattern has three forms:

1. **Patriarchical Family**

Such a family, where power to decide lies with father or man. Such a family is called patriarchy family. The headship of the family is with the elder man or the father.

1. **Matriarchical Family**

If a woman or elder woman of a family decides matters, it is called matriarchy family.

 **5.** **ON THE BASIS OF MARRIAGE**

**a. Monogamous Family**

A monogamous family is one which is consisted of one husband and one wife. In this type of family one man has one wife or one woman has one husband at a given time.

**b**. **Polygamous Family**

When one man marries several woman or one woman marries several men and constitute the family, it is polygamous family. Again polygamous family is divided into two types such as polygynous family and polyandrous family.

* + - 1. **Polygynous Family**

It is a type of family in which one man has more than one wife at a given time and lives with them and their children together. This kind of family is found among Eskimos, African Negroes and the Muslims, Naga and other tribes of central India.

* + - 1. **Polyandrous Family**

In this types of family one wife has more than one husband at given time and she lives with all of them together or each of them in turn. Polyandrous families are found among some Australians, the Sinhalese (Srilankans), the Tibetans, some Eskimos and the Todas of Nilgiri Hills in India.

**FUNCTIONS OF FAMILY**

As a social institution the family has certain functions to perform for the society and the individual. It plays important role for survival, protection and support, socialisation and societal identification of the individual.

Different sociologists have classified the functions of the family differently.

**K. Davis** has mentioned four main functions of family. These are (i) reproduction (ii) maintenance, (iii) placement and (iv) socialisation of the young.

**Ogbum and Nimkoff** have divided the functions of family into six categories These include (1) affectional functions, (ii) economic functions, (iii) recreational functions (iv) protective functions, (v) religious and (vi) educational functions.

**Maclver** divides the functions of the family into two categories: Essential and Nonessential functions.

**Essential Functions**

**1. Satisfaction of Sex Needs:**

The sex instinct is the natural and biological urge of human beings. The satisfaction of sex desire requires that male and female should live together as husband and wife.

Hence, family is the only place where husband and wife can satisfy their sex instinct.

**2. Reproduction:**

The task of race perpetuation has always been an important function of the family. A ongoing society must replace its members. It primarily relies on the biological reproduction of its own members.

**3. Sustenance Function:**

The family provides the daily care and personal protection to its dependant members namely aged, children etc.

**4. Provision of a Home:**

Establishment of household life or provision of a home is another essential function of the family.

**5. Socialization:**

Man is a social animal. But he is not born human or social. He is made social through the process of socialization. The family presents itself to the child as an educative group of most fundamental kind. It presents itself as a concrete manifestation of the cultural process. It is the first social environment which trains and educates the newborn child.

**Non-Essential Functions**

**1. Economic Functions:**

Family serves as an economic unit.

**2. Property Transformation:**

The family acts as an agency for holding and transmission of property.

**3. Religious Function:**

Family is a centre for religious training of the children. The children learn various religious virtues from their parents.

**4. Educative Function:**

The family provides the bases of all the child’s latter formal education learning.

**5. Recreational Function:**

The family provides recreation to its members.

 **6. Wish Fulfillment:**

The family gives moral and emotional support for the individual member, providing his defense against social isolation and loneliness and satisfying his need for personal happiness and love.

**CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTION OF FAMILY**

**(1) Changes in the functions of sexual regulation:**

Satisfaction of sex needs is one of the most essential functions of family. As a result pre-marital and extra marital relations modern family fails to exercise its traditional control in regulating sexual behavior of its members.

**(2) Changes in the reproductive functions of family:**

In traditional society’s reproductive functions was one of the most important essential functions of family. Birth of more number of children is discouraged in prevailing families.

**(3) Changes in the child rearing functions:**

Child rearing functions of family have been shifted to certain external agencies such as hospitals, maternity home, Anganbadi Kendra nurseries etc. working women at present prefer to send their children to these agencies. As a result children are debarred from family affection and ties.

 **(5) Changes in the Socialization function of family:**

Family plays a vital role in the process of socialization of the child. In modern times family plays very less role in socializing it’s children. Some of the socialization functions of family now is being performed by many other specialized agencies such as school, college etc.

**(6) Changes in the educative functions of family:**

It was the first school for children. He learns his primary education and some occupational education from family. But in present day the role of family in education has declined a lot. School, College, Universities and technical institutions take the place of family and teachers became substitute to parents. Besides it is not possible to acquire modern education from family. Hence a lot of change occurs in the educative functions of family.

**(7) Changes in the economic functions of family:**

In ancient times family was the main centre of production, consumption and distribution. It produces almost everything as per the need of its members. But at present family remain only a consumption unit than a centre of production.

**(8) Changes in religious functions of family:**

Family was the centre of worship and religious activities. But in modern times this religious functions of family have also undergone a great change. People are becoming secular in their attitude and outlook and secularism became the ideal of family. Religious practices and festivals lost their traditional importance. As a result a great change is marked in the religious functions of family.

**(10) Changes in the recreational functions of family:**

In traditional societies family was the centre of all kinds of recreation. But in modern times the recreational functions of the family have been shared by different external agencies such as hotels, parks, clubs, movies etc.

**(11) Changes in the social functions of family:**

Traditional family acts as an important agency of social control. It exercises a direct control over. But in modern times this functions of family has sharply declined. It fails to exercise the same authoritative control over its members.

**Unit II**

**Marriage**

**MEANING**

Marriage is defined as a socially approved union between two or more people in what is considered as a steady, lasting relationship based in part on some form of sexual bond. It is an institution that is regarded permanent and involves mutual rights and obligations.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Malinowski**, “Marriage is a contract for the production and maintenance of children.”

**Edward Westermark**, ‘History of human marriage’ defined, “Marriage is a relation of one or more men to one or more women which is recognized by customs or law and involves certain rights and duties both in case of parties entering into the union and in the case of children born of it.”

**Horton and Hunt,** “Marriage is the approved social pattern whereby two or more persons establish a family.”

**TYPES OF MARRIAGE**

As a universal social institution marriage is found to exist in all societies and at all stages of development. Types or forms of marriage vary from society to society.

**(A) On the basis of number of mates:**

**Homogamy** is the tendency for dates, mates, and spouses to pair off with someone of similar attraction, background, interests, and needs e.g. LGBT Marriages

On the basis of number of mates marriage may

be classified into three types such as Monogamy,

Polygamy and Endogamy or group marriage.

**(1) Monogamy**

Monogamy is an ideal, widespread and rational type of marriage. Monogamy refers to a marriage of one man with one woman at a time.

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**(i) Serial Monogamy**

In serial Monogamous marriage the possibility of remarriage exists in case of divorce or death. Inspite of his remarriage he remains to be monogamous.

**(ii) Non-serial Monogamy**

In case of non-serial monogamy the question of remarriage does not arise by either of the couple.

 **(2) Polygamy**

Polygamy is a type of marriage in which there is plurality of partners. It allows a man to marry more than one woman or a woman to marry more than one man at a time. Polygamy is of two types such as polygamy and polyandry.

**(i) Polygamy**

Polygamy is a type of marriage in which a man marries more than one wife at a time. In this type of marriage each wife has her separate household and the husband visits them in turn. It was a preferred form of marriage in ancient Indian society. But now it was not in practice among majority of population. Found among few tribals such as Naga, Gond and Baiga. Economic and political cause was mainly responsible for polygamy. Besides man’s taste for variety, enforced celibacy, Barrenness of women more women population etc. are some of the cause of polygamy. Polygamy is further divided into two types such as Sororal polygyny and non- sororal polygyny.

**(a) Sorroral Polygamy**

Sorroral polygamy is often called as surrogate. The term surrogate comes from the Latin word ‘sorer’ which means sister. Accordingly it refers to a marriage practice in which a man marries the sisters of his wife at a time or after the death of his wife.

**(b) Non-sororal Polygamy**

It is just opposite of the sororal polygamy, when a man marries several women at a time who are not necessarily sister to each other it is known as non-sororal polygamy.

**(ii) Polyandry**

In this type of marriage a woman marries several men at a time. In the words of K.M. Kapadia, “Polyandry is a form of union in which a woman has more than one husband at a time or in which brothers share a wife or wives in common.Found among some of the tribes like toda, khasi and nayars. Polyandry is divided into two types such as fraternal polyandry and non-fraternal polyandry.

**(a)Fraternal Polyandry**

When several brothers share a common wife it is called as fraternal polyandry. Draupadi’s marriage to Pandabs is fine example of fraternal polyandry. The determination of father is associated with some rituals. At present time this type of marriage is practised by some tribals like toda and khasi.

**(b) Non-fraternal Polyandry**

It is just opposite of fraternal polyandry. In this type of marriage husbands of a woman is not necessarily brother to each other. This type of marriage is found among the Nayars of Kerala, Wife goes to spend some time with each of her husband. So long as a woman lives with one of her husbands, the others have no claim on her. This mainly happens due to scarcity of women.

**(3) Endogamy or Group Marriage**

In this type of marriage a group of men marry a group of women at a time. Every woman is the wife of every man belonging to the particular groups. Sociologist, like Dr. Rivers call it as a kind of sexual communism. This type of marriage is found among some tribes of New Guinea and Africa.

**PREFERENTIAL FORMS OF MARRIAGE**

**(i) Cross-cousin marriage**

When marriage takes place between one’s mother’s brother’s daughter/son with father’s sister’s son/daughter we called it as cross cousin marriage.

**(ii) Parallel Cousin marriage**

When marriage takes place between the children of either two sisters or two brothers it is known as parallel cousin marriage. This type of marriage is mostly found among Muslims.

**(iii) Levirate**

It is otherwise known as ‘Devar Vivaha’. When a woman marries her husband’s brother after the death of her husband it is known as levirate.

**(iv) Sororate**

It is otherwise known as ‘Sali Vivah’. When a man marries his wife’s sister after the death of his wife or even when the wife is alive it is called as sororate.

**(v) Anuloma or Pratiloma**

Sociologists have classified marriage into Anuloma or Pratiloma.

**(a) Anuloma marriage or Hypergamy**

When a man of higher caste or varna marries a woman of lower caste or varna it is called as Anuloma or Hypergamy marriage.

**(ii) Pratiloma marriage or Hypogamy**

Pratiloma or hypogamy marriage is just opposite of Anuloma or hypergamy. When a man of lower caste or status marries a woman of higher caste or status it is known as pratiloma or hypogamy marriage.

**RULES OF MARRIAGE**

**1. Rules of Endogamy:**

Endogamy is a rule that requires a person to select a spouse from within certain groups. These endogamous groups specifically refer to Varna, Caste and Sub-caste. .

**2. Rules of Exogamy:**

Exogamy refers to the rule that man must marry someone outside his own group. It defines the range within which a person cannot marry.

**FUNCTIONS OF MARRIAGE**

Following are the important function of marriage

1. Procreation of children
2. Sex regulation
3. Children socialization
4. Providing legal parents to children
5. Giving socio-economic security to women
6. Increasing manpower
7. Fulfillment of basic needs
8. Perpetuation of lineage

**CHANGES IN THE INSTITUTION OF MARRIAGE**

* There has been a long term decline in marriage
* People are more likely to cohabit (although in most cases this is a step before marriage)
* People are marrying later
* The number of remarriages has increased.
* There is a greater diversity of marriages (greater ethnic diversity and civil partnerships)

**1. Economic Factors** **– The increasing cost of living and the increasing cost of weddings.**

Increasing property prices in recent years may be one of the factors why couples choose to get married later in life.

**2. Changing gender roles**

**Liberal Feminists** point to changing gender roles as one of the main reasons why couples get married later. More than half of the workforce is now female which means that most women do not have to get married in order to be financially secure.

**3. The New Right**

Blame the decline of marriage on moral decline – part of the broader breakdown of social institutions and due to too much acceptance of diversity. This results in the inability of people to commit to each other, and they see this as bad for society and the socialization of the next generation.

**4. Post modernization**

**Postmodernists** explain the decline in marriage as a result of the move to postmodern consumer society characterized by greater individual choice and freedom. We are used to being consumers and picking and choosing, and so marriage is now a matter of individual choice.

Another process associated with Post modernization is the decline of tradition and religion (secularization) – as a result there is less social stigma attached to cohabiting or remarrying after a divorce.

**5. Late Modernism**

Associated with the ideas of **Anthony Giddens and Ulrich Beck** – argue that the decline in marriage is not as simple as people simply having more freedom – People are less likely to get married because of structural changes making life more uncertain. People may want to get married, but living in a late-modern world means marriage doesn’t seem like a sensible option.

**Unit III**

**Kinship**

**MEANING**

The relations based on blood or marriage may be close or distant. The bond of blood or marriage which binds people together in group is called kinship. Kinship system includes socially recognized relationships based on supposed as well as actual genealogical ties. These relationships are the result of social interaction and recognized by society.

**DEFINITIONS**

**A.R Radcliffe Brown** defines kinship as a system of dynamic relations between person and person in a community, the behavior of any two persons in any of these relations being regulated in some way and to a greater or less extent by social usage.

TYPES

**(i) Affinal Kinship:**

The bond of marriage is called affinal kinship. When a person marries, he establishes relationship not only with the girl whom he marries but also with a number of other people in the girl’s family.

#### (ii) Consanguineous Kinship:

The bond of blood is called consanguineous kinship. The consanguineous kin are related through blood whereas the affinal kin are related through marriage. The bond between parents and their children and that between siblings is consanguineous kinship. Siblings are the children of the same parents.

**DEGREES**

1. **Primary Kinship**

Primary kinship refers to direct relations. People who are directly related to each other are known as primary kin. Primary kins are 8 in number.

1. **Secondary Kinship**

Secondary kinship refers to the primary kin’s of primary kin. In other words, those who are directly related to primary kin (primary kin’s primary kin) become one’s secondary kin. There are 33 secondary kin.

1. **Tertiary Kinship**

Tertiary kinship refers to the primary kin of primary kin’s primary kin or secondary kin of primary kin primary kin of secondary kin. Roughly 151 tertiary kin have been identi­fied.

### KINSHIP TERMS

Kinship terms are those terms which are used in designating kin of various types. Morgan made an important study of kinship terms.

**Morgan classified these terms into:**

####  (i) Classificatory System:

Under the classificatory system the various kins are included in one category and all referred to by the same term. Thus, the term ‘uncle’ is a classificatory term. It is used for chacha, mama, mausa, foofa, taoo, etc.

#### (ii) Descriptive System:

Under descriptive system one term refers to only one relation. It describes the exact relation of a person towards another. For example, father is a descriptive term. Similarly, mother is a descriptive term.

### KINSHIP USAGES

The study of kinship system does not end with the description of various kinds of kin and the basis of their classification but it also includes the study of behaviour patterns of different kins. These usages are called kinship usages.

#### Avoidance

In all societies the usage of avoidance is observed in one form or another. It means that the two kins should remain away from each other. In other words, they should avoid each other. They should not only avoid sexual relationship but in some cases avoid seeing the face of each other.

#### Joking Relationship

It is the reverse of avoidance relationship. Under it a relation is permitted to tease or make fun of the other. The relationship between devar-bhabhi, jija-sali is joking relationship. The joking may amount to exchange of abuse and vulgar references to sex.

#### Teknonymy

A kin is not referred to directly but he is referred to through another kin. A kin becomes the medium of reference between two kins. Thus, in traditional Hindu family a wife does not utter the name of her husband. She calls him through her son or daughter.

#### Avunclate

This kinship usage is a peculiar feature of matriarchal system. It gives to the maternal uncle (mama) a prominent place in the life of his nephews and nieces. He has special obligations towards them which exceed those of father.

#### Amitate

When a special role given to the father’s sister it is known as amitate. The father’s sister gets more respect than the mother.

#### Couvade

This is a queer usage which is found among many primitive tribes like the Khasi and the Toda. Under this usage the husband is made to lead the life of an invalid along with his wife whenever she gives birth to a child. He refrains from active work and takes sick diet. He observes the same taboos which are observed by his wife. This kinship usage thus involves the husband and wife.

**CHANGES IN KINSHIP**

In the words of H .M .Johnson, “Kinship systems are changing all the times. The changes in important structural parts such as the form of marriage , the rule of residence, the rule of descent and the types and composition of kin groups are usually slow; that is, they usually emerge clearly in the course of generations rather than days or even years”.

* Changing patterns of kinship in modern societies have further weakened the notion of kinship. There has been an increase in people delaying or even forgoing marriage due to changing perceptions.
* The traditional functions of marriage such as gaining economic stability and attaining legalization of sexual activity are no longer that important.
* With individuals attaining higher levels of education, more individuals have employment and are able to be financially independent. Thus, many individuals, even women, do not see the need to rely on their spouses, much less their in-laws.
* Changing perceptions that individuals in modern societies hold have entirely diluted the concept of kinship.
* Kinship patterns are changing and so is the case with affinity. In the past kinship was confined to caste, and inter caste marriages were discouraged, But today inter- caste marriages are taking place. The number of inter caste marriages is also increasing day by day. Due to inter-caste marriages changes have taken place in affinal kinship. The kins belong to different castes.
* In the past in every society residence mattered much. Usually there were no marriages at very distant places. But today distance has no meaning. Thus, one can have kinship at distant place and in any Caste. But due to long distances meetings shall not be frequent .Hence; there will not be much affinity.

**Unit IV**

**Religion**

**MEANING**

Religion is one of the largest social institutions that sociologists study. Throughout history, religion has been a central part of all known human societies. Sociologists study religion to understand religious experiences around the world and how religion is tied to other social institutions.

Religion is a belief in supernatural power or it refers to the performance of practices which binds together or links human beings with the unseen super power.

**DEFINITIONS
Emile Durkhiem**

"a unified system of beliefs and practices relative to sacred things, that is to say, things set apart and forbidden -- beliefs and practices which unite into one single moral community called a Church all those who adhere to them."

**James G. Frazer**

"a propitiation or conciliation of powers superior to man which are believed to direct and control the course of Nature and of human life."

**E. B. Tylor**

"Belief in spiritual things"

**PRIMARY COMPONENTS OF RELIGION**

According to Anderson and Parker, each religion consists of four primary components. These are:

**(a) Belief in Supernatural Forces**

 Each religion believes in some supernatural forces ­powers outside of man and his observable world. These powers are believed to influence human conditions and events.

**(b) Man’s Adjustment to Supernatural powers**

Since man is dependent on these powers, he must adjust himself to them, consequently, each religion provides for some outward acts like prayer, hymns, kirtans, yagyas and other forms of reverence. Failure to perform these acts is regarded as sinful.

**(c) Acts Defined as Sinful**

Each religion defines certain acts as sinful. Such acts destroy man’s harmonious relationship with God or the gods and he suffers the wrath of God.
**(d) Method of Salvation**

Man needs some method by which he can regain harmony with the gods through removal of guilt. Thus Buddhism provides for Nirvana, and Hinduism provides salvation in the release from the bondage of Karma.

**EVOLUTION OF RELIGION**

Not all religions share the same set of beliefs, but in one form or another, religion is found in all known human societies. Even the earliest societies on record show clear traces of religious symbols and ceremonies. Throughout history, religion has continued to be a central part of societies and human experience, shaping how individuals react to the environments in which they live. The evolution of religion can be understood under following headings.

**ANIMISM**

Animism refers to the belief that non-human entities are spiritual beings, either intrinsically or because spirits inhabit them for a period of time. Unlike [supernatural forces](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/supernatural-forces/), animist spirits may be inherently good or evil. Often, these spirits are thought to be the souls of deceased relatives, and they are not worshiped as [deities](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/deity/).

While animists believe everything to be spiritual in nature, they do not necessarily see the spiritual nature of everything in existence as being united (monism), the way pantheists do. Animism puts more emphasis on the uniqueness of each individual soul. In pantheism, everything shares the same spiritual essence—there are no distinct spirits and/or souls. Because humans are considered a part of nature, rather than superior to, or separate from it, animists see themselves on roughly equal footing with other animals, plants, and natural forces, and subsequently have a moral imperative to treat these [agents](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/agent/) with respect.

In animist societies, ritual is considered essential to win the favor of the spirits that ward off other malevolent spirits and provide food, shelter, and fertility. Shamans, also sometimes called medicine men or women, serve as mediums between the physical world and the world of spirits.

Animism is thought to be the [belief system](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/belief-system/) that laid the groundwork for the notion of a soul and the animation of traditionally inanimate objects, allowing every world religion to take those basic principles in other directions. Though earlier philosophers such as Aristotle and Thomas Aquinas discussed animism, the formal definition was postulated by Sir Edward Taylor late in the 19th century. Examples of Animism can be seen in forms of Shinto, Hinduism, Buddhism, pantheism, Paganism, and Neopaganism.

**MANAISM**

The animatist theory of Marett known as Manaism put forth that primitive people believed in some non-material,impersonal and understandable supernatural power that was defined in animate and inanimate objects.This theory of Marett is known as animatism or manaism.

The name manaism is after the term mana used by Melanesians to designate the force in animate and inanimate objects.Bonga among the Ho tribe in India is similar to Marett's theory of primitive religion.

**TOTEMISM**

**Totemism,** system of [belief](https://www.britannica.com/topic/belief) in which humans are said to have [kinship](https://www.britannica.com/topic/kinship) or a mystical relationship with a spirit-being, such as an animal or plant. The entity, or totem, is thought to interact with a given kin group or an individual and to serve as their emblem or symbol.

The term totemism has been used to characterize a cluster of traits in the [religion](https://www.britannica.com/topic/religion) and in the social organization of many peoples. Totemism is [manifested](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/manifested) in various forms and types in different [contexts](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contexts) and is most often found among populations whose traditional economies relied on [hunting and gathering](https://www.britannica.com/topic/hunting-and-gathering-culture), mixed farming with hunting and gathering, or emphasized the raising of cattle.

Durkheim hoped to discover a pure religion in very ancient forms and generally claimed to see the origin of religion in totemism. For Durkheim, the sphere of the sacred is a reflection of the emotions that underlie social activities, and the totem was, in this view, a reflection of the group (or clan) consciousness, based on the conception of an impersonal power. The totemistic principle was then the clan itself, and it was permeated with sanctity. Durkheim held that such a religion reflects the collective consciousness that is manifested through the identification of the individuals of the group with an animal or plant species; it is expressed outwardly in taboos, symbols, and rituals that are based on this identification.

As far as Radcliffe-Brown was concerned, totemism was composed of elements that were taken from different areas and institutions, and what they have in common is a general tendency to characterize segments of the community through a connection with a portion of nature.

**ROLE/ FUNCTIONS OF RELIGION**

The structural-functional approach to religion has its roots in Emile Durkheim's work on religion. Durkheim argued that religion is, in a sense, the celebration and even (self-) worship of human society. Given this approach,

**Durkheim** proposed that religion has three major functions in society

* it provides social cohesion to help maintain social solidarity through shared [rituals](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/ritual/) and beliefs,
* social control to enforce religious-based morals and [norms](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/norm/) to help maintain [conformity](https://www.boundless.com/sociology/definition/conformity/) and control in society
* it offers meaning and purpose to answer any existential questions.

Both from individual and social point of view religion perform the following functions:

**1. Religion provides mental peace:** religion consoles and encourages human being in uncertainties, insecurities and provides mental peace and emotional support.

**2. It inculcates social virtues:**

Religion promotes the major social virtues like truth, honesty, non-violence, service, love, discipline etc.

**3. Religion promotes social solidarity:**

Religion gives rise to the spirit of brotherhood. Durkheim viewed that religion strengthens social solidarity.

**4. Religion converts the animal qualities to human qualities:**

Religion inculcates the spirit of self-service. It demands that people should be charitable and benevolent. Through various religious experiences he forgets the worldly life and problems. This experience suppresses the animal desires and converts the animal qualities of man to human qualities.

**5. Religion is an agent of socialization and social control:**

Parsons viewed that religion is one of the most important agents of socialization and social control. It has significant role in organizing and directing social life.

**6. Religion promotes welfare:**

Religion teaches to the people to serve the masses and promote their welfare. It gives message that "the service to humanity is service to God".

**7. Religion gives recreation:**

Religion plays a charming role in providing recreation to the people. Religious rites and festivals are more or less performed in every religion which gives relief to the people from mental exertion.

**8. Religion influences economy:**

Sociologists like Sombart and Max Weber rightly established the relationship of religion with economic system. Weber observed the influence of Protestant ethics in the development of capitalism. Sombart found this spirit of capitalism in Jewish norms.

**9. Religious influences political system:**

Religion has played a significant role in political system in the ancient and medieval society. Even in modern times in many countries of the world the religion directly and indirectly also influences political activities. The political system of the countries of the world like Bhutan, Pakistan, Italy, Germany, England etc. are influenced by religion.

**10. Religion Strengthens Self-confidence:**

Religion is an effective means to strengthen self-confidence. There are certain beliefs like 'work is worship', 'duty is divine', 'result in predestined' etc. which is found in various religions gives strength to the individual and promotes self confidence.