

# THE GODFATHER: A STUDY ON HOW ORGANISED CRIME FAMILIES BECAME A PART OF AMERICAN DREAM

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**ABSTRACT**--Organised crime is a complex of mighty enterprises set up for the sole purpose of engaging in illegal activities. A criminal organisation family can also be referred to as a mafia. The families govern over failed states that has no proper educational system, law enforcement and teeming with poverty. Organised crime families make use of these conditions to recruit and indulge in illegal activities such as extortion, robbery, gambling, and prostitution. These crime families have its merits and demerits. While on one side, they deal with illegal activities, on the other they maintain peace within the failed state and follow many family values that contrasts greatly with their activities. The protagonist family Corleones indulge themselves with illegal activities yet has the respect of numerous people, both ordinary and people with power due to the way they conduct their business. This paper will focus on the study of these family values and the way the Corleones conducted their business that made them stand apart from other Crime families on the basis of the 1972 film *The Godfather*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola.

**KEYWORDS**-- Organised crime, Illegal, Mafia, Laws, Family values.

## I. INTRODUCTION

*The Godfather* is a movie based on organised crime families in New York directed by Francis Ford Coppola based on the world renowned fictional book written by Mario Puzo (1969). The movie was released in 1972 and was the highest grossing film that year. It had won three Oscars and was nominated for eight others. The movie is filled with Italian-American references and focuses on the Italian based Corleone family led by Vito Corleone (Marlon Brando). The Corleone family is one of the six most powerful families running different parts of New York. The Corleone family like other mafia families engaged in businesses like gambling and prostitution among other illegal things but always stood apart from other mafia families because Vito Corleone was a man who was respected by all, for he doesn't care if the person who comes seeing help is rich and powerful or poor and helpless, for all he ask in exchange for his service is one thing 'Friendship'. The person who seeks help from the Corleone family must only proclaim their friendship and nothing more. The Corleone family never hurt the innocent and was highly respected for that trait throughout New York. The Corleone family followed a set of rules and family values and lived by it.

## II. OBJECTIVE

This paper will look into how the mafia became a part of the American Dream and the various rules and family values; life lessons set and followed by the Corleone family in the movie *The Godfather* which set them

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apart from the other families in return earning them the respect of the people. Each life lesson bear the importance needed to be followed in a chaotic world to safeguard one's existence. The essence of American Dream can be seen within the movie as different people from different aspect of life working hard in order to attain their own version of American Dream.

### **III. HYPOTHESIS**

The never ending aspiration to attain the alluring American Dream where one works hard and follows the law eventually becomes successful died long ago. The world has long moved on from that has sought different ways to become successful , one such way is to engage in illegal activities and when many like minded people come together we get a gang or mafia. The existence of these factions brings a chaotic peace and balance between law and order.

### **IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

American Dream is an ideology that anyone, no matter who they are and from what background they come from can attain their own version of success. This was coined by James Truslow Adam in his book "Epic of America". The countless that flocked to America had only one goal and that was to make their dreams come true. This was fine until people started breaking the laws in order to attain their goal. When a group of people band together to disrupt law and order they are known as Criminal Organisation or Mafia. The mafia organisations or families mostly engaged in illegal activities like protection racketeering which is a fancy word for extortion, running a prostitution ring, gambling houses and even selling liquor and other commodities. As time passed, these organisations became a part of American Dream for they were something the law and order could not eradicate for they've grown too powerful. Though most organisations are cold-hearted there are some that don't hurt the innocent and would only indulge in illegal activities that don't harm the innocent in any way. In order to lead an organisation that is a force to be reckoned with and yet be kind-hearted to the innocents, there needs to be a set of rules which needs to be followed.

### **V. REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

#### ***UNDERSTANDING THE CORLEONES FAMILY***

The Corleone family was one of the six most powerful families that ruled over New York City. They owe the most respected out of all the mafia families for they never hurt the innocent in order to make profit. The Don of the family only had one condition to the people who came looking for his help, that they become his friend and owes a favour to the family, nothing more, nothing less. The Corleone family engaged in liquor distribution, running gambling houses and brothels all of which was acceptable by the law to look the other way for it isn't harming anyone. The Don made a lot of powerful friends due to his character and the rules he has set within the family. Also the reason why they are the most respected family by the people. We see that the Corleone family helps people who seek it for reasons that can be justified and rejects people whose request could harm others. Some of the rules and family values the Corleone family follow are don't make promises you cannot keep, don't act on

emotion, keep your friends close but you enemies closer, establish friendships out of respect business and trust, white collar criminals are the most powerful criminals, keep your business private and only discuss it within the family, never sell drugs, violence is the last option, family is the most important thing in life and don't go against your own family.

***Don't make promises you cannot keep***

A promise isn't something one should take lightly for it is the most important thing one has to offer. The Corleone family makes sure they don't give out empty promises and only take on requests they can handle and rejects requests they can't without giving any false hope. The conversations the Don had with Amerigo Bonasera the undertaker who wanted justice for his daughter who was brutally hurt for defending her honour, Nazario the baker who wanted help to keep Enzo from being deported back to Italy and Johnny Fontane his Godson who wanted a part in a movie which he was denied all led to the Don making promises to help them which he knew he could keep given his status influence. It is the sense of comfort when the Don gives his word that earns him the respect and loyalty of the people around him.

***Don't act on emotion***

This rule goes without saying, one should never act or take decisions when they are emotionally unstable be it being sad, happy or even angry for one does not think about the consequences of said actions. Emotionally unstable people become unpredictable, Sonny was the best example for he was short tempered and was easy to manipulate. We see Sonny order a hit against Bruno Tattaglia after the hospital fiasco made him angry which later proved fatal to him as he was gunned down at a toll by the Tattaglia family. Never hate our enemies for it affects our judgment.

***Keep our friends close, but our enemies closer***

Always keep a note on what our enemies are doing for that knowledge will help us if there comes a time when said enemies make a move against us. The Don didn't have to worry much about his friends cause he was sure he would never be betrayed by anyone he considered to be his friend for either they respected him highly or feared his wrath. That's not the case when it comes to his enemies who would try anything to eradicate the Corleone family for they were a force to be reckoned with and had the respect of people. This is why the rule keep our friends close but our enemies closer comes into play.

***Create friendships out of respect, business and trust***

One cannot choose our family, but we can choose our friends. One should consider the benefits and the drawback when making new friends. Friendship is everything; it is the closest thing next to being family. Don Corleone knew this and always made friends with people who he respected and trusted and at time declined people for creating a friendship with certain people will only have more cons than pros.

### ***White-collar people are the most powerful criminals***

People who are educated and have high powered jobs can create more trouble to us than a normal gang of street thugs. A corrupt lawyer or politician can steal more money than a man with a gun. Thus, having a proper education and working our way up in the society is one of most important life lessons to be followed in order to become successful and powerful. We see in various situations where corrupt officers of the law creating false charges in order to ruin the power of the Corleone family.

### ***Violence is the last option***

Nothing good ever comes out of violence. History has proved that time after time with the countless wars nations have waged against each other in order to gain power or wealth. Throughout the movie, the Corleone family encourages diplomacy and honest sit downs first rather than use violence to resolve their issues. Once two or more families decide to wage war then many lives will be lost, business will come to a halt and the families will lose face in front of the public. Violence is always followed with bloodshed; hence the Corleone family only resort to violence only when it is of utmost importance.

### ***Don't sell drugs***

This isn't a hard life lesson to follow, but is one of the most important rule to follow. Drugs are the worst kind of business to be involved in for it ruins one's life literally when compared with alcohol consumption, gambling and even engaging in sexual pleasures. Amongst all the vices mentioned above drugs is the most poisonous one for it ruins one's mind and body. The Don knew this and rejected the offer to back a major drug dealer who was looking to set up shop in New York. He considered getting involved with drug was a dirty business and that both he and his family will lose face in front of the public. He also mentioned that most of his high powered friends would no longer be friendly if they knew that he was dealing with drugs for it was a harmful vice they can't ignore when one compares it with other vices like gambling and running a prostitution ring.

### ***Build a powerful community***

The Corleone family got to be powerful and well respected because they took care of not only their family but also their neighbourhood and the community, It is only by helping others can we be certain of receiving help from them when in times of need. Understanding this simple logic Don Corleone helped out everyone who came to him asking for help and in return for helping them all he asked was for their friendship and a favour. This is what made the Corleone family the strongest out of all the families in New York.

### ***Don't involve in other's personal life***

One should never get involved in another individual's live. One should especially never get involved in a married couple's life for someone's personal life is and always should be personal and their privacy must be respected. Never gossip or give advice to others for it is their life and they alone should decide for themselves what actions should be taken. One might feel like giving advice to a family member or friend could help them but one shouldn't.

### ***Family is the most important thing in life***

The phrase “Blood is thicker than water” makes perfect sense for one’s family is his greatest fortune. A man who doesn’t spend time with his family can ever be a real man is a life lesson taught by Don Corleone to his children and his followers. We see many who follow this lesson and many who don’t. The people who follow this lesson tend to end up leading a better life than those who didn’t. We see Clemenza follow this life lesson when he remembers to bring home Cannoli’s his wife asked for even though he was on his way to execute a traitor. On the other hand, we have Sonny who didn’t spend much time with his wife and liked to play around with other women ended up meeting a gruesome death.

### ***Don’t go against the family***

Family is the one thing one can depend on in our life. One should never go against the family unless they are prepared to face the consequences. In the movie we see Paulie and Fredo both go against the family and betray both Sonny and Michael Corleone by selling them out to the enemies, Sonny ended up dead while Michael barely made it out alive. The drawback of going against the family no matter who you are is alienation which then leads to death. Both Paulie and Fredo came to know it the hard way.

## **VI. ANALYSIS AND MAJOR FINDINGS**

The movie *The Godfather* which is taken from the fictional novel written by Mario Puzo’s *The Godfather* manifests the lives of the Corleone family which is a glimpse of a mafia family that were common in America during the late 80s and 90s. The fictional mafia family was the polar opposite of the actual mafia families that had influence over many states, government officers and some even had the President helping them out. Though Mario Puzo tried to bring out the few good things these mafia families do such as helping the poor people get justice and strengthen the community most of their gruesome acts done in order to gain more territories or power overshadowed their minor good deeds. Hence these families never did stand out for their righteous acts and were infamous for their illegal activities. Mario Puzo in his novel did his best to portray how a powerful mafia should be and how it should use its influence to help the people and not just themselves. The movie ends with the Corleone family taking out all the corrupt families and ending the Great War and bringing peace across New York City. That’s the beauty of fictional plots, good guys always win.

## **VII. CONCLUSION**

Although these mafia families indulged themselves in illegal activities to earn money, in a chaotic world such as ours if one looks at this from the mafia’s perspective in a way they do help out people who join them achieve their American dream even though their means of achieving their dreams will most definitely be twisted. Mario Puzo wanted to show the people the different ways one could achieve their own version of American Dream.

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