

Groups and Institutions

Q1. Explain the definition of family.

[June 2009, Q.No.-10][Dec 2007, Q.No.-2]

Ans. Among all the human groups, family is the most important group and institution. **Family** denotes a group of people or animals (many species form the equivalent of a human family wherein the adults care for the young) affiliated by a consanguinity, affinity or co-residence. Although the concept of consanguinity originally referred to relations by "blood," anthropologists have argued that one must understand the idea of "blood" metaphorically, and that many societies understand 'family' through other concepts rather than through genetic distance. One of the primary functions of the family is to produce and reproduce persons, biologically and socially. Thus, one's experience of one's family shifts over time. From the perspective of children, the family is a **family of orientation**: the family serves to locate children socially, and plays a major role in their enculturation and socialization. From the point of view of the parent(s), the family is a **family of procreation** the goal of which is to produce and enculturate and socialize children. However, producing children is not the only function of the family; in societies with a sexual division of labor, marriage, and the resulting relationship between two people, is necessary for the formation of an economically productive household. A conjugal family includes only the husband, the wife, and unmarried children who are not of age. The most common form of this family is regularly referred to as a nuclear family. A consanguineal family consists of a parent and his or her children, and other people. A matrifocal family consists of a mother and her children. Generally, these children are her biological offspring, although adoption of children is a practice in nearly every society. This kind of family is common where women have the resources to rear their children by themselves, or where men are more mobile than women.



Family

Family as an Institution: Social institution and how family is one of the pivotal and most significant institution of all societies. There are various forms of family found all over the world; but most sociologists and anthropologists agree that universally the most common features of a family is that it is composed of individuals related to each other by blood, marriage, or adoption. Family, like any other institution of society forms around complex, socially significant problems, solving the problems of social existence is critical to collective living in all societies. George Murdock lists four important functions served by the nuclear family, these functions serve to resolve four major problems of society.

According to him the nuclear family along with other social institutions, serves to:

- i) regulate sexual relations.
- ii) account for economic survival.
- iii) controls reproduction.
- iv) socializes children

Out of all these functions, some thinkers believe that socialization of children is one of the most central tasks of the family. Thus, one can see that family, as an institution, helps solve the problem of regulating sexual behaviour, surviving economically, reproducing new members of society and socializing them to become effective members of that society and culture.

Variations in Family Forms: The bewildering variety of family forms, noticed in societies throughout the world in the course of human history, is a cultural phenomenon of considerable interest. For instance, with regard to residence some societies are metrilocal in their marriage and family customs, while others are patrilocal. In the former case, the young married couple takes up residence at the home of the bride's parents, whereas, in the latter type the couple takes up residence at the home of the bridegroom's parents. Residence in most

parts of India is patrilocal in that it gives to the husband and not the wife the right to choose the place of residence after marriage.

The issue of descent as to who will be related to whom and how, is not as simple as it might first appear. Those who are socially defined by a given society as "related", are called kin. Therefore from the point of view of lineage, there are three different systems for tracing descent. In a matrilineal society descent is traced through the female line, and in a patrilineal society through the male line. It is also common to trace descent bilaterally in some societies.

From the point of view of authority, the pattern of dominance and subordination and decision-making in the family, two different patterns are visible in different societies. These are patriarchy-male dominant: matriarchy-female dominant. Most of the societies have the patriarchal pattern. However, in modern societies of today, social and cultural change is tending to establish more equalitarian pattern of decision-making in which authority is shared between the conjugal pair.

Yet another distinction is made between the conjugal family or family by marriage on the one hand and consanguine family or family by blood on the other, based on the membership type of the family. While the conjugal family consists of parents and their children, the consanguine family is made up of either parent and the units' blood relatives such as, mother, her children, her parents, his children, his parents etc.

Finally, we can also classify families into nuclear and extended types based on the way they are organized. The nuclear family consists of a married couple and their children. The extended family is commonly defined as the nuclear family plus all kin belonging to either side living together. It may be pointed out here that a consanguineous family implies 'ties of blood'. Ties of blood means the relationship between parents and their children, between siblings; even cousins on both paternal and maternal sides. It implies no particular form.

Universal Nature of Family: The family is the most permanent and pervasive of all social institutions. There is no human society without any family system. All societies both large and small, primitive and civilized, ancient and modern, have institutionalised the process of procreation of the species and the rearing of the young. It is a permanent and universal institution and one of the constants of human life.

However we need to point out here that the same type of family is not found everywhere. There are several types of family. For example in the West the nuclear family is found. This comprises the husband and wife together with

their children. In Indian villages and in small towns the extended or joint family is found. In India, too, largely nuclear families are found but often, amongst the better off families in villages, especially where agricultural land is there or amongst the Communities involved in business and trade, one often finds the large joint or extended family. This form of family has people living in it of two, three or sometimes four generations under the same roof.

Biological Basis of the Family: The institution of the family is to be explained in terms of biological factor-the existence of two sexes and the sexual character of reproduction in the human species. It appears as a natural answer to the human sexual drive, a phenomenon solidly based in the biology of the human organism. Family provides legitimacy to all these biological activities with the support of marriage.

The family is characterized by its limited size. Because of this characteristic feature, family is identified as a primary group. It may include parents and their unmarried children or parents and their married as well as unmarried children. The bonds that tie together these limited number of members with limited common interests are the outcome of emotional factors such as love, mutual affection and solicitude. This emotional basis of the family makes it an ideally suitable primary social group in every society.

Common Residence and Nomenclature: The family is one of the most durable of all social institutions. Each family has a residence, an address and a name. We recognize any family with the help of the family name, location and address. A family can mean two quite different things depending upon the vantage from which we view it. For instance, the family in which one is a child is the family of orientation and the family in which one is a parent is the family of procreation. Each family thus has common habitation for its living. Without a dwelling place, the task of child bearing and rearing cannot be adequately met. However, family as a concept has a wider meaning than mere household since a family can be spread out geographically sometimes but yet emotionally, socially and legally be known as a family. For example, a married couple may be living in two different cities or their children may be working somewhere else, even living in a different country/city; but they think of themselves as one family.

Q2. Describe the social functions of the family.

[June 2009, Q.No.-10][Dec 2007, Q.No.-2]

Ans. Followings are the social functions of the family:-

i) **Member replacement and physical maintenance:** In order to survive, every society must replace members who die and keep the survivors alive.

The regulations of reproduction are centered in the family as are cooking and eating and care of the sick. Once children are born, they will be nurtured and protected within the family. It is the family that feeds, clothes and shelters them.

ii) Regulation of sexual behaviour: The family regulates sexual behaviour. Each and every member's sexual behaviour is influenced to some extent by what is learned in the family setting. The sexual attitudes and patterns of behaviour we learn in the family reflect societal norms and regulate our sexual behavior. The sociological notion of sexual regulation should not be confused with repression. The norms, on the other hand, specify under what conditions and with what partners sexual needs may be satisfied.

iii) Socialization of children: The family carries out the serious responsibility of socializing each child. Children are taught largely by their families to conform to socially approved patterns of behavior. If the family serves society as an instrument for the transmission of culture, it serves the individual as an instrument of socialization. A family prepares its children for participation in the larger world and acquaints them with the larger culture.

iv) Status transmission: Individual's social identity is initially fixed by family membership by being born to parents of a given status and characteristics. Children take on the socio-economic class standing of their parents and the culture of the class into which they are born, including its values, behavior patterns and definitions of reality. In addition to internalizing family attitudes and beliefs, children are treated and defined by others as extensions of the social identity of their parents. In short, family acts as a vehicle of culture transmission from generation to generation.

v) Economic activity: Until recent times, the family was an important unit of both production and consumption. The family produced most of the goods it consumed and consumed most of the goods it produced. But today, modern families mainly earn incomes. Thus, their principal function is that of the consumption of goods and services which they purchase. Because of the production of income the provision of economic support for family members is a major function of the modern family.

vi) Social emotional support: The family as a primary group is an important source of affection, love and social interaction. Caring for family members does not end with infancy and childhood. It is seemingly the nature of human beings to establish social interdependencies, not only to meet physical needs,

but also to gratify emotional and psychological needs for response and affection as well as.

vii) Inter-institutional linkage: Each baby is a potential participant in the group life of the society. Family membership in a religious, political, economic, recreational and other kinds of organizations typically gives individuals an opportunity to participate in activities that might otherwise be closed to them. The family, then, not only prepares the individual to fill social roles and occupy status in the community, but also provides the opportunities for such activity. Some institutions depend also on the way the family functions in this regard to insure their own continuity and survival.

Q3. Explain the institution of marriage. [June 2008, Q.No.-6]

Ans. Marriage is a very important social institution. It is an institution in which interpersonal relationships between two individuals, is sanctioned with governmental, social or religious approval. The act of marriage changes the personal status of individuals in the eyes of those authorities that recognize it, namely the State, religion(s) to which the parties belong and/or by society in general. The civil process sanctifies it in accordance with the marriage laws of the land. Since family is a basic but important unit constituting the social structure of mankind, marriage upholds this institution. It is one of the most significant events that occur between life and death.

A New Phase: Marriage also marks a distinct phase in life, making the path for progress, prosperity and joy through a spiritual journey and a quest to be one with the Infinite. By all that marriage invests in every married couple through societal recognition, it makes way for procreation and nurturing of future generations and influences the social and cultural growth of society. This new phase of life brings along experiences that help both the individuals mature through intricacies in the realm of relationships and play a key role in shaping a common future.

Marriage is a serious decision in India, and is taken after careful deliberation and understanding of the partner with respect to compatibility of the couples' horoscopes, the backgrounds of their families (wealth, social standing) and their castes. The concept of marriage is an integral part of Indian society in India and retains its sanctity, with often older and wiser parents and elderly family-members planning the marriage of their sons and daughters.

Spiritual Relevance: Marriage prepares you to serves three purposes-Dharma (duty towards family and society), procreation, progeny and performance of holy rites. In Hinduism, the latter has its own importance and marriage facilitates

the participation of women in rituals. Marriage is a union of souls and of minds. It stresses on the spiritual equality of man and woman. It is defined by an everlasting commitment between the couple who are going to start a new relation and a new life with each other. The Samkhya theory states that Man (Purush) and Woman (Prakriti) are eternal and evolve spiritually.

Motherhood is considered a significant stage, and the virtues of a woman, who bears a child, cares and nurses it, has been extolled by Saint Yajnavalkya as 'Soma gave woman purification, the Gandharva, sweet speech, Agni, perfection and purity; thereafter, verily, woman is always pure.'

Q4. Discuss the various forms of marriage.

Ans. There are two forms of marriage, namely, monogamy and polygamy are exists in almost all the societies.

Monogamy is the state of having only one husband, wife, or sexual partner at any one time. The word monogamy comes from the Greek word *monos* which means one or alone, and the Greek word *gamos* which means marriage or union. In many cases, the word "monogamy" is used to specifically refer to marital monogamy.

☐ **Social monogamy** refers to two persons/creatures who live together, have sex with one another, and cooperate in acquiring basic resources such as food, clothes, and money.

☐ **Sexual monogamy** refers to two persons/creatures who remain sexually exclusive with one another and have no outside sex partners.

☐ **Genetic monogamy** refers to two partners that only have offspring with one another.

☐ **Marital monogamy** refers to marriages of only two people.

Polygamy: The term **polygamy** (a Greek word meaning "the practice of multiple marriage") is used in related ways in social anthropology, sociobiology, and sociology. Polygamy can be defined as any "form of marriage in which a person has more than one spouse."

In social anthropology, polygamy is the practice of marriage to more than one spouse simultaneously. Historically, polygamy has been practiced as **polygamy** (one man having more than one wife), or as **polyandry** (one woman having more than one husband), or, less commonly as **group marriage** (husbands having many wives and those wives having many husbands). (See "Forms of Polygamy" below.) In contrast, monogamy is the practice of each person having only one spouse. Like monogamy, the term is often used in a *de facto* sense, applying regardless of whether the relationships are recognized by the state (see marriage for a discussion on the extent to which states can and do

recognize potentially and actually polygamous forms as valid). In sociobiology, polygamy is used in a broad sense to mean any form of multiple mating. In a narrower sense, used by zoologists, polygamy includes a pair bond, perhaps temporary.

Polyandry: The mating of one female with more than one male while each male mates with only one female is known as polyandry (literally, "many males"). It is a rare mating system, occurring in less than one percent of all bird species, and is found mostly in shorebirds. Polyandry is often accompanied by a reversal of sexual roles in which males perform all or most parental duties and females compete for mates. The common pattern of sexual dimorphism is often reversed in polyandrous birds: the female is often larger and more colorful than the male. This reversal confused early biologists and led Audubon to mislabel males and females in all of his phalarope plates. Two types of polyandry have been documented: simultaneous polyandry and sequential polyandry. In simultaneous polyandry, each female holds a large territory containing the smaller nesting territories of two or more males who care for the eggs and tend the young. In our region, only Northern jacanas characteristically practice this form of polyandry. Females may mate with all of their consorts in one day and provide each male with help in defending his territory. A female will not copulate with a mate while their eggs are being incubated or during the first six weeks of the life of the chicks. If a clutch is lost, she will quickly copulate with the broodless male and lay a new batch of eggs within a few days. A very rare variation on the preceding theme is "cooperative simultaneous polyandry," in which more than one male mates with a single female and the single clutch of mixed parentage is reared cooperatively by the female and her several mates. This arrangement occurs in some populations of Harris' Hawks and occasionally in Acorn Woodpecker groups. In sequential polyandry (the most typical form of this mating system), a female mates with a male, lays eggs, and then terminates the relationship with that male, leaving him to incubate the eggs while she goes off to repeat this sequence with another male. Spotted Sandpipers, Red-necked and Red Phalaropes are examples of sequentially polyandrous species that breed in North America. A possible evolutionary precursor of sequential polyandry is found in Temminck's Stint, Little Stint, Mountain Plover, and Sanderling. In these species, each female lays a clutch of eggs that is incubated by the male, followed by a second clutch that she incubates herself. These two-clutch systems can be envisioned as a step toward the sort of sequential polyandry seen in the Spotted Sandpiper, but females of that species never incubate a clutch alone unless their mate is killed even when resources are abundant. There is an interesting sidelight to the story of polyandry in birds. In polygynous mammals (one male mating with several females)

such as lions and gorillas, infanticide can occur when a new male takes over a harem. By killing the young of the previous harem ruler, the new male presumably brings females back into heat. This gives him a chance to increase his own reproductive contributions and, perhaps, to reduce use of resources by unrelated offspring. In Northern jacanas it has been reported that females taking over the territories of other females occasionally practice infanticide, destroying the offspring of previous females. The males attempt to defend their broods, just as lionesses attempt to defend their cubs from infanticide male lions taking over a pride. However, the actual killing of young has not been observed only empty nests. If substantiated, this behavior in jacanas is the first known example of infanticide being used as a reproductive strategy by females.

Q5. Explain the changes in institution of marriage.

Ans. Changes in Marriage: Following changes could be easily seen in the institution of marriage:

1. Change in the Forms of Marriage: Societies with traditions of plural marriages are turning towards monogamy. Due to the general improvement in the status of woman and her gradual emancipation from the clutches of male dominance, even in those societies where polygamy is permissible, incidence of polygamous marriages, and plurality of wives, are on the decrease. In India, the Hindu Marriage Act has banned both polygynous and polyandrous marriages. Even in a Muslim country like Pakistan, legislation was introduced making it necessary for the kazi to solemnize **plural marriages only if the first wife gave her written consent.** The trend towards monogamy has also been encouraged by the new idea of romantic love as the basis for marriage propagated by the western societies. It is a marriage in which one specific individual is considered to be the ideal partner.

However, it would perhaps be wrong to assume that this trend towards monogamy is also towards straight monogamy. While conditions in modern society have made marriage unstable and the marriage bond is revocable, individuals are willing to risk another marriage in order to find happiness. Parents and friends too are sympathetic in this matter. Hence, societies are likely to move towards the condition of serial monogamy, rather than maintain straight monogamy.

2. Changes in Mate Selection: In traditional societies like India, where mate selection was entirely a prerogative of parents and elders, a dent has been made. Young men and women are increasingly being given some say in the matter of mate selection. From a position in which they had no say whatsoever concerning whom they were to get married to, a stage has now come in

which the concerned individuals are consulted and their consent obtained. In urban middle class families, sons and daughters have even come to enjoy the right to veto marriage proposals initiated by others. In the more advanced and enlightened urban families, parents are now giving opportunities to their children to become acquainted with prospective mates. "Dating" a practice in which a boy and a girl meet each other to get to know each other and enjoy themselves with relative freedom is a phenomenon which can be seen in different colleges and universities of predominantly metropolitan cities in India. It is again an imitation of the Western Society and is the result of exposure of people to Western culture to a far greater extent than it was earlier.

In India, mate selection through newspaper advertisement has become quite a popular practice among urban middle classes and the latest development is the reported harnessing of the services of computers in bringing potentially compatible mates together.

3. Changes in Age of Marriage: In India where, traditionally, child marriages were prescribed, preferred and encouraged, various efforts were made by social reformers to bring this practice to an end; accordingly, the Child Marriage Restraint Act, popularly known as the Sarda Act, was passed in 1929. However, early marriage continues, in spite of the impact of modern industrialization and urbanization, especially among the rural people. In Urban areas, too there was a strong tendency to get a daughter married off as soon as possible.

But with increasing enrolment of girls in schools and colleges, and their desire to take up employment, along with the problems of 'settling down' in life for the vast majority of boys, the age at marriage is perforce being pushed up. Further, as part of its population policy, the Government has now prescribed the minimum age of marriage as 18 years for girls and 20 years for boys. In urban areas, however, marriages are now generally taking place beyond these prescribed minimum ages.

4. Changes in Marriage Rituals and Customs: Contemporary changes in India present us with a paradoxical situation. With greater intrusion of technology and science, it was expected that a secular scientific outlook would emerge and, consequently, the non-essential rituals and customs have always pleaded for avoiding of wasteful expenditures on meaningless customs and rituals. But observation indicates that, contrary to the expectations of enlightened people, marriages in India are tending to become more traditional insofar as the ritual-custom complex is concerned. Today, there is a revival of many rituals and customs, which, soon after independence, appeared to have become weak. To an extent, this revival is a function of affluence. Many

such as lions and gorillas, infanticide can occur when a new male takes over a harem. By killing the young of the previous harem ruler, the new male presumably brings females back into heat. This gives him a chance to increase his own reproductive contributions and, perhaps, to reduce use of resources by unrelated offspring. In Northern jacanas it has been reported that females taking over the territories of other females occasionally practice infanticide, destroying the offspring of previous females. The males attempt to defend their broods, just as lionesses attempt to defend their cubs from infanticide male lions taking over a pride. However, the actual killing of young has not been observed only empty nests. If substantiated, this behavior in jacanas is the first known example of infanticide being used as a reproductive strategy by females.

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people in society have a lot of money to spend lavishly on weddings, and there is a tendency among the not-so affluent to imitate the affluent.

5. Changes in Marriage: Goals and Stability: It was seen earlier that procreation has been the most important function of marriage in traditional societies. In all communities, a large number of children, bestowed higher status upon parents and among Hindus sons were particularly desired. Thus, a large-size family was one of the cherished goals of marriage, and the blessings showered upon the bridal couple included good wishes for several children. But modern conditions of life have made a large family burdensome; in fact, even those with three or four children are being disfavoured.

Q6. What is the meaning of kinship?

[June 2009, Q.No.-12]

Ans. Kinship is a relationship between any entities that share a genealogical origin, through either biological, cultural, or historical descent. In anthropology the kinship system includes people related both by descent and marriage, while usage in biology includes descent and mating. Human kinship relations through marriage are commonly called "affinity" in contrast to "descent" (also called "consanguinity"), although the two may overlap in marriages among those of common descent. Family relations as sociocultural genealogy lead back to gods (see mythology, religion), animals that were in the area or natural phenomena (as in origin stories).

Kinship is one of the most basic principles for organizing individuals into social groups, roles, categories, and genealogy. Family relations can be represented concretely (mother, brother, grandfather) or abstractly after degrees of relationship. A relationship may have relative purchase (e.g., father is one regarding a child), or reflect an absolute (e.g., status difference between a mother and a childless woman). Degrees of relationship are not identical to heirship or legal succession. Many codes of ethics consider the bond of kinship as creating obligations between the related persons stronger than those between strangers, as in Confucian filial piety.

Q7. Discuss the descent group of kinship.

Ans. Descent is the principle whereby a child is socially affiliated with the group of his or her parents. In some societies the child is regarded as a descendant equally of both the father and the mother, except that titles and surnames are usually passed down along the male line. Such a system is termed Bilateral or Cognatic. The individual belongs simultaneously to several descent groups – those of the two parents, the four grandparents, the eight great-grandparents, and so on. This link is limited only by memory or by some conventionally determined cut-off point at, say, four or five degrees.

removal. In small intermarrying communities, membership will probably overlap, and in case of dispute or feud, the individual might find his or her loyalties divided. There are some cognatic systems where the individual has the right by descent to membership of several cognatically recruited groups, but this right is actualized only if the person is able to reside in a particular group's territory. Modern nationality laws often make this type of requirement.

Types of Descent: In other societies, by contrast and your own in is most probably one of them—descent is reckoned unilineally, that is, in one line only. The child is affiliated either with the group of the father, that is, patrilineal descent, or with the group of the mother, that is, matrilineal descent. Theories of the physiology of procreation and conception often correlate with these different modes of reckoning descent. In the former, the father is often given the primary role in procreation while the mother is regarded as merely the carrier of the child; in systems of the latter type the father's role may not be acknowledged at all.

Additionally, in some societies one finds that the child is affiliated to the group of either parent, depending on choice, or to one parent for some purposes (for instance, the inheritance of ritual or ceremonial roles). This is called double unilineal descent.

The principle of unilineal descent provides the individual an unambiguous identification with a bounded social group that exists before he or she is born and that has continuity after he or she dies. Members of a descent group have a sense of shared identity, often referring to each other as 'brother' and 'sister' even when no genealogical relationship can be traced. Descent groups are also very often, (though not inevitably), characterized by exogamy. That is marriage must be with persons outside this group. For instance traditional Chinese society was divided among approximately a hundred 'surname' groups—you could perhaps call them clans—within which marriage was disallowed, and these groups further divided into lineages, whose members claimed to be able to trace their descent, perhaps for several hundred years, from a founding ancestor, and then into further localized sublineages and so on down to the individual co-resident families. Sometimes a whole village might be settled by members of a single lineage. The gotras of Indian caste society are also exogamous descent groups, segmented in rather the same way.

Functions of Descent Groups: Apart from the function of exogamy, unilineal descent groups tend to be 'corporate' in several other senses. Their members may often come together for ritual and ceremonial functions, for instance, for collective worship of lineage gods, totems or ancestors. The descent group

will have a built-in authority structure, with power normally exercised by senior males, and it may well own corporate property. An individual's economic rights and responsibilities will be defined by his or her position in the descent group. In many societies unilineal descent groups are also jural units, internally deciding their own disputes, and externally acting as a unified group in the conduct of feud, etc. for this reason, lineage structure is often conterminous with the political structure in societies lacking a centralized state structure. Lineage cannot expand indefinitely in a single locality and often segment into smaller, more manageable and economically viable lineage segments. The lines of segmentation of the ground, as it were. Consider the pattern of land ownership in an Indian village; or at the pattern of village or urban settlement; a particular quarter of the village or town may be inhabited by the descendants of a single founding ancestor. Often, the large havelis divide among brothers or step-brothers, and these quarters are further divided among their descendants. In case a line dies out, the property would be reconsolidated. Given the range of social functions that descent groups may potentially perform, it is little wonder that concern with the principles of unilineal descent has dominated the work of many students of comparative kinship. However, even these scholars realize that unilineal descent is not the whole story. In ancient Rome, women after marriage severed all contact with their natal group. In certain slave societies, the slave has no 'family' or his or her own. In patrilineal systems, the mother's father, mother's sister, and especially the mother's brother, are important relationships which need further discussion. To take note of the importance of relationships, the scholars have identified another principle. This has been termed the principle of complementary filiation which explains the significant ritual and social roles of the mother's brother(s) in the lives of their sister's children. It reminds us that, in most societies, an individual is a child of both parents, however descent is formally reckoned.

Inheritance Rules: Rules of inheritance tend to co-ordinate with the reckoning of descent in most societies, but not necessarily in a one-to-one manner. In fact, it is quite often the case that certain types of property pass from father to son, and other types from mother to daughter. In most parts of India, in the past, immovable property such as land and housing, was inherited only by sons. In the absence of sons, except under rare circumstances, by the nearest male relatives on the father's side. On the other hand, movable property in the form of cash and jewellery also passing from the mother-in-law to the daughter-in-law.

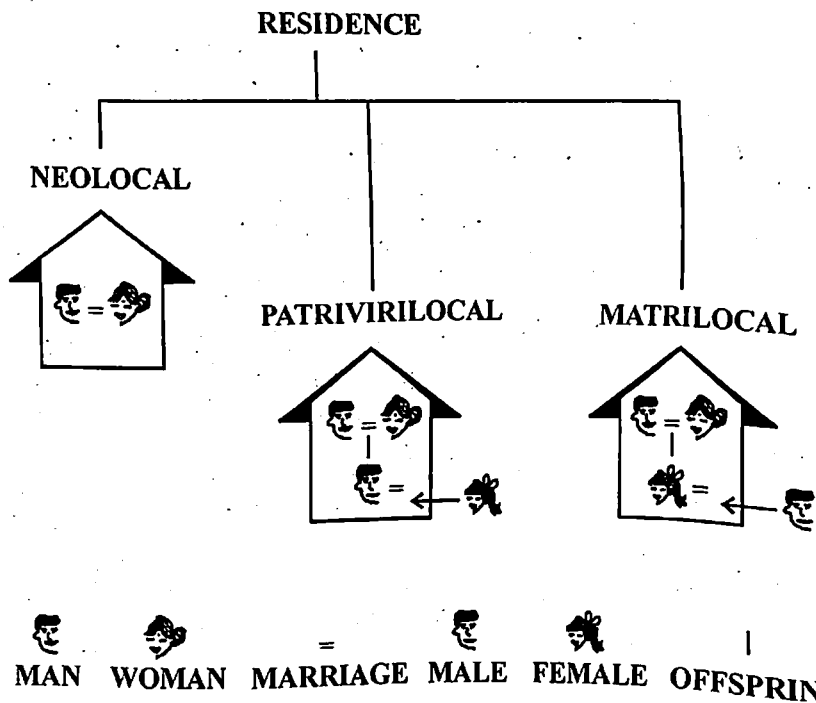
In addition to property of various kinds, rights and obligations, esoteric knowledge, crafts and skills, etc., might be passed on in accordance with kinship roles, succession to office to chieftainship, kingship, etc. and to other

social roles and statuses, is also very often determined by kinship criteria. In such cases, the individual's status is said to be 'ascribed', not 'achieved'. It is commonly asserted that ascriptive status of modern, industrial societies. There is a great deal of truth in this statement, but one should not underestimate the importance of kinship connections in modern societies too. Often one finds that in a family if father is a doctor or lawyer the son or daughter is also likely to choose the same occupation. Most of the Indian women who have been successful in the political domain are either daughters, sisters or wives or people who have been active in politics. One such example is the Nehru family of India.

Rules of Residence: Rules of residence, meaning residence after marriage, are an important variable in a kinship system, and substantially affect the quality of personal relations within the kin network. If husband and wife set up their own independent home after marriage, as is usually the case in modern western society, residence is said to be neolocal. Where the wife goes to live with the husband in his parents' home, residence is described as virilocal, patrilocal, or patrivirilocal, and where the husband moves to live with the wife, it is termed matrilocal or rules of residence may or may not 'harmonize' with the rules of descent. On the whole, patrilineal descent systems correlate with either neolocal or patrivirilocal residence patterns. However, matrilineal descent systems may be combined with all three types of residence. It is also combined with what is called avunculocal residence, that is, residence with the mother's brother.

ILLUSTRATION : The different types of Residence

(i) Neolocal (ii) Patrivirilocal (iii) Matrilocal



Patriarchy and Matriarchy: A society is said to have a patriarchal structure when a number of factors coincide, i.e. when descent is reckoned patrilineally, when inheritance of major property is from father to son, when residence is patrilocal, and when authority is concentrated in the hands of senior males. There is, however, no society on earth, nor any society actually known to have existed, whose features are exact reverse of these. For even in matrilineal, matrilineal systems, which are fairly rare, major property is usually controlled by males. And authority is normally exercised by males, though women may well have a higher status in the family and greater powers of decision-making than in the patriarchal set up. Some anthropologists assert that in societies with very simple technology and minimal property, relations between the sexes are relatively egalitarian, whether descent is formally matrilineal, patrilineal or bilateral, but others insist that women, and children, have played subordinate roles in all human societies.

For this reason, the term 'matriarchy', though often found in the literature, is probably a misnomer, best avoided, and there is certainly no conclusive evidence to support the view that matriarchy was a universal early stage in the development of kinship systems.

[June 2008, Q.No.-9]

Q8. Explain the Kinship system in India.

Ans. The system has both classificatory and descriptive terms. In addition to gender and generation, Iroquois kinship also distinguishes between parental siblings of opposite sexes. Of the different rules of marriage, and of the kinship practices that derive from these. In the Southern Zone, you usually find a preference for marriage with certain categories of close kin, in particular with one or the other or both of the cross-cousins (but never parallel cousins), or even with the elder sister's daughter. On the whole, the intermarrying groups are of comparable status. Though the actual marriage relationship might give rise to a temporary inferiority of wife-givers in relations to wife-takers. The marriage will probably involve groups which are geographically quite proximate even from the same village and the bride will already be familiar with her in-laws.

You don't really expect a young bride to be badly treated by her mother-in-laws if that woman is also her aunt or her maternal grandmother.

In north India, by contrast, marriages are never between persons who are already closely related. A rule of village exogamy also ensures that brides are given to and taken from other villages or towns, often at a considerable distance. The bride therefore comes to her husband's family as a 'stranger'. She will always be suspected of trying to alienate her husband's affections, and will usually be blamed for the breakup of the joint family, should a partition subsequently take place. The distinction between daughters' and 'brides' is very sharply emphasized in this system, and the new bride's position is relatively vulnerable, unless and until she becomes the mother of a son. In this region it is also often the case that marriages unite groups whose social status is already unequal, the wife-givers being of inferior status to the wife-takers while the marriage transaction commonly takes the form of a 'dowry' payment. However legally taking dowry or giving it, both have become illegal offences punishable by the state. But, in reality it continues to affect a large category of people in India. Even other religions, such as, Muslims, Christians and SC/STs are getting influenced by it. All in all, we have in this combination of features the social-structural locale of also such practices as levirate marriage, sati, female infanticide and, lately, 'bride-burning' or dowry deaths. Other differences between the northern and southern systems noted by Irawati Kame (and others) relate to the rules of descent, inheritance and marriage. In brief, the northern zone is universally patrilineal, though patrilineal systems are also found among different communities in the southern or Dravidian zone, along with a variety of residence patterns. We should add here that there are a number of important matrilineal groups north-eastern India (eastern zone) as well.

Of course, the division of the kinship may develop into major culture areas zones can give only a very crude idea of the salient variations in kinship practices throughout the subcontinent. A more precise picture emerges when one considers the sub-regional varieties corresponding to the different regional languages and dialects. In analysing these regional kinship systems, scholars pay attention not only to kinship terminologies and to the way the people concerned speak about kinship relations and about the moral obligations that stem from them, but also to the data of ritual practices, gift exchanges folklore and other forms of cultural communication.