

Family, Marriage and Kinship

Q1. Define the nature of the institution of family.

Ans. The nature of the institution of family refers to the group comprising parents and children. It may also refer, in some places, to a patri-or matrilineage or to a group of cognates, that is, persons descended from the same ancestor. In some other cases, it may refer to a group of relatives and their dependants forming one household. All this refers to the compositional aspect of this institution. Another aspect is that of the residence of its members. They usually share a common residence, at least for some part of their lives. Thirdly, we can also speak of the relational aspect of the family. Members have reciprocal rights and duties towards each other. Finally, the family is also an agent of socialisation. All these aspects make this institution different from other units of social structure. Family is one of the most important social institutions. Most of the world's population lives in family units. The specific form and behaviour patterns found within a family have shown variations through time across countries of the world and even within a country. A sociologist looks at the institution both in terms of an ideal type and a reality. He/she ascertains the ideals of the family system partly because they are a guide to behaviour and also because these ideals act as values, a set of norms which are passed from one generation to another. A sociologist also studies the actual way in which a family is patterned and re-patterned with in a society, in a particular group through time. She will also try to identify the forces, which have been responsible for changing certain aspects of the family units in particular manner.

Q2. Give a description of the types of family.

Ans. Family is of many types. There are various factors, which are taken into account while classifying the family.

Based upon some important factors, families can be classified as follows:

1. Residence: Depending on the place of residence of newly-wedded husband and wife, the families are of following three types:

(i) Patrilocal Family

(ii) Matrilocal Family**(iii) Neolocal Family**

(i) Patrilocal Family: When the newly married wife leaves her parents' house and goes to reside with her husband's parents in their house; such families are known as patrilocal families. Most of the Indian families are of this type.

(ii) Matrilocal Family: When the married couple resides in the wife's parental residence then such families are known as matrilocal families.

Such families are formed when the wife doesn't leave her mother's house even after marriage and it is the husband who comes to reside with her, leaving his parent's residence. Tribes of north-east such as Garo and Khasi have matrilocal families.

(iii) Neolocal Family: When a newly-wedded couple sets up a new home, independent from either of the parents, then such families are known as neolocal families. In western countries, young couples prefer neolocal family i.e. they prefer to set up a new home which is separate from either of their parents' residence.

In some tribes of Australia, the married couple resides with or near a maternal uncle of the groom rather than with the parents of either of the spouses. Such families are known as avunculocal families.

2. Authority: Families are of two types seen from the point of view of authority. These are:

(i) Patriarchal Family**(ii) Matriarchal Family**

(i) Patriarchal Family: The family in which father is the formal head and the ruling power in the family is called patriarchal family. The authority of the father is taken as absolute and final in such families. Women and children have to follow the decisions and dictates of the male members of the family. Traditional Indian and Chinese families are examples of patriarchal families. Most patriarchal families are patrilocal and patrilineal.

(ii) Matriarchal Family: The family in which the mother is the central figure and her authority is supreme, is called matriarchal family. In such families usually the mother wields power and authority in the house. Matriarchal families are found among Nayers of Kerala and Khasi and Garo tribes of Assam. Most matriarchal families are matrilineal and matrilocal.

3. Size: Family is divided into two types on the basis of size:

(i) Nuclear Family**(ii) Joint/extended Family**

(i) Nuclear Family: It is made up of a husband, wife and their unmarried children. This type of family is small in size. In urban areas, nuclear family is more popular. The size of the family is kept small because of lack of living space, economic problems, a feeling of individualism and other factors. It is

the basic grouping of married couple and their children and is also known as immediate, primary or conjugal family.

(ii) Joint/extended Family: It is composed of blood and marital relatives of three or more generations who identify themselves as members of a particular family. The members of the joint family provide financial and other kinds of help to each other and follow joint family norms. They usually live under one roof and function under one common authority.

Extended family is an extension of the nuclear family, very often by addition of other closely related people. Such addition may be along collateral lines by including more than one spouse or several blood relatives.

Polygamous families where a person can marry more than one wife or husband are examples of such families.

The extension of a primary family can also be along three or more generations. This is the prevalent form of joint family in India.

Q3. Discuss the nature of nuclear family in Indian society.

Ans. The traditional family structure in India has been thought to be that of joint family since ancient days.

Joint family in India has been defined as a group of people belonging to three or more generations who live under the same roof, eat food cooked from the same hearth and participate in common activities. These people, depending upon the nature of kinship system, have common rights in the property. However, others feel that it is not always necessary to share residence and kitchen for members of a joint family. Sociologists feel that fulfillment of following three conditions is enough to call a family as *joint*. These conditions are: generation depth, rights and obligations and property.

Two or more families having kinship relationships who may live separately, but share emotional bonds, joint property and function under one authority can also be termed as constituting a joint family.

Characteristics: In brief, the joint family in India is marked by the following characteristics:

- i. **It has an authoritarian structure:** The power to take decisions regarding matters related to family and individuals lie in the hands of head of the family. His/her decision is taken as final and everyone has to abide by it.
- ii. **It has familistic organisation:** It implies that the interest of the family as a whole is more important than the individual's interest. One has to sacrifice one's personal wishes, likes and dislikes, these go against family norms or rules or traditions.
- iii. **Status of members is determined by their age and relationship:** The status of a person higher in age is higher in a joint family than a person lower in age.

Similarly, a person is respected more because of the higher status in terms of marital or blood ties. A husband, an uncle, an aunt and the in-laws are respected because of higher status in a relationship. A person's ability and achievement are not given importance in determining status.

iv. Blood relationship gets preference over marital relationship: It implies that the husband-wife relationship is subordinate to father-son or brother-brother relationship.

v. The family functions on the ideal of joint responsibility: Everyone shares the problems of other members of the family and tries to help in whatever manner one can.

vi. All members get equal attention: The family income is pooled together and needs of the individual members are met according to their needs and not according to their contribution. However, the description of the joint family along with its characteristics as given above constitutes an ideal picture. In reality, therefore, joint family functions in less than ideal-manner having lost many of its ideal characteristics, at least partly.

The joint family system is useful for agricultural and business – based families because both activities require manpower and pooling of economic resources such as land and money.

Q4. Explain the significance of the family.

Ans. Family is significant because it has been regarded as the cornerstone of human society. It plays a vital role in the formation of human society by binding men, women and their children in a stable relationship with each other. It is called the nursery of human nature because the manner in which the children are brought up in a family decides to a great extent, the way they react to different situations. In other words, the family lays down the foundation of human personality.

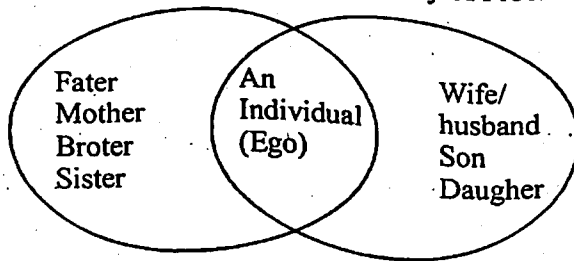
Family is also called the transfer-point of culture. As we are aware, culture is the man-made part of environment. A child becomes familiar with every aspect of culture in the family itself. When he becomes an adult, he imparts this knowledge about social norms, customs as well as material aspects of life to the younger generation.

An adult person is part of two types of families. The family in which one is born is called the *family of orientation*. A person is identified as son or daughter in this type of family. Such a family exerts formative influence on his life and personality.

The family which a person sets up after marriage is called the *family of procreation*. It is the family in which a married couple gives birth to children and brings them up.

Family of Orientation

Family of Procreation



The family is significant in every way for the individual as well as society and hence, its study is important in Sociology.

Q5. Identify the major forces responsible for change in the institution of family.

Or

Examine the factors responsible for change in joint family system in India. [Dec 08, Q 2]

Ans. Family, traditional as well as modern, has been undergoing changes under the impact of following factors: (i) Industrialisation (ii) Urbanisation (iii) Western culture (iv) Modern education (v) Legislative measures (vi) Quarrels in the family (vii) Emergence of various associations to perform different functions of family.

The structure i.e. composition and inter-relationships within the family have undergone significant changes under the impact of the above mentioned factors. The functions of family too have changed significantly in the modern era. The changes are discussed below:

☞ Size of the family has been considerably reduced under the impact of urbanisation and industrialisation. In urban areas, it is very difficult to find large accommodation for large-sized families. Moreover, the income of an individual is not sufficient to meet the requirements of large families. Hence, families in modern times consist basically of husband, wife and their unmarried children. Such families are known as nuclear families.

☞ Rise of nuclear families has changed the inter-relationship among its members. The members of nuclear family interact with each other on more equal terms. They no longer have to follow the dictates of the elders blindly. In nuclear families, the husband, wife and children discuss their problems and likes and dislikes with each other. The decisions regarding family matters and individual's life are taken collectively.

☞ Sometimes, conflict between older and younger generation is seen in the family because of their inability to understand each other's point of view. As a result, the level of discipline and devotion towards each other has declined.

Some parents do not take care of children adequately because of their jobs, busy schedule or desire of freedom from responsibilities of children.

Boys and girls do not find it necessary to marry the mates selected by their parents. They choose their marital partners on the basis of mutual attraction, career and occupational similarity, financial benefits and so on. Class, caste and compatibility between family-values are no longer very important.

Kinship-ties are not very strong in today's family set-up. The family members have become more self-centred and self-reliant. They do not spare much time, energy and money for their relatives or kinsmen.

The families have become child-centric. Parents spend most of their time, energy and money on their children. Due to break-up of joint family, they no longer have to compulsorily contribute towards the welfare of brothers and sisters. The entire life of the parents revolves around their children and all their future plans are made keeping their children in mind.

The functions performed by the family have been reduced to a substantial extent. Other agencies which cater to the needs of the family members have come up although their roles are specific and not holistic as is the case with the family. The *crèche*, day-care centres for children, old-people's homes, nursing homes, hostels, restaurants, banks, clubs and so on, are a few examples of agencies which have taken up varied family functions thereby reducing the ambit of its reach and relevance. However, the emotional support and the selfless devotion of family members are still hard to find elsewhere.

Family is no longer the unit of production in most of the societies. With the arrival of factory system of production, home is not the place for the production of goods. As a result, family members have to look for jobs outside their homes. This change has increased the physical and mental distance between family members.

Family is facing the problems of instability in western societies. Separation and increasing rate of divorce due to mutual disagreement has become common. This has put maximum emotional and social strain on children of divorced parents. They don't have anyone to support them in their formative years. Those parents who take care of children after divorce also face severe strain on their time and energies.

Some couples are living together without getting married as in western countries. They fear that if they get married to each other, then it will sooner or later result in divorce. Such living together without marriage is termed as a *live-in-relationship* or cohabitation. This is an alternative to family life in their view.

Some married and employed couples are opting not to have children despite sufficient financial stability. They consider children as a burden on themselves.

Such families are termed as DINK families.

☞ In Israel, a unique family system known as *Kibbutz* is found. A *Kibbutz* is a community of families and individuals which co-operate in the raising of children. The children reside in Children Homes away from parents. Each *Kibbutz* operates as a single household of 50 to 2000 people where children are treated as the responsibility of the whole community while the parents live in separate residences. The children spend weekends with their families.

However, in spite of structural and functional changes, the family still plays a significant role in ensuring socialisation of children and providing emotional support to its members. The task of procreation and upbringing of children is done most satisfactorily by the family only. The psychological satisfaction and social respect earned through marriage and successful family life is considered unparalleled in terms of quality. As a result, the family remains a universally indispensable institution.

Q6. Explain the universality of the institution of marriage in India.

Ans. Marriage is an important social institution. It is a relationship, which is socially approved. The relationship is defined and sanctioned by custom and law. The definition of the relationship includes not only guidelines for behaviour relating to sex but also regarding things like the particular way labour is to be divided and other duties and privileges. Children born of marriage are considered the legitimate offspring of the married couple. This legitimacy is important in the matter of inheritance and succession. Thus, marriage is not only a means of sexual gratification but also a set of cultural mechanisms to ensure the continuation of the family. It is more or less a universal social institution in India. The religious texts of many communities in India have outlined the purpose, rights and duties involved in marriage. Among the Hindus, for instance, marriage is regarded as a socio-religious duty. Ancient Hindu texts point out three main aims of marriage. These are *dharma* (duty), *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (sensual pleasure).

That is to say that marriage is significant from both the societal as well as the individual's point of view. Marriage is significant in that it provides children especially sons who would not only carry on the family name but also perform periodic rituals including the annual "*shraddha*" to propitiate the dead ancestors. Majority of the Hindus look upon son(s) as a support in old age to parents and as the most important source of economic enrichment to the family. Marriage, in the Hindu-system, enables a man to enter into the stage of a householder. Both a man and a woman are regarded incomplete without marriage. Even among other communities in India, marriage is regarded as an essential obligation. Islam looks upon marriage as "*sunnah*" (an obligation), which must be fulfilled by every Muslim. Christianity holds marriage as crucial to life and

lays emphasis on the establishment of a mutual relationship between husband and wife and on their duty to each other.

The significance attached to marriage is reflected in the fact that only a very small per centage of men and women remain unmarried. The Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India has indicated that only 0.5 per cent of women never marry in India. By and large girls are brought up to believe that marriage is a woman's destiny; married state is desirable and motherhood is a cherished achievement. Only a very small per centage of men and women remain unmarried by choice. Today, marriage is still considered important and necessary, and only few individuals remain unmarried by choice. Goals of marriage are, however, undergoing changes especially for the urban and educated sections of the population. The older notions regarding large size family are being replaced by preference for small size family. Marriage for self-fulfillment rather than primarily for procreation or societal welfare is also becoming prevalent.

Q7. Discuss the aspect of age at marriage in India.

Ans. In spite of legislations, and governmental and non-governmental efforts to educate the people about the dangers of early marriage, age at marriage is low in India. The 1971 Census data on marital status of women indicate that the average age of marriage for girls in more than one-third of the total number of districts in our country was below 15 years. The mean age at marriage for females for the year 1991 was 18.3. The female age at marriage was lowest in Rajasthan (17.5) followed by states of Madhya Pradesh and Bihar and it was highest in Kerala (22.3) followed by Assam and Punjab. In newspapers and journals we read about marriage melas, especially in rural areas, in which the average age of the bride is reported to be below fifteen years. Low age at marriage is related with the near universality of marriage in India. Marriage is regarded essential and thought of a girl's marriage is entertained right from her childhood. In some regions, the existence of clear-cut expectations, preferences and rules regarding choice of a marriage partner also lead to early marriage. The desire and concern to preserve the chastity or purity of women is yet another factor. In fact, till the 1920's among certain upper castes, pre-puberty marriages were not only popular but also mandatory. There is the belief that the onset of puberty is the right age for marriage for a girl as she is then ready for maternity. This is also another important factor leading to early marriage. Female age at marriage rose from 16.1 years in 1961 to 19.3 in 1991. The rural urban gap in female age at marriage for 1991 is 2 years and this indicates that in spite of rise in age at marriage a wide gap persists between the rural and urban areas of the country. It is important to point out on the basis of growing evidence that age at marriage has not been low for all communities in India.

For instance, among many of the hill tribes in India the average age at marriage has been above 15 years for girls. Also among the Christians, Parsis and some educated sections living in urban areas, the age at marriage has been above the minimum age prescribed by law. Raising the age at marriage among certain sections of the population. Research suggests that in urban areas and for the well to do in rural areas education and the need for employment of boys have raised the age of marriage. In states where the literacy rate is high, age at marriage is also much higher than in those states where literacy level is low. While, it is encouraging to note that education has helped in rising the age at marriage, it has however led to some unintended consequences. Educations combined with increasing demands for dowry have led to a rise in the age at marriage. Educated girls seek educated boys and the price (dowry) of an educated groom in the 'marriage market' is high. Since most marriages in India are arranged, parents arrange a marriage only when they meet the dowry demands. Thus, necessarily the marriages of the girls are postponed and age at marriage increases.

Q8. Examine the different forms of marriage in India. [June 08, Q 3]

Ans. Types and terms of marriage differ from society to society according to the norms or the rules related to marriage.

To understand the types of marriage, we would classify it according to the following criteria:

(i) Number of mates

(ii) Ways of acquiring mates

Types of Marriage on the Basis of Number of Mates: Marriage may be classified into two main types on the basis of number of husbands or wives a person may have at a time:

(a) Monogamy

(b) Polygamy

(a) Monogamy: Monogamy is that form of marriage in which a man/woman remains married to only one woman/man at a time. One can marry in certain extraordinary circumstances such as the death of the spouse or divorce. Monogamy is the most prevalent form of marriage the world over.

(b) Polygamy: In this form of marriage, a man or woman is permitted to marry more than one woman or man and live with all the wives/husbands at the same-time.

Polygamy may be further subdivided into two types:

(i) Polygyny

(ii) Polyandry

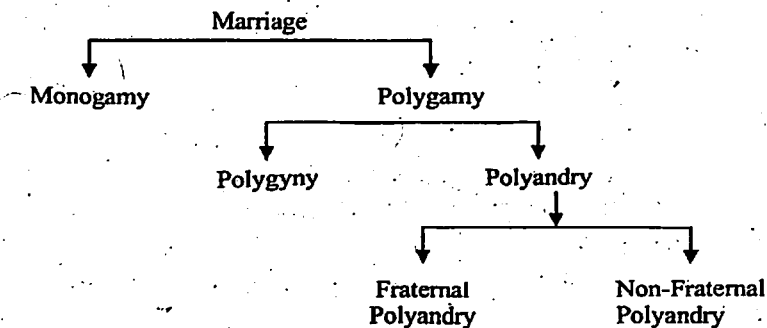
(i) Polygyny: Polygyny is that form of marriage in which a man is married to more than one woman.

Polygyny is permitted among the Muslims. Many tribal societies also follow polygyny. Historically also polygyny was practiced. In ancient India we might recall that Raja Dasratha, father of Lord Sri Ram, had three wives.

(ii) Polyandry: Polyandry is that form of marriage in which a woman is married to more than one man. In other words, under polyandry, a woman is allowed to have more than one husband at the same time.

In some tribes like the 'Khas' of Uttranchal, a woman marries men who are brothers. This practice is called fraternal polyandry. In the epic 'Mahabharata' we must have come across the name of Draupadi who was married to all the five Pandavas.

Type of marriage on the basis of number of mates



If the husbands of a woman are not brothers, it is called non-fraternal polyandry. Such marriages are found among the Nayers of Kerala.

It would be interesting to know that polygyny appears to be the norm in a large number of societies. But, monogamy is the most prevalent form of marriage all over the world.

Q9. Describe variations in the pattern of selection of spouse.

Ans. Every society lays down certain rules to govern the marital alliances among its members. Members are not allowed to marry whosoever they want. They have to abide by the prohibitive and prescriptive rules of marriage while selecting their marital partners. Some such rules are discussed here.

Prohibitive Rules: Prohibitive rules are those which put a restriction on the selection of mates. These rules forbid men and women from entering into marital alliance with a certain category of people. Such categorisation is done according to the religious norms and local customs.

Some of the widely prevalent prohibitive rules are as follows:

(i) Incest Taboo: Incest is prohibited in all human societies. incest implies sexual or marital relation between two persons, who are related to each other by blood ties or who belong to the same nuclear family.

In every society, marital relation is prohibited between father and daughter, mother and son and brother and sister. This prohibition is known as **incest taboo**.

Society also prohibits marriage among close kins. Among the Hindus of north India, for example, marriage among cousins, marriage with mother's brother, father's sister or brothers is also prohibited.

(ii) Exogamy: Exogamy is a custom which requires an individual to marry outside a specific group of which he is a member such as kinship group, a family, a clan, a village group or any other social group to which he may belong.

(iii) Endogamy: Endogamy is a custom that requires marriage within one's own social group. The social group may be one's own tribe or caste or religious group but not clan in most cases. Very rarely the clans are endogamous. Mostly, they are exogamous.

Tribes are endogamous social units. Castes among the Hindus are endogamous. Among the Muslims, there are two endogamous units, namely, 'Shia' and 'Sunni'. Among the Christians too, there are endogamous groups such as 'Roman Catholics' and 'Protestants'.

Traditionally, castes in India are endogamous groups. But inter-caste/inter-varna marriages in ancient times were permitted under the rules of hypergamy and hypogamy.

(iv) Hypergamy: It is a social custom according to which a boy from upper caste can marry a girl from lower caste. Thus, a Brahmin boy can marry a girl from any lower caste or varna.

(v) Hypogamy: It is the marriage in which a boy from lower caste marries a girl from higher caste. Such marriages were not encouraged in traditional Indian society. Hence, it was not possible for a Brahmin girl to marry lower caste/varna boy and get acceptance from society.

Prescriptive and Preferential Rules: There are some other rules which give preference to certain types of alliances over others. In certain cases, there is prescription to marry within a particular kin group. These customs which prescribe or direct implicitly as to whom one should marry or prefer to marry are called prescriptive rules. Some of these rules are as follows:

(i) Parallel cousin marriage: It is the marriage between the children of either two brothers or two sisters. Such marriages are aimed at strengthening the bond among two brothers or two sisters. Such marriages are exception to the rules of clan exogamy. Parallel cousin marriage is preferred among Muslims.

(ii) Cross cousin marriage: It is the marriage of a man with his maternal uncle's daughter or paternal aunt's daughter. Alternatively, it may be defined as a marriage of a girl with her mother's brother's son or father's sister's son. This form has been the preferred form of marriage in several parts of India.

such as among Gonds of Madhya Pradesh and Oraon and Kharia tribes of Jharkhand. This is also practiced in Maharashtra. Maternal uncle is the prescribed mate among some South Indian Hindus.

(iii) **Levirate:** Levirate is the custom in which a widow marries her husband's brother. Generally, husband's younger brother marries the widow. This practice is prevalent among the Toda of Nilgiri Hills.

(iv) **Sororate:** Sororate is the custom in which a widower marries the younger sisters of his deceased wife. It is generally found among the tribes of central India such as Gond or Baiga.

Q10. Describe the basic rites of marriage in different communities.

Ans. In Hindu society, marriage is an important *Sanskrit*. It is a religious duty. *Sanskrit* is a ritual which purifies a person. Every Hindu must perform the religious duty i.e. *dharma* of getting married. Through this, a person enters the second stage of life i.e. 'Grihastha Ashram', leaving behind the stage of *Brahmacharya Ashram*.

In traditional Hindu society, only a married man gets the right to participate fully in all the social and religious activities along with his wife.

The main objectives behind a Hindu marriage are the following:

(i) Performance of religious duty - *Dharma*

(ii) Giving birth to children - *Praja*

(iii) Sex satisfaction - *Rati*

Among the three objectives of Hindu marriage, the objective of *Dharma* has been given the greatest importance. It implies that one must marry in order to fulfill one's socio-religious duties. A married couple is expected to give birth to children who may carry on the family tradition to the next generation.

Hindu marriage as a sacrament: Hindu marriage is a sacrament which purifies a person. Marriage is considered so sacred that there is no provision for divorce in the Hindu texts. In fact, marriage is considered a union of two souls which remain faithful to each other forever.

The marital rites are performed before the most sacred God *Agni* by reciting passages or *mantras* from the sacred scriptures. A sacred person, the *Brahmin*, solemnises the marriage.

The bride and the groom exchange many promises to remain dutiful and faithful to each other. Well-wishers bless the couple for a happy married life.

Traditional Forms of Hindu Marriage: In the traditional Hindu society, the following eight forms of marriages were recognised. Out of these, first four were considered proper and desirable and the last four were regarded as undesirable.

► In *Brahma* marriage, a father gifts his daughter to a learned man of good character.

► In *Daiva* marriage, the father gifts his daughter to a Brahmin priest.

► In *Arsha* marriage, the groom presents some gifts like a pair of cows or bulls to the father of the bride before marriage.

► In *Prajapatya* marriage, a father gifts his daughter to a man after proper negotiation with his parents. Most of the marriages among the Hindus are of this nature.

► In *Asura* marriage, bride-price is given by the groom to the bride's father.

► In *Gandharva* marriage, the bride and the groom like each other and marry without taking the consent of the parents.

► In *Rakshasa* marriage, the girl is kidnapped and married without the consent of either the girl or her parents.

► In *Paisacha* marriage, the girl who is asleep, intoxicated or of unsound mind is forced to surrender her chastity. Later, the girl is given the status of wife.

Muslim Marriage as a Contract: Muslim marriage or *Nikah* is a civil contract between a man and a woman for the purpose of legalising sexual relationship and the procreation of children. In this sense, it is different from Hindu marriage. The Muslim marriage-contract or agreement can be broken at the will of the husband or wife. It can also be broken if either the husband or the wife fails to carry out the promises made at the time of marriage.

Muslim marriage is solemnised in the presence of witnesses including a priest-the *Maulvi*. The *Maulvi* recites holy hymns from the *Kuran* and asks the bride and the groom to give their consent. Also, the husband must agree to pay the dower or the *Mahr* to his wife in the event of a divorce.

Forms of Muslim Marriage: There are four forms of Muslim marriage:

(i) *Nikah* or 'Sahi *Nikah*'

(ii) *Fasid*

(iii) *Muta*

(iv) *Batil*

☐ The marriage which conforms to the rules of marriage as laid down in the *Kuran*-the holy book of Muslims, is termed as regular marriage or *Nikah* or *Sahi Nikah*.

☐ The marriage which fails to conform to a few conditions initially is called 'irregular marriage' or *Fasid*. The irregularity can later be removed and it can be converted into *Sahi Nikah*.

☐ Muslims also have a system of temporary marriage and it is called *Muta*. This type of marriage contract is valid for a fixed period of time and after the expiry of this period, marital relation is automatically dissolved. However, the children born out of this temporary union are given a share in the father's property.

☐ *Batil* is that form of mating which cannot be regularised because it violates certain basic principles of Muslim marriage.

Customary Marriages

Rites constitute an important component of marriage among many communities there are sections or groups of people who do not have religious rites in marriage. Marriages with no rites are referred as customary marriages. These marriages are based on simple practices. For instance, in some groups living in the Himalayan tract, putting a ring in the bride's nose is a customary form of marriage. Customary forms of marriage are generally found among those groups where divorce and secondary marriages are permitted and practiced. Secondary marriage of a widow or a separated or divorced woman is usually celebrated in a simple way, which indicates essentially the renewal of her married state. Today marriage rites have been condensed to a great extent. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 provides for secular and civil marriage before a registrar. This Act applies to all Indian citizens who chose to make use of its provisions, irrespective of religious affiliations. Civil marriage enables persons to avoid the expense of traditional weddings. However, weddings continue to be an expensive affair for a large majority of people. Large sums of money, gifts of jewellery, furniture, vessels, and clothes have to be bought and generally the expenses are more for the bride's side than the groom's side. This discussion takes us to the next topic of the transfer of goods and prestige that accompany marriage in India.

Q11. Discuss about the divorce and widow remarriage.

Ans. Divorce The possibilities and mechanisms of dissolving a marital union have varied through time, between and within communities. Hindu marriage is in theory a sacrament and irrevocable. However, among many *non-dwija* (or non-twice born) castes, divorce is customarily allowed. When we say non-twice born castes, we mean those castes, which do not observe the practice of performing the life-cycle rituals or Hindu *Samskara*. Their performance symbolises the second birth or social birth of a biological person and hence the term twice-born for the first three categories of Hindu castes—the Brahmin, Kshatriya and Vaishya, which must and do perform these rituals. The notion that marriage is indissoluble has gradually been eroded and through legislation, the right of divorce has been introduced in all legal systems in India. The grounds for divorce have been spelt out both by custom and by law in different communities. During 1940-48, several provinces and states passed laws permitting divorce for Hindus. The Special Marriage Act of 1954 introduced and '*clarified the grounds for divorce*'. It has been available to all Indians who have chosen to register their marriages under this Act. The Hindu Marriage Act of 1955 was amended several times since 1955 (the next one being in 1976) to incorporate a wide range of grounds for divorce available to both men and women coming under the purview of this Act. Some of the important

grounds for divorce outlined by law are:-

- i) impotency,
- ii) lunacy
- iii) Disappearance for seven years,
- iv) Contagious disease,
- v) Rape,
- vi) homo-sexuality
- vii) Bestiality

Now adultery and cruelty have also become the grounds on which divorce may be sought. The condition that one can apply for divorce after three years of marriage has been reduced to one year. The waiting period of divorce by mutual consent is now only 6 months. Among the Muslims, marriage is a contract and divorce is allowed. Muslim law provides for different types of divorce of which *talaq* and *khol* need special mention. *Talaq* is an exjudicial divorce. It becomes effective if pronounced thrice unilaterally by the husband. It signifies the power the husband has to divorce his wife at will. The other form of divorce *khol* takes place by mutual consent. Public attitude to divorce in a Hindu dominated culture is not yet very liberal in spite of the legal permission for divorce. In many communities of the Indian population, divorce even when it is required is not sought, despite legal provisions. Even in cases where women have turned to the legal system for help, law is not very clear about the rights of a woman in her marriage. For instance, the respective judgments of Andhra Pradesh High Court and Punjab High Court in two cases relating to the Hindu woman's right in the matter of being a wife or a mother reflect the ambiguity. In one case in Andhra Pradesh the judgment favored the woman. Her right to decide whether she wanted to bear the child of the husband whom she did not find compatible was upheld. In the other case in Punjab, the wife was held guilty for refusing to bear a child by her spouse whom she did not find compatible. Women activists point out that though our constitution supports the notion of equality between sexes, the laws passed to promote such a notion have not been able to end the discrimination shown toward women. Even among the Muslims, where divorce has been permitted for a long time, laws favour men more than the women.

Widow Remarriage

Certain sections of the Indian population have a tradition of widow remarriage. Levirate alliances have been reported among the Ahirs of Haryana, some Jats and Girjans and several castes in U.P. and among the Kodagu of Mysore. In a levirate marriage, a man is obliged to marry the widow of a brother. In many cases of the Hindu fold, widow remarriage has been customarily sanctioned and practised. Only those castes which imitate the life-style and values of the high castes adopt the practice of banning widow remarriage. Widow remarriage

is permitted among the Muslims, Christians and Parsis. Among the Jains local and caste customs determine the issue. Generally, everywhere the widower has the right to remarry. The 1971 census of India showed that there were 8 million widowers as against 23 million widows. In the year 1991, among the elderly (60+ age group) the percentage of widows was 60.7 and that of widowers was 19 (Census of India 1991). It is often said that the problem of widow remarriage is the problem only of a section of society because only the high castes put a strict ban on widow remarriage. Not only this, in the past, widows of some priestly castes, royal families were also expected to commit the practice of sati or widow burning. The practice of widow burning comprises self-immolation of the widow on the funeral pyre of her husband. Respect is paid to such women who end their lives as a mark of devotion to their husbands. As early as in the nineteenth century, reformers like Vidyasagar, fought against the practice of sati and exploitation of widows. In 1856, the Hindu Widows Remarriage Act legalised the marriage of widows of all castes. Traditional notions about widow remarriage and the treatment of widows still seem to be prevalent: Widows are still regarded as inauspicious; they are not expected or permitted to participate in certain religious and social functions. It is shocking to hear that widows are still burnt alive on their husband's pyre and there is a section of the population, which glorifies such act. The most recent case of law being enacted to protect the woman victim is the law against the practice of widow burning or sati. This was passed by the Parliament in response to a national demand and reaction following the burning of a young educated woman, Roop Kanwar, on the funeral pyre of her husband in Deorala a village in Rajasthan. The Act is called Commission of Sati (Prevention) Act, 1987.

Q12. Define the kinship system.

Ans. Kinship is a method of acknowledging relationship. It is a social bond initiated by genetic or blood ties as well as marriage. Kinship ties are of fundamental importance in every society all over the world. Everywhere, it is the social recognition and expression of family relationships formed on the basis of marriage, procreation or adoption. In fact, social recognition of a relationship is more important than biological bond. If a relationship is not recognised or accepted socially, then it is not included within the realm of kinship.

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Q13. Describe the main approaches to the study of kinship system in India.

Ans. Kinship in India covers descriptions, comparisons and analytical problems based on the findings from various regions. Approaches of kinship can be broadly classified under two headings

(i) the Indological approach

(ii) the Anthropological approach.

Here, we will discuss these approaches one by one.

Indological Approach

The social institutions of Indian society are rooted in literary and learned traditions, many sociological studies have made use of textual sources for explaining the ideological and jural bases of our institutions. For example, K.M. Kapadia (1947) has used classical texts to describe Hindu kinship. *Hindu Social Organisation* by P.H. Prabhu (1954) is also based on Sanskrit texts. Similarly, Irawati Karve (1940, 43-44 and 1958) and G.S. Ghurye (1946, 1955) have extensively worked on Indian kinship system. Both have used textual sources to explain kinship pattern in different regions of India from a socio-historical perspective. We can, therefore, say that Indological approach to the study of kinship has provided a framework to understand the elements of continuity and change in the system.

Anthropological Approach: Descent and Alliance

Anthropologists have looked at kinship systems from the point of view of descent and alliance.

Descent Approach

Kinship in our society is used for establishing clear-cut corporate social units. Each one of us is a member of such a cooperating and closely bound group of people. One can depend upon the help and support given by such people. Such cooperating local groups are always larger than elementary families of spouses and their children. When these groups are recognised or defined on the basis of shared descent, anthropologists call them descent groups. Formally speaking there are six possible avenues for the transmission of descent group membership, from parents to children. These are (i) patrilineal — where descent is traced in the male line from father to son, (ii) matrilineal — where descent is traced in the female line from mother to daughter, (iii) double where descent is traced in both the father's line as well as mother's line for different attributes such as movable property in one line and immovable in another, (iv) cognatic (bilateral) — where attributes are transmitted equally through both parents. Here no unilineal groups can be formed but group structure can be cognatic, that is, the group of kinspersons on the father's and mother's side. Membership can be acquired through either the father or the mother, (v) parallel descent — a very rare form of descent where descent lines are sex specific. Men transmit

to their sons while women to their daughters, and finally, (vi) cross or alternative type descent — this is also very rare. Here men transmit to their daughters and women to their sons. In India, we generally find the patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems. Of the two, patrilineal system is more common. The description and analysis of kin relationships in a descent/group have given us a fairly comprehensive sociological understanding of certain types of kinship systems in India.

Alliance Approach

Alliance is a concept that figured prominently in the study of kinship systems in India. Kinship includes the consideration of the patterns and rules of marriage when a sociologist pays special attention to these aspects of kinship the alliance approach to understand the patterns of kinship. Many studies of kinship in India have focused on marriage as an alliance between two groups and on kinship terminology, as a reflection of the nature of alliance. Because of their concentration on relationships arising out of marriage, we say that these studies follow the alliance approach. The main exponent of this approach is Louis Dumont (1950, 1953, 1957 and 1959, 1962 and 1966). He has emphasised the role played by marriage in the field of kinship in South India. By showing the opposition between consanguine and affine as reflected in the Dravidian kinship terminology, Dumont has made an important contribution to our understanding of kinship system in India in general and of South India in particular. He has applied to South India a structural theory of kinship. It brings out the repetition of intermarriage through the course of generations. This pattern highlights the classification of kinsmen into two categories of parallel and cross relatives. The alliance approach to the study of kinship has helped sociologists to discuss and explain the distinction between bride-givers and bride-takers. In addition, it has also included the discussion on the notion of hypergamy practice of dowry in relation to hypergamy and ideas of exchange in marriage. Now we turn to various dimensions of kinship systems in both North and South India kinship systems in both North and South India.

Q14. Discuss the major aspects of North Indian kinship system.

Ans. Irawati Karve have identified four cultural zones the Northern, the Central, the Southern and the Eastern zones. The northern zone, according to Karve, lies between the Himalayas to the north and the Vindhya ranges to the south. In this region, the majority of the people speak languages derived from Sanskrit. Some of these languages are Hindi, Bihari, Sindhi, Punjabi, Assamese and Bengali. The differences of language, history and culture bring about a high degree of variation within the region. The pattern of kinship organisations of the communities in this region on the basis of broad and general features. Basic structure and process of kinship system in this area in terms of four

features are i) kinship groups, ii) kinship terminology iii) marriage rules, and iv) ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin. Now, we take up each of these features to discuss the kinship system in North India.

Kinship Groups

Sociological studies in various parts of North India show that social groups, such as patrilineage, caste, sub-caste provide the basis for cooperation or conflict among the people.

i) Patrilineage: Kinship organisation in North India is based on unilineal descent groups. When the lineage membership group is traced on the basis of shared descent in one line, we call it a unilineal descent group. In North India, we have mostly patrilineal descent groups. This means that the descent is traced in the male line from father to son. Members of patrilineages cooperate as well as show antagonism in various situations. This takes place in terms of a) cooperation, b) conflict and c) inheritance of status and property.

a) Cooperation : Members of a patrilineage cooperate in ritual and economic activities. They participate together in life cycle rituals. In settlement of disputes, the senior men of the lineage try to sort out the matter within the lineage. Cooperation among lineage members is strengthened because they live close together in the same village. As the farm-lands of lineage members are normally located in the same village, they set up their houses almost next to each other. In this situation, there is constant exchange of material resources from the household of one member to another. This pattern of cooperation is amply described in the studies of kinship patterns in North India by Lewis. In terms of theoretical approach to the study of kinship the descent approach because they examine the pattern of cooperation and conflict in descent groups.

b) Conflict : Lineage members help each other, but conflict also characterises kinship relations among them. For example, T.N. Madan shows how in a Kashmir village, rivalry among brothers leads to partition of the joint family. Later, this rivalry takes more intense form in the relationships between the children of brothers.

c) Inheritance of Status and Property : One generation to the next, transmission of status and property takes place according to certain rules. In North India, these generally pass in the male line. In other words predominantly patrilineal mode of inheritance in North India. For this reason, composition of patrilineage becomes very important. Thus, the lineage fellows cooperate for economic and jural reasons. They share jural rights and therefore they cooperate in order to keep the rights. However, they also fight among themselves about who is to get more benefits from those rights. Pradhan (1965) has described how the Jats and other landowners of Meerut and other districts around Delhi have a certain portion of the village lands and how it cannot be transferred out of the lineage. To keep the land within the lineage, its male members have to

remain united. Thus, it becomes a main principle of their social organisation.

ii) Clan: A lineage is an exogamous unit, i.e., a boy and a girl of the same lineage cannot marry. A larger exogamous category is called the **clan**. Among the Hindus, this category is known as *gotra*. Each person belongs to the clan of his/her father and cannot marry within the clan or *gotra*. One usually knows about the common ancestor of lineage members as an actual person. But the common ancestor of a clan is generally a mythical figure. The members of a lineage live in close proximity and therefore have greater occasions for cooperation or conflict. Common interests or action do not characterise the relationships among clan members because they are usually scattered over a larger territory and their relationships are often quite remote. These relationships do become significant only in the context of marriage.

iii) Caste and Subcaste: Besides lineages and clans, the kinship system operates within the families of the caste groups, living in one village or a nearby cluster of villages. As castes are endogamous, i.e., one marries within one's caste, people belonging to one caste group are kinspersons in the sense that they are already related or can be potentially related to each other. Caste-fellows generally come forward to help each other when others challenge their honour and status. They may also hold rituals together and help each other economically. Sub-caste is the largest segment of caste and it performs nearly all the functions of caste, such as endogamy and social control. In this respect, the internal structure of the sub-caste would provide us the frame work within which we can see the operation of kinship system. The members of a sub-caste cooperate as kinspersons. They, depending on the context, work together as equals in the sphere of ritual activities and political allies in socioeconomic activities. As Vidyarthi has shown in the case of a very small subcaste, one may trace one's relationship with most members of the subcaste. On the other hand, in the case of a subcaste spreading over many villages, one may be limited to maintaining relations with only a part of the total number of kin. Klass (1966) in his study of marriage rules in Bengal calls this part of the total as one's 'effective jati' i.e., those people of the sub-caste with whom one actually has relationships of cooperation or conflict among the subcaste kin, we should also include those related to a person through marriage. Here, generally a person's kin through mother are called uterine kin and those through spouse are known as affinal kin. These relatives are not members of one's family or lineage or clan. They are expected to help and support each other and, actually do so when an occasion arises for such an action. While a person belongs to only one lineage, one clan or one sub-caste, he would always have a string of relatives who do not belong to his lineage/clan/sub-caste.

Here we should mention how sociologists, following the descent approach to study kinship systems, try to explain the fact of special place of the relationship

between a person and his/her mother's brother. For example, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown (1958) went to the extent of coining a new term to express this relationship. Following the principle of filiation a person's relationship with his mother's brother is to be understood by the idea of filiations on mother's side or the principle of 'complementary filiations'. Without going into further details about this theoretical issue, we would like to tell you that those following the alliance approach like to explain the same fact in terms of repetition of intermarriage through generations.

Fictive Kin — Kinship among villagers. Often, people, who are not related either by descent or marriage, form the bonds of fictive kinship with each other. We find the evidence of such a practice in many tribal and village studies. B. Bandopadhyay (1955), L. Dube (1956), S.C. Dube (1951), S.K. Srivastava (1960) and L.K. Mahapatra (1968, 1969). On the basis of common residence in a village in North India, unrelated individuals may usually behave like brothers. Mahapatra (1969) points out that fictive kinship is a mechanism to provide even such kin who are not ordinarily found in a particular situation. For example, in North India where village exogamy is a normal practice, it is rare to find a brother to a daughter-in-law living in the same locality. She can get a brother only through a fictive relationship. In urban context, you must have frequently come across small children who call any older man 'uncle' and an older woman 'aunt'. This shows how easily we make use of kinship idiom in our day-to-day behaviour towards total strangers. These transitory relationships do not however assume much importance in terms of actual kin ties and behaviour associated with them.

In day-to-day interaction with our relatives, we use certain words to address them and certain other words to refer, identify and categorise them. These various kinds of words are collectively known as a kinship terminology. Examples of kinship terminologies are father, mother, wife, husband, aunt, uncle and so on.

These kinship terms help us understand the inter-relationship between various members of a family and their status and role within the family. 'Kin' terms give us a clue about the kind of family, its rule of residence and its rules of descent and other aspects of social organisation. Kinship terms are not merely linguistic in nature, but are also sociological, meaning related to an individual's status and behaviour.

Kinship terms are of various types. Anthropologists have adopted different bases to classify these terms.

(i) On the basis of linguistic structure. Kinship terms have been classified into three types:

(a) **Elementary Terms**: These terms are such that they cannot be further reduced or broken down into simpler words. Examples of such elementary

terms are father, mother, brother, sister, nephew, niece etc. In Hindi, we have elementary terms such as *mata*, *pita*, *bhai*, *bahen* etc.

(b) Derivative Terms: Those kinship terms which are coined by joining suffixes or prefixes to the elementary kinship terms are known as derivative kinship terms. Examples of such terms are grandfather, sister-in-law, step-son, great-grandfather and so on.

(c) Descriptive Terms: The kinship terms which are formed by combining two or more elementary terms are known as descriptive term. For example, wife's sister, brother's wife, son's wife, daughter's husband and so on. In Hindi we have, *mausera bhai*, *Chacheri bahen* etc.

(ii) On the basis of mode of use, kinship terms have been classified into two types:

(a) Terms of Address: Kinship terms which are used by us for addressing our kins or relatives are known as terms of address, for example, papa, daddy, *maa*, mummy, didi, *bhaiya* etc. In Hindi, terms of address are *annan*, *tambi*, *akka* etc. in Tamil.

(b) Terms of reference: Kinship terms which are used by us for indirectly referring to a person are known as kinship terms of reference. Examples of terms of reference are father, mother, brother and sister etc. In Hindi we have *pita*, *maa*, *bhai*, *bahen* etc. In Tamil, the terms of reference are *mama magu*, *magan*, *attai magal magan*.

(iii) On the basis of range of application: The kinship terms are of two types depending on the range of application of the terms:

(a) Denotative/isolative/descriptive term: The term which applies to only one particular kin category is known as descriptive/denotative/isolative term. For example, the term 'father' and 'mother' is applied to our parents only and to no one else.

(b) Classificatory term: The term which applies to persons of two or more kinship categories is known as classificatory term. For example, the term 'cousin' is used for referring to father's brother's son, father's sister's son, mother's brother's son as well as to mother's sister's son. Similarly, the term 'uncle' refers to mother's brother, father's brother, mother's sister's husband and father's sister's husband.

Lineage: Family is bilateral but lineage is a unilateral descent group. It consists of all the consanguineal blood relatives who claim their descent from a known common ancestor or ancestors who existed in reality in the known past. The ancestor is not a myth as is the case with a clan. Lineage is an exogamous group. It is a unilateral descent group, it implies that a lineage includes all such family members who belong to the father's line alone. If the ancestor is a male figure, then the lineage is called patrilineage. The descent is traced in the male line from father to son. If the lineage is traced from a female figure, it is called

matrilineage. Lineage members of a matrilineal group trace relationship to each other through the mother.

Clan: A clan is also a unilateral descent group. It includes a set of kins whose members believe themselves to be descended from a common ancestors, but the actual genealogical link may not be demonstrated. The common ancestor is often a mythical figure such as a saint or a *Rishi* in case of Hindu society. It may also be a supernatural character or a totemic object such as tiger, fish and snake etc.

Among the Hindus the common descent is traced from some sages such as Kashyap, Bhardwaj, Gautam etc. In fact, the common ancestor of the kinsmen is most often an unknown figure or object in the far off antiquity.

The members of a clan consider themselves to be blood relatives of each other as they believe in common descent or blood tie. Hence, most often, the members of a clan do not marry each other. In other words, the clan is an exogamous kinship group.

The clan is patrilineal when the descent is traced through male lines. If the descent is traced through female line, it is called matrilineal clan, as found among Khasi or Garo of north-east India.

Clan is also known as '*Gotra*' in Hindi. The clan grouping is mainly taken into account while initiating marriage negotiations. Marriage is negotiated only with those who do not belong to one's own clan.

Phratry: A phratry is unilateral descent group composed of two or more clans which are supposedly interrelated.

Like clan, the phratry organisation is also exogamous. The members of phratry organisation believe that they have a common ancestor.

The clans constituting a phratry may retain their individual identifies. But, they fulfill special obligations on ceremonial occasions.

Moiety: Moiety is a large social group that results from the splitting of a society into two equal or unequal halves on the basis of descent. Each half thus formed is called a moiety.

The members of a moiety have a belief in a common ancestor which may or may not be actually traceable.

Each moiety is again sub-divided into a number of phratries. Each phratry is split up into a number of clans and each clan into a number of lineage and finally, each lineage into a number of families.

The Aimol Kuku tribe of Manipur has a set of moieties which are further divided into phratries and so on.

The two moieties provide marital patterns to each other as members of one moiety cannot marry each other. But, the Toda moieties are endogamous, although they are further sub-divided into exogamous clans.

Marriages within the Sub-caste

Local term is the idea of the status of various units within the sub-caste. Taking the example of the Sarjupari Brahmin of Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh, studied by Louis Dumont the three subcastes of Sarjupari Brahmins of this area is divided into three houses which range hierarchically in status. The marriages are always arranged from lower to higher house. The popular saying in North India that 'the creeper must not go back'. The same idea is reflected by another North Indian saying that 'pao pujke, ladki nahin le jainge'. This shows clearly that marriage rules in North India maintain hierarchical relationship between the bride-givers and bride-takers. In terms of negative rules of marriage in North India, the above description reflects the rule that a man cannot marry his father's sister's daughter or his patrilineal cross cousin. This is called the rule of no reversal, as depicted.

Q15 Discuss about the Kinship System in South India. [June 09, Q.11]

Or

Distinguish between cross-cousin marriages with suitable examples.

Ans. South Indian Kinship System: The states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala are generally considered as South India where the languages of the Dravidian family are spoken. In the region occupied by these four states, we find a fairly common pattern of kinship organisation. Like in the North, we find diversity in the kinship pattern in the South too. The state of Kerala is distinct because of its matrilineal system of descent and the practice of inter-caste hypergamy. Secondly despite common elements, each of these four linguistic regions may have its distinct socio-cultural patterns of kinship.

Kinship Groups

Kin relatives in South India are mainly categorised in two groups namely, the patrilineage and the affine.

Patrilineage: In South India, just as in North India, relating to various categories of kin beyond one's immediate family implies a close interaction with members of one's patrilineage. The patrilocal residence amongst the lineage members provides the chances for frequent interaction and cooperation. Thus, the ties of descent and residence help in the formation of a kin group. Such a group is recognised in both South and North India. For example, K. Gough (1955) in her study of the Brahmins of Tanjore district describes patrilineal descent groups, which are distributed in small communities. Each caste within the village contains one to twelve exogamous patrilineal groups. Dumont (1986) in his study of the Pramalai Kallar of Madurai in Tamil Nadu describes kin groups in terms of patrilineal, patrilocal and exogamous groups, called *kuttam*. All members of the *kuttam* may form the whole or a part of one or several villages. It may be subdivided into secondary *kuttam*. Each *kuttam* bears the

name of its ancestor, which is also the name of the chief. The name is inherited by the eldest son who is also the holder of the position of chief in the group. The ritual activities during harvest season, when food is plenty, all the members of the group are invited and they collectively worship in the temple of the *kuttam*. In the economic sphere, as land is owned by the male members of the *kuttam*, there are frequent fights between brothers or coparceners, as opposed to the free and friendly relations among affinal relatives. Thus, it is said amongst the Kallar that brothers or coparceners do not joke. The coparceners are known as *pangali*. In the classificatory system of South Indian kinship terminology, they are opposed to the set of relatives.

Affinal Relatives: Opposed to the members of a patrilineage, the kin group of affinal relatives (those related through marriage). Beyond the patrilineage are the relatives who belong to the group in which one's mother was born, as well as one's wife. They are a person's uterine (from mother's side) and affinal (from wife's side) kin, commonly known as *mama-machchinan*. In this set of relatives are also included the groups in which a person's sister and father's sister are married. The nature of interaction between a patrilineage and its affine, as described by Dumont (1986) is always cordial and friendly.

Indirect Pangali: If group A is one's patrilineage and group B has one's *mama machchinan*, then members of group C, which has *mamamachchinan* of group B, will become classificatory brothers to people in group A. Such classificatory brothers are called *mureikku pangali*. These relatives, though called a kind of *pangali*, are never confused with actual coparceners or sharers of joint patrilineal property. Beyond this circle of relatives, the rest are only neutral people.

Kinship Terminology

The linguistic expression of kin relationships in Dravidian languages follows a clear-cut structure with a great deal of precision. Main features of this system, according to Louis Dumont are :

Parallel and Cross-cousins

Parallel cousins are those who are the children of the siblings of same sex. This means that children of two brothers or, of two sisters are parallel cousins to each. The kin terminology in South India clearly separates the two categories of cousins. There are very good reasons for doing so because in South India, parallel cousins cannot marry each other while cross-cousins can. If the system of terminology does not distinguish between the two categories, there would have been utter confusion in the minds of the people. But as any speaker of one of the four Dravidian languages will tell you, there is never any doubt as to who is one's parallel cousin, with whom you behave as a brother/sister and who is one's crosscousin with whom one is to remain distant and formal. The parallel cousins are referred as brothers/sisters.

Nature of Kinship Terminology

The distinction between parallel and cross-cousins combined with the classificatory nature of terminology makes the Dravidian kinship terms a mirror image of the kinship system in South India. The terminology becomes classificatory in the following manner. The person's own generation is terminologically divided into two groups.

a) One group (known as *Pangali* in Tamil) consists of all the brothers and sisters, including one's parallel cousins and the children of the father's parallel cousins.

b) The other group comprises cross-cousins and affinal relatives such as wife/ husband of the category (a) relatives. In Tamil, this category is called by the term of *mama-machchinan*.

One's Own Generation

This bi-partition applies to the whole generation of a person. All one's relatives in one's own generation are systematically classified in this way. There is no third category of relatives. People falling into neither category are not considered to be relatives. The Tamil term for category (a) is *pangali*, which means 'those who share'. The word *pangali* has connotations of both the general and the specific kind. In its general sense, it refers to classificatory (*murei*) brothers, who do not share a joint property. They are all reckoned as *pangali* (brothers). In its specific sense, the word '*pangali*' refers to strictly those people who have a share in the joint family property. Here we are more concerned with the classificatory (*murei*) connotation of this term. The two categories are both opposed and exclusive to each other. This classification, which has been explained above in terms of relatives in one's own generation, is applied to groups, lineages, villages and so on. This bi-partition in terms of both the generation above one's own and the generation below one's own. The two categories of kin are observed in one's father's generation and in one's children's generation.

Ascending Generation

Two classes of male kin are distinguished in the father's generation. One class is the side of the father, and the other class is the side of the mother's brother. With one's father are classified in one group all his brothers and also the husband of mother's sister (also termed *periyappa orchittappa/sinappa* in Tamil). With the mother's brother (*maman*) are classified father's sisters' husbands. All immediate affines, for example, the father-in-law, are classed with the corresponding cross-relatives, i.e. the mother's brother or the *maman*.

Descending Generation

The generation below one's own we have again the same principle operating. With one's daughter and son are classified children of one's parallel cousins. In Tamil, one's daughter is called *magal* and one's son is *magan*. So are one's

parallel cousin's children. On the other hand are placed one's daughter-in-law (*marumagal* in Tamil) and son-in-law (*marumagan*, in Tamil). The children of one's cross-cousins come in this category. This has to be so because they are potential spouses for one's children.

Affines of Affines

The principle of classificatory relationship into the categories of *pangali* and *mamamachchinan* extends to even those who are the affine of one's affine. As we have already seen, the rule is that one has to assign a class to each relative. If A is the affine of B who is an affine of C, then the relationship between A and C has to be, according to the above formulation, that of a *murei pangali* or classificatory brother. This is so because anyone who is related to you, and is not your *mamamachchinan* then has to be your *murei pangali* or classificatory brother.

Thus, we have seen how at the level of three generations — that of one's own, of one's father and of one's children — all kin relationships are classified into two opposite and exclusive categories. Secondly, this principle is also extended to those who are the affines of one's affines. Features of kinship terminology in South India. One is the factor of age distinction which classifies all kin into those older and those younger to ego. The other is related to the distinction in terminology on the basis of sex.

Age and Sex Distinction

By separating the older and younger relatives, the ego's generation is divided into two parts. Similarly, the father's generation is also divided into two parts. In Tamil, brothers and sisters and parallel cousins older to ego are called *annan/akka*, respectively, and those younger to ego are called *tambi/tangaichi*, respectively.

In the same way all brothers/sisters and parallel cousins older to one's father are called *periapt/periyamma* and younger ones are *chittappa/sinnappa/chithi sinnamma*, respectively. The sex distinction is paired, says Dumont, with the alliance distinction. As soon as a distinction is not necessary for establishing an alliance relationship, it is merged. This is what we find in the case of kin terms applied in grand-parental and grand children's generation. For the generation of one's grandchild, one does not distinguish between one's son's and daughter's children. Both are referred in Tamil, as *peran* (grandson) or *peththi*. Similarly, maternal grandfather/mother and paternal grandfather/mother are designated by a common term *tata* for grandfather and *patti* for grandmother. Merging of the sex distinction in generations of grandparents and grandchildren shows the boundaries where the relationship of alliance ceases to matter and the two sides can be assimilated into one category. The above description of kinship terminology in South India should not give you the impression that there are no variations in this general picture. In fact,

particular features of kinship terms in specific regions are of great interest to sociologists.

Q16. Explain the comparison of north and south Indian kinship systems.

[June-06, Q.2]

Ans. North India the kinship system is characterised by negative rules of marriage. The South Indian kinship system is characterised by positive rules of marriage. In North India, a marriage alliance links one family with an entirely new family and in fact one village with another village. In South India, most marriage alliances occur within a small kin group and the emphasis is laid on relationships on both the father's and mother's sides.

Further, there is almost no territorial exogamy. This results in co-activity among the affines. In North India co-activity takes place among only the lineage members. One's affined generally live in other villages and do not participate in one's day-to-day affairs. Thus, following the negative and positive marriage rules we encounter different types of kinship bonds in North and South India. Following the composition of kinship groups the kinship terminology in North India reflects the separation of kin related by blood from those related by marriage. While in South India, the kinship terminology emphasises the symmetry of relationships between the affines. The South Indian or Dravidian terminology is structured on the principle classificatory kin relationships and divides a generation into parallel and cross relatives. This distinction is crucial in South India which is irrelevant for the purpose of marriage alliances in North India. Secondly, marriage alliances in North India follow the principle of hypergamy. This means that the bride-givers are distinctly inferior to the bride-takers. In South India, preferable marriage is with one's multilateral and sometimes patrilineal crosscousins and sometimes intergeneration. This situation makes it difficult to brand the bride-takers as superior to the bride-givers. Already related kin cannot be treated as lower or higher after a marriage. It is easier to treat bride-givers as lower in North India because marital alliances are mostly made between unrelated and relatively unknown family groups. With reference to the Dravidian or South Indian system, Dumont considers that the principal marriage (usually a person's first marriage) links the persons of equal status. He calls it isogamy, i.e., the marriage between two equals. What we need to remember here is that the notion of hypergamy or the status of bride givers being lower than the status of bride-takers, also exists in South India but it is much less common because of the already existing relationships. The differences between the two systems in terms of status of women is : in North India, a girl enters the family of total strangers when she gets married and leaves her natal home. Her behaviour in her father's house is quite different from how she is expected to behave in her father-in-law's house. In South

India, from the woman's point of view, there is little difference between her family of birth and the family of marriage. She is not a stranger in her husband's house.

Similarities

The kinship systems without talking much about the link between caste and kinship. This does not mean that their relationship is either weak or irrelevant. The fact is that in both North and South India, caste and kinship are inextricably intertwined. The all India system of hierarchy and social stratification permeates the kinship system as well. The notions of purity and pollution are found influencing the kinship systems in terms of protecting the purity of one's blood. Another basic similarity is unilineality of the two kinship systems. In both North and South India we find the application of one principle of descent either matrilineal or patrilineal. Irrespective of a society being either patrilineal or matrilineal, the kinship systems in both regions emphasise the role of affinity in social relationships and networks. This means that relationships established through marriages are important in both systems. The distinction between bride-givers and bride-takers is recognised in both North and South India. Undoubtedly, the degree of emphasis on affinity does highlight the essential difference between the two systems. Yet, Dumont has tried to discover the underlying similarities between the kinship systems in North and South India. According to him, the very recognition of the distinction between bride-givers and bride-takers across North and South India shows the basic similarity in the kinship system.

Q17. Discuss the kinship organisation in matrilineal communities in North-East and South-West India.

[Dec 07, Q 6]

Ans. The patterns of kinship organisation in patrilineal societies give a brief account of the less common types of matrilineal descent system in India. These are in contrast to patrilineal descent system and provide us with examples of quite different patterns of kinship.

Matrilineal communities in India are confined to south-western and north-eastern regions only. In North India, the matrilineal social organisation is found among the Garo and Khasi tribes of Meghalaya and Assam. In South India, matrilineal is found in Kerala, in parts of Karnataka and Tamil Nadu and in the Union Territory of Lakshadweep. Among the matrilineal groups of both the Hindus and the Muslims in these regions property is inherited by daughters from their mothers. What a matrilineal system.

Matrilineal Descent System

In a matrilineal descent system, the children trace relationship through mother. A matrilineal descent system should not be confused with matriarchal system. In matriarchy, women also hold power. In matriliney, though descent is traced

through women, power does not normally lie in their hands. Social control and power of decision-making regarding land and other property is held by men. Thus, we can clearly say that in matrilineal system women perpetuate the line of descent and children follow the social status of their mother. Through the mother they acquire a right in property. Correspondingly, we also notice that here, the birth of a male child is not a special occasion. Matrilineal descent is linked with those economic systems which recognise women's independence and their right to organise their living arrangements themselves. In these systems, men do help in some economic activities, like hunting, fighting and trading. In some cases, large-scale changes in the economic system do not reflect corresponding changes in the traditional social organisation. Often even the change in religion has not much affected the patterns of kinship and marriage. The factors such as market economy, access to education, legal changes, diversification of occupational structure, have brought no changes in matrilineal communities. These have definitely affected patterns of residence after marriage, rules of succession and structure of authority in the family. Now we first discuss the pattern of kinship organisation among the matrilineal communities of north-east India.

Matrilineal Groups in North-east India

The matriliney is represented, in the north-east, mainly by the Garo and the Khasi in the states of Meghalaya and Assam. We will now discuss in brief the broad features of the kinship organisation in each of these two groups.

i) The Garo

Among the Garo tribals who are found mainly in the state of Meghalaya, a matrilineage is represented by the households of daughters. These households come out of the original household which is continued by retaining one daughter within its fold. The husband (*nokma*) of this daughter inherits the rights and duties of the head and manager of the household (*nok*), while the daughter inherits the property. Unmarried daughters and sons live with their mother, while married daughters, except the one living in the original household, set up households near their mother's house. The married sons leave their mother's house to join their wives.

A matrilineage is understood by the term *machong*, which refers to an extended group of kin, living in a locality. All members of a matrilineage or *machong* trace descent from a common mother. The children take the name of their *mother's clan*. In the matter of tracing descent and passing on property, mother is the pivot around which the Garo society revolves. But decision-making regarding land and other property and management of the affairs of the household (*nok*), lie with men. As authority is exercised within the framework of a lineage, some men of the lineage have to remain in the village within its fold, while others may go and live in the families of their spouses. Thus, a Garo village generally includes most women of the core lineage (or lineages) together with

their husbands and off spring. In addition, it has also some men who belong to these core lineage (or lineages).

In this way we can clearly see that a cooperating group in a Garo village comprises a unilineally related core. So kinship relationships begin with those in the immediate family and extend to the cooperating group (*nok*) and lineage (*machong*). Further they extend to the village and village cluster. The Garo are divided into two phratries (*katchi*). A phratry is a kinship unit of the tribe. The two kinship units among the Garo are named the *Marak* and the *Sangma*, respectively. There are no intermarriages between the two phratries. The dual social organisation of the Garo gives them the ever-widening circles of kin relatives within each phratry.

Kinship groups are involved in the process of settling disputes. Mostly members of a matrilineally defined kindred take action in these matters. The institutionalised role of the headman is the basis of the organisation of local village groups.

After marriage the pattern of residence is matrilocal. This means that after marriage the son-in-law lives in his wife's parents' house. He becomes the *nokrom* of his father-in-law. After the death of the father-in-law, a *nokrom* marries his wife's mother and becomes the husband of both the mother and the daughter. According to Burling (1963) a man's marriage with his mother-in-law is only an economic arrangement to enable the son-in-law to succeed his father-in-law as the head of the *nok*. The Garo have the custom of avoidance between a mother-in-law and her son-in-law during her husband's life-time. That is why the marriage between the two after the father-in-law's death, is seen only as an economic arrangement by Burling (1963). If a woman becomes a widow before there comes a *nokrom* or a son-in-law in the family, she cannot remarry without the permission of the family of her deceased husband. However, children from such a union belong to the lineage of the mother.

Property owned by a matrilineage (*machong*) cannot pass out of it. It goes from mother to daughter. In a family of more than one daughter the mother selects her heiress (the *nokna*). At the present time, other daughters in the family also get a small portion of the parental property at their marriage. These daughters usually set up their own family units. In a matrilineage a son cannot inherit property. A man as a husband can however make full use of his wife's property during her life-time. As mentioned before, some male members of the lineage remain in the village.

These people manage the day-to-day affairs of their sisters' families. This is known as the *nokpan* system in which the mother's brother or the maternal uncle has a very important place. He has a strong hold over his sister's children and acts as their father. Chie Nakane (1968) has shown that the Garo have two lines (a) the line of ownership of property and (b) the line of authority and management of property. The functions of both the lines are equally strong.

The first line is taken care of through the wife while the second line is managed through the husband. Thus, the co-residential core among the Garo is that of husband and wife. The rules of matrilineal cross-cousin marriage (a man's marriage with his mother's brother's daughter) and mother-in-law marriage (a man's marriage with his mother-in-law) are the two mechanisms to end the problems which arise out of the contradiction between the above mentioned two lines. Secondly, among the Garo, divorce is a rarity. However, incidence of adultery does lead to divorce.

ii) The Khasi

The Khasi are a matrilineal tribe, which lives in the hills of Meghalaya. These tribals are matrilineal in descent. This means they trace their descent through the mother. Inheritance and succession are also through the mother. Residence after marriage is matrilineal. This means that a man after his marriage lives with his wife's parents. The Khasi have exogamous clans, that is, two persons belonging to one clan cannot marry each other. They have a classificatory kinship terminology. This means that they address their lineal relatives (father, son etc.) by terms, which are also applied to certain collateral relatives. For example, the same term is applied to the father and to the father's brother. In other words, the terms for siblings are also applied to parallel cousins. The Khasi rules of marriage allow the matrilineal cross-cousin marriage. But levirate (marriage of a widow with her husband's brother) or sorority (marriage of a widower with his wife's sister) marriages are not allowed. They do not also practice hypergamy, i.e. woman's marriage into a group higher in status than her own group. Polygyny as well as polyandry are unknown among the Khasi. A man may have a mistress. Among some sections of the Khasi, children from his mistress equally share inheritance rights to the father's property, if any is acquired by him, with other children in the family.

The Khasi follow the rule of ultimo geniture. System of inheritance by which the youngest daughter in the matrilineal societies (son in patrilineal societies) succeeds to the property. Thus, among the Khasi, the youngest daughter is the heiress. She, her husband and children live with her mother and father. She performs the family ceremonies and propitiates the family ancestors. The youngest daughter gets the main share of the property and other daughters are entitled to a share of their mother's property on her death only. The other daughters normally move out after their marriage and birth of first or second child. They live neolocally in nuclear family households with their husbands and children. The status of the man who marries the youngest daughter is quite different from that of the men who marry other daughters. The husband of the youngest daughter is the head of the household in which his wife and her parents live. The men marrying other daughters are, on the other hand, the masters of the houses they build and manage. Among the Khasi, the ideal type of co-residence

after marriage comprises a woman with either her husband or her brother.

The function of the line of ownership of property, i.e., the line of the mother is stronger than that of the line, which manages the property, i.e., the line of the father.

The Khasi say that all members of a clan descend from a woman ancestor. They are called 'one clan'. The 'one clan' is divided into sub-clans, which originate from those who descend from one great grandmother. The next division is the family, which comprises the grandmother, her daughters, and the daughters' children, living under one roof. The male child is generally lost to the family he marries into.

As a husband, the man is looked upon as a begetter. All property acquired by a man before marriage belongs to his mother. After marriage the property acquired by a man goes to his wife. The wife and children inherit such property. The youngest daughter receives the major share upon the death of a man's wife. If there is no daughter, only then the acquired property of a man is equally divided among the sons.

Matrilineal Muslims of Lakshadweep

Now we shift to a discussion of the matrilineal Muslim community of Lakshadweep.

These matrilineal Muslims are descendants of Hindu immigrants from Kerala. Later, they were converted to Islam. They follow duolocal residence. Duolocal residence implies that the husband and the wife reside separately. In this context it means that the husband visits his wife's home at night. The common unit of matrilineal on the island is the *taravad*. A *taravad* here is a group of both the males and the females with common ancestress in the female line. Name of a *taravad* is used by its members as prefix to their own names. By the fact of taking birth in a *taravad* each person gets the right to share the *taravad* property. This right passes through the female members. A male member has the same right of using the property of his *taravad*. The *taravad* is an exogamous unit, i.e., a member cannot marry another member of the same *taravad*. The *taravad* may comprise one domestic group or a number of domestic groups.

In this community, the father has a special role, which is associated with these people's conversion to Islam. Substantially spend money on ceremonies linked with his children's life cycle rituals. Marriage is quite fragile on the island. It incorporates few rights and responsibilities. People manipulate the inheritance of property on the basis of both the matrilineal and Islamic (patrilineal) principles. Islam provides procedure for easy divorce and islanders use it frequently. The institution of *taravad* as a unit of production and consumption, however, remains basically matrilineal.

These accounts of matrilineal communities give us a picture of contrast from the commonly found patterns of patriliney in India.