Unit 9
The Household and the Family

Contents

Learning Objectives

Unit 9 aims to look at the family in India as an institution and to see what sociological research has to offer in this regard. Going through the unit should enable you to:

≈   define the family and learn of the variations in family types, structure and composition;

≈   distinguish between family and household;

≈   understand the joint and nuclear forms of family and question if these are essentially evolutionary forms (i.e. examine the modernization thesis with the family as a case);

≈   to find out the distinction between the family in scriptural texts and empirical studies;

≈   learn the process of phases of household development in relation to joint and nuclear family types;

≈   study the functional, conflict, power and cultural dimensions of the family;

≈   discuss the changes in the family in contemporary India;

≈   ask if there is an alternative to the family as an institution; and

≈   to see that family studies have commonly focused on the upper caste Hindu family in India and identify a paucity of research on the family among other groups.

9.1   Introduction

The family is a unique institution in that it is both a private and a visibly public institution at the same time. It oscillates between the most intimate to the most public in its various contexts. The family is near universal as well. All of us for most of the time live in families. The very visible and commonplace presence of the family has perhaps lent itself to the impression that the sociology of the family is a soft subject. Or it could be the other way round, in that it is too intimate and private to be brought up to the level of sociological analysis. Notwithstanding either of the possibilities, Uberoi thinks that being commonplace enables everyone to have an opinion on the family, thus inhibiting its consideration seriously. She also points to the intrusive fears that make the family too sensitive to critical inquiry, "It

is as though critical interrogation of the family might constitute an intrusion into that private domain where the nation's most cherished cultural values are nurtured and reproduced, as though the very fabric of society would be undone if the family were in any way questioned or reshaped" (1993: 1-2).

Social philosophers have all through history, though at long intervals, reflected and commented upon the family. The family constituted an important area of study in Sociology in its early infancy. The high status accorded to the family in early Christianity might have influenced the genre of family studies in that period. This continued to be the case until the early 60s of the 20th century. In the Indian context too, family studies have been through ups and downs in popularity and focus. The family has remained a central social institution. However, it has, of late, received somewhat inadequate attention in comparison with the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. Given the universality of prevalence of marriage in India, the study of the family has been given somewhat less attention in the last two decades of the 20th century.

The study of the family in Anthropology also had its ups and downs. Being intertwined with marriage and kinship, the institutions that structure rules and behaviour regarding relationships both by descent and alliance, gained predominance over the study of the family (see Uberoi 1993 for elaboration). We do know that these principles and rules routinely get enacted out of the family and the household. Somehow this dimension of the family happened to be glossed over despite Fortes' (1958) view that the domestic group is the workshop for kinship and marriage. It is worth serious consideration that the family is, to use Goffman's (1958) dramaturgical notion, both the back stage and the front stage of a very substantial part of people's behaviour throughout their lives. The family as an omnipresent institution stages and witnesses the drama of life as it unfolds throughout people's lives. Such an approach to the family is less likely to fall under the clearly chartable principles of kinship that Anthropology found more fascinating to study. It largely dealt with neater categories than the existential messiness that the family offered (see Simpson 1994 for analysis of the messiness of the contemporary British family).

The numerous variations in the dynamics of everyday behaviour of the family did not lend itself easily into the fold of certain structural principles. The family was thus best left marginalised from conventional structural Anthropology. Nevertheless, it is a platform from which most of the structural principles of sexuality and relations of reciprocity, hierarchy and exchange are enacted, regulated and reproduced.

Let us halt a bit here and see what is meant by the term family.

9.2 Meaning of the Terms : Family and Household

The concept, family, broadly refers to the primary group comprising husband-wife unit (parents) and their children. This definition keeps three types of ties in mind. The ties are: of marriage between the spouses, (i.e. the parents) and of siblingship between children. The two ties are connected through the genealogical one between parents and their children. (For details on the meaning of family you may see Unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B. A. Programmme.) We shall see below that some families comprise persons descended from a common male parent, while in others from a common female parent. For example a couple, their married sons and latter's' wives

and children make the primary group, stated at the outset of this section as a family, a somewhat larger one. Thus a family may be large or small depending on the prevailing principles of organisation of descent relations between the dependents of married persons. Thus, the family is based on the principles of kinship whose members usually share a common residence. They reside in a house/homestead. This residential unit is called the household. The members of a household have a set of relational ties amongst them. These ties are linked with the statuses held and the corroborating role complexes members of the family are expected to constitute. The household (*ghar*) is a residential and domestic unit composed of one or more persons living under the same roof and eating food cooked in the same kitchen (hearth/*chulah*). It may so happen that not all the members of a family live in the same household all the time. Geographically distanced homes may be occupied by a few of the members of a given family. These members then reside in two or more households but they consider themselves as belonging to the same family. The household is a commensal and co-resident group/ unit (with provision for the phenomenon of single person households). Thus kin and residence rules distinguish between family and household (see Shah 1973, page 3 for an elaboration of the concepts and to see how the household is one of the several dimensions of the family).

Kolenda (1998) is another sociologist who has consistently worked towards clarifying the conceptual issues about family and household. She has proposed the 12 type classificatory scheme in her comparative study of the Indian joint family based on 26 post-1949 ethnographic studies and household censuses (Kolenda 1968). These classes of obtained household compositions take the reader beyond the joint-nuclear or extended-elementary types of families. This scheme does not obscure the phenomenon as a simple joint versus nuclear family one does. The 12 type classes are as follows: 1) Nuclear Family, a couple with or without unmarried children; 2) Supplemented nuclear family; 3) Subnuclear family; 4) Single person household; 5) Supplemented subnuclear family; 6) Collateral joint family; 7) Supplemented collateral joint family; 8) Lineal joint family; 9) Supplemented lineal joint family; 10) Lineal-collateral joint family; 11) Supplemented lineal collateral joint family; and 12) other, a residual class (See Shah 1973: 220-227 for a critical appreciation of Kolenda's classification scheme). See Unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B. A. Sociology Programme to clarify how these classes of households are useful in the understanding the continuum between variations of joint and nuclear family forms over a life cycle.

Reflection and Action 9.1

1) See Table 3 in the book by A.M. Shah (1973) on page 13 for household size in 1951 in village and town areas in Gujarat (India) if possible. Take ten houses on a street each in a nearby village and/or town and make a table of household size and compare the Indian census figures for 1951 with your own figures. Compare the 1991 and 2001 census figures for rural and urban India and your state with those given in Shah.

2) See Table 17 in Shah (1973) for working out the basis of composition of households. Now prepare a basis for such a composition for the data you have gathered from the twenty households in rural and urban surroundings.

Discuss the difference in figures and patterns of households at your study/ Counselling Centre.

9.3 Joint and Nuclear Family in India

In the two most significant Hindu epics, 'Ramayana' and 'Mahabharat', the central families are large joint families. Dashrath's sons in 'Ramayana' and Dhritrashtra's and Pandu's in 'Mahabharata' live together along with their wives for a good part of their lives. Even when separated by force of circumstance, the jointness of concern, respect for togetherness and emotional bonding is visibly a desirable feature of the family in the epics. The epics hold a great deal of influence on the Hindus in India and a large joint family with filial (father-son relationship) piety is considered the ideal. These families are cited as examples to emulate whenever any threat to the family unity is perceived or if the younger generation is to be reminded of norms of filial piety. The husband-wife couple of Ram and Sita of Ramayan is the ideal for others to emulate as filial ties are underscored over conjugal ties in their life.

The two kinship links between i) parent-child and ii) siblings are found to exist in reality in various permutations and combinations. In the manner of their organisation, these links enable the separation between nuclear/ elementary and joint/extended families. A nuclear family is defined as a group consisting of a man, his wife and their unmarried children. When there are additional relatives to any of the relations in the nuclear family it turns into a joint one. Thus a joint family is a nuclear family plus all kin belonging to the side of husband and /or wife living in one homestead. The term joint and extended are used interchangeably in Sociology/Social Anthropology. Such a family is a combination of more than one nuclear family based on an extension of the parent-child relationship. By implication it may also include an expansion of the number of siblings of a certain sex and their spouses and children. When descent is traced through the male line, the extended/joint family is based on the extension between father-son relationship. On the other hand, an extension based on mother-daughter relationship forms a matrilineal extended/joint family. A horizontally extended family between brothers, their wives and children is called fraternal or collateral family (see Kapadia's essay in Patel 2005 for illustrations of lineally/ vertically and laterally/horizontally extended families).

The ideal Hindu joint family consists of a man, his wife and their adult sons, their wives and children, and the younger unmarried children of the parental couple. This is called a patrilineal, parivirilocal (the newly married couple taking residence in the husband's father's home) family. The oldest male heads the family and authority is hierarchically ordered along the lines of age and sex. In such a family, conjugal ties are considered subordinate to filial and fraternal (relationship between brothers) ties. Members of the family are related by kinship bonds lineally or collaterally or both. As elaborated in Unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B. A. Programmme, a joint family is seen by the number of generations present, ideally three or four generational family (Desai 1964, Madan 1965). The joint family holds property in common. However, not all members have the same right over the family property. Gore (1968) defines a joint family as a group consisting of adult male coparceners and their dependents. Thus some members do not constitute coparceners even if they are members of the family, and have a right of residence and use of family resources.

We shall see the details of property rights (in both schools of law— Dayabhaga, adopted in Bengal and Assam, and Mitakshara, adopted in most other parts

of India) to different members of the family when we deal with the feminist perspective.

9.4 Views on the Family in India

Research on the family in India has adopted different approaches. Like any knowledge on a cultural reality, family research has also been conducted from different points of view. You will see in Unit 12 of this Block that kinship has been approached differently in Indological studies than in empirical sociological and social anthropological research. Similarly, family in India has been studied through the Indological and the empirical approaches. We shall now examine these.

a) The Textual View

The family in Hindu thought is derived from the idea of *pitri rin*, i.e. ancestral indebtedness. Every man has to repay the debt of his ancestors (the other two being of the teacher and gods) through procreation. The birth of a child, especially a son was not only a reason for being, but also being free of ancestral debt. Raising the next generation, i.e. sons, to adulthood ensures one's way to heaven. The son's privilege and obligation to light the funeral pyre and observe certain death rituals symbolises this indebtedness and the way out of it. Thus the Hindu family was defined as the closest group bound by mutual ties of giving and receiving the funeral oblation (a person and his three immediate ancestors). The family was a three or four generation group depending on how and whom you count in or out. *Shradha* and property were linked in the notion of the family. The text-based dimension of the Hindu family is one of a property holding and *shradha* performing unit.

The Hindu family became coterminous with the Indian joint family through the engagement of British colonial administration with indigenous systems of kinship and marriage as reflected through the Hindu sacred texts, the 'Dharmshastra' (see Kane 1930-62). Maine (1972) projected the Indian joint family as a surviving example of the ancient form of human family. He had discerned the outlines of the ancient family in the legal system in ancient Rome and in the Celtic and Slavic survivals of earlier forms of social organisation. To Maine, this patriarchal family worked as a corporation, with its members as its trustees. Many early Indian sociologists were trained in the Indological approach. Prabhu (1955[1940]) described the patriarchal form of joint family as the family form of all Hindus, rich, poor, urban and village folk. Ghurye (1955) claimed an Indo-European pedigree for the Indian joint family. The Hindu family had for long found itself analysed, commented upon and prescribed as the ideal norm. The upper caste and upper class Indians derived their family morality and norms from liturgical texts and this became an ideal for other castes to emulate, in the process of their Sanskritisation, to use Srinivas' concept. The ideological amalgam was further complicated by the British legal reinterpretation of liturgical concepts. "The hereditary literati had their own traditions, attitudes, biases, and interests which influenced their comments and interpretations. As if this was not sufficiently complicated, during the British rule certain ideas and myths regarding the Indian family organisation obtained wide currency through the British law courts and judges, and the new class of lawyers" (Srinivas's Foreword in Shah 1973: vii).

Historians as well as sociologists had used textual (literary, sacerdotal and legal) sources to comment on social institutions, including the family (see

Unit 12 of this block). Karve (1953) in her extensive survey of the Indian kinship system with kinship vocabularies had identified four main types of kinship organisation in India. Karve's study brought out the Dravidian kinship system and its family form as distinct from the form in most parts of India. It is through the Indological approach that the Hindu joint family came to be considered as the ideal and often the real family in India (See Uberoi 2000 for an elaboration of the Indological approach to family studies).

Whether it is the Ramayana family or the upper caste and class Hindu family, the large joint family is not the universal form of family in India, both at present and in the recorded past. It may be reiterated that the joint and the nuclear types of the family are Indological constructs. The family as obtained in the field through empirical social anthropological and sociological studies is much more varied rather than the ideal joint family.

b) **The Field View**

Goody's (1962) influence took some time to show itself in Indian family studies. However, empirical study of the family was still under the strong influence of the basic difference between the oriental and the occidental family types, and this type-cast remained a given fact as though the empirical reality had to be pigeonholed into either of the compartments. Of course, the terms 'domestic group' as well as 'household' provided a processual view of the family, which brought to attention the lived reality of family closer to sociological scrutiny. Though Rivers (1906) had given the lead for providing empirical cases and actual figures through the genealogical method, the jural and textual influence continued its preponderance for nearly half a century, in the family studies in India. The discourse on the native category of the family was influenced by colonial administration and Anthropology.

Box 9.1 : Nuclear and Joint Family

Although for at least three decades since the 1950s, Sociology and Social Anthropology both in the West and in India have provided a great deal of rigorous research on the family and its various dimensions and aspects, it is a sad state that many social science research students in India today have to ask their respondents if theirs is a nuclear or a joint family. People's terms may vary. Their terms range from being together to being separated, with reference to the ego's (male's in patrilineal society) residence in relation to other members of the family and the household. While the sociologist's categorisation deals with the structure of residence derived from its composition, people's categorisation is based on the context of the ego's residence vis-a-vis other household and/or family members. A household in itself is neither joint nor nuclear, but becomes either of these by virtue of its being under progression and regression in a developmental process. For example, a married son's moving out of his father's house in patrilineal society makes the son's house a nuclear one, or rather a separate one. This act may or may not simultaneously make his father's household a nuclear one. This dimension of behaviour projecting the residents as living together or as separate (in joint or nuclear households) has to be investigated further. It is here that the family is seen not just as a noun but as an adjective constituting actors and agents.

The family received a great deal of interest during the first few decades of the emergence of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India. In her comprehensive survey Dube (1974) describes the overwhelming interest in

family studies as being next only to those in caste. It is an interesting coincidence and a case for comparative study that with India's political independence and following the formation of the Indian Sociological Society, the sociological study of the family experienced a watershed from, what Srinivas calls, the book view to the field view. Almost simultaneously came up the Western field-based anthropological and sociological studies (Goody 1958, Goode 1963).

These studies provided a break from the studies of the Indological school based on legal and liturgical arguments. A shift occurred from the textual Indology to the contextual in the study of the family in India. Sociologists and social anthropologists began to study the various extant forms and structures of the family as they existed in reality rather than the erstwhile text-based dimension of the family as a property-holding and *shradha*-performing unit. The effect of liturgical and legal texts continued to linger in studies of the joint family and the changes therein. The overlap of the ideal, normative and behavioural with that of value and fact in family studies continued until the concept of the household as a heuristic device seemed to rescue family sociology from the confusion (Shah 1973). The overwhelming influence of the Hindu, upper caste, North Indian ideal of the family was assumed, somewhat erroneously, as the all India Hindu and Indian family, notwithstanding the fairly early studies among non-Hindu South Indian communities in India by Kapadia (1958) and Dube (1969).

c) Process View: Phases of Household Development

We have earlier mentioned the continuum between nuclear and joint family as one changes into another over time. In this way of studying the family, it is clear that the family is not a static institution. It goes through a developmental cycle. This cycle interrelates the nuclear and the joint families with each other. The structure of a family changes over time with changes in its size, composition and the status and roles of its members. Thus a family is not likely to always remain nuclear, nor does a family always remain joint. Similarly, not all nuclear families are identical nor are all joint families so. At any given point in time, a nuclear family may have one or more persons. When it turns into a joint one it may have at least two and usually many more members. You have already seen the 12 classes Kolenda (1998) found in the 26 studies she analysed. This process of the developmental cycle has been improvised by Shah's (1973) study of the household and its developmental phases. A household may experience progression and/or regression or both on the basis of birth, adoption and in- and out-marriage, and death, divorce and separation of members over a period of time. A household in itself is neither joint nor nuclear, but becomes either of these by virtue of its being under progression and regression in the process of its developmental phases. For example, a married son's moving out of his father's house in a patrilineal society makes the son's house a nuclear one, or rather a separate one. This act may or may not simultaneously make his father's household a nuclear one. Thus at any given time the family forms in a society are likely to vary from a single member to a large group residing together. Thus the term household is used for the residential grouping and family for the group related through kinship, emotional, ritual and legal dimensions. Thus Shah (1973) uses the terms simple and complex for the household rather than joint or nuclear.

Each person in a household is involved in a complex pattern of behaviour with every other member. Life in a household is marked by proper code of

conduct for each member. To analyse a household in its entirety, all the relatives in a household need to be taken into account. 'The compositional types are not discrete and haphazard but are interrelated in a developmental process. The pattern of the developmental process in each society is affected by three major factors. The first is the demographic factor, which not only includes the phenomena of birth, adulthood and death but also the sex and number of members. While these phenomena are demographic in origin, they are social in operation. The second factor is the series of explicitly stated norms regarding the residence of various relatives in a household. The third is the pattern of interpersonal relations in a household, largely dependent on the norms or codes of proper conduct attached to kinship relationships in the household' (Shah 1973: 81-81). When a simple household becomes a complex one through addition of other family members (by birth or marriage) the process is called fusion. Contrariwise, when members are lost (by birth, out-marriage, migration) the household is said to undergo fission. A household goes through the process of fusion and fission and accretion and attrition and in its wake turning itself into simple and complex one. Each attrition may or may not change the household and the family into a nuclear or a joint one.

Reflection and Action 9.2

We have seen above that a family does not remain static in its size, composition and structure. In fact, it goes through phases of development which may be progressive as well as regressive. The concept of household and its developmental phases, therefore, is of heuristic value in research.

Prepare a chart of a your family tree with the help of your parents and/or grand parents for upto at least four generations. I may refer you to units 8 and 9 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme and Unit 12 of this Block to make the chart. Mark the time when your family was nuclear and when it became a joint one over the entire period you have covered in the chart. Point out if some members/sections of the family reside/d in separate houses but remained joint in property, rituals, pollution, sentiments etc.

Discuss at your study centre, how different households of your family were set up, and how these were composed of varying forms of family class types at different periods. This exercise should enable you to see that classifying households simply as nuclear and joint families hide the actual developmental phases that families go through over time. Families experience fission and fusion and this is visible through the households in which the family members reside. This should enable an understanding of the significance of kinship ties and principles in family and household organisation. Discuss the usefulness of the concept of household in empirical research on the family with your Academic Counsellor at your Study Centre.

The period in Indian Sociology that marked a shift from the book-view to the field-view coincided with the influence of the idea of modernisation and development. Bombay was assumed, as it were, to be the pinnacle of industrialisation and modernisation, and the teaching community the leading light. Therefore, the family in Bombay, might have been assumed to provide evidence of the influence of modernisation and industrialisation on the family. As will be evident from the essays in Patel (2005), the Indian family received maximum attention in Maharashtra and Gujarat and much less in other parts of India, especially South India by Sociologists in India.

9.5 The Myth of Disintegration of the Joint Family

Sociology shared with Social Anthropology the unilinear evolutionary path that the family was to take over time. Maine's evolutionary path in his *Ancient Law* (1861) on the origin and nature of human society was summed up in the famous shift from status to contract. For Maine, the movement from status to contract might be visualised through the movement in the institution of marriage centred on family and kin (i.e. status orientation) to individual choice (i.e. contract orientation). The ensuing family eventually became a nuclear one with a strong conjugal orientation like the Christian nuclear family. He found in the Indian joint family the earliest form of the patriarchal family. Bachofen and Engels disagreed with Maine's views in a certain way as their ancient family was matriarchal. Engels was influenced by Morgan's (1877) conjecture of the latter day patriarchal family formation. He is well-known for attributing the woman's historic fall from grace with the formation of the institution of private property and the patriarchal monogamous family. Yet they all remained evolutionary in their perspective regarding the institution of the family (for related elaboration, see Zimmerman's essay in Patel (2005).

Even though the charge of assumed evolutionist perspective was to be dismissed, there is another analytical trend that strengthens the thesis of the disintegration of the joint family. The empirical data on post-independent India were being unquestioningly contrasted with the ideal and textual image of the three or four-generational patrilineal Hindu joint family. A historical analysis of the family can provide interpretations of the contemporary family both of its own gradual transformation and the all round transformation experienced by the society as a whole.

Serious empirical studies of the family dealt with conceptual and analytical categories more carefully and raised issues like jointness and its meaning and variations in its various contexts. The question of the meaning of jointness and its implications was put under critical scrutiny. Two major contemporary influences made a significant impact not only on the field view of the family but also on how family studies in India were to unfold over the following decades. First, by the turn of the 20th century, population censuses were administered in many western countries and their colonies. The Indian census data on the household size revealed that the Indian household was decreasing in size compared to the textual Indological image of the family. It was much smaller than the three-generational joint residential unit it was understood to be. Secondly, this datum along with the data on the disintegrating European family was interpreted with the evolutionary perspective on social institutions including that of the family. The view was further substantiated with the census data obtained in India. To the evolutionists and Euro-centrists, the census data and inferences on the Indian family were evidence of all roads leading to Rome, i.e. monogamy and the nuclear family were the final destination. The assumed evolutionary path of the gradual reduction in the size of the family is an erroneous one. Laslett and Wall (1972) highlight the small size of the European family in the past substantiated by historical demographers. Historical studies both of the European and the Asian family have challenged the unilinear assumption of the reducing size and the changing structure and content of the family (See Wilk and Netting 1984 and Yanagisako 1979). The well known Parsonian thesis of the fit between the nuclear family and the American industrial society which other societies would eventually follow was not only an evolutionary thesis but was also delegitimising of

131

other family patterns. See Uberoi's (2000: 7-13) perceptive appraisal of the modernisation thesis in this regard.

But historical analysis in a comparative framework is also possible without following the evolutionary perspective. Weber's (1975) *Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* focussed centrally on the origins of modern society and conditions of its emergence rather than with a whole series of types of societies of which the modern was seen as but the latest. Closely related in some way, though not reiterating the unilinear evolutionary model of family change, was the assumption that the conjugal unity of the couple and their children with ever fewer kin ties provided the structural keystone of the system. Its intense concentration on the socialisation of children was associated with the advanced industrial society. This family was particularly compatible with the demands of the dominant economic order of the industrial society. The developing countries would also behave in ways compatible. This over-simplistic assumption was visible in the thesis of the joint family's disintegration. It was devoid of serious historical data and insightful analysis (see Desai's essays 2005). Even the large sized family with a set of kinsmen (though in reality servants were more common) that existed among the more affluent upper class in Europe was found to be erroneously assumed. The cosy family of mum-dad and the kids assumed by planners and policy makers had long been declared stereotypical than real. Laslett and Wall (1972) revealed it for the European family, especially in British society, on the basis of historical data. Anderson (1980) studies recent times (1961-71) in England and states that 40 per cent of the people at any given point of time lived in households that did not conform to this pattern. There is a danger in viewing quantitative data too superficially, i.e. to look at time series for a misleadingly short period of time or to contrast quantitative data against an ideal or normative practice as was done after the initial censuses in India regarding the household size and composition. Several sociologists, Desai (2005) and Shah (1973) in particular, had picked up debates with the census data and pointed out the flaws in the interpretation of concepts and data. Nevertheless, Shah (1999) finds a potential in census data despite its limitations.

Fitting in the nuclear family with industrialisation was not a straightforward thesis in terms of Indian data. Despite the family-household conceptual distinction, other dimensions remained to be understood. Singer's work (1968) on the adaptation to western values and ways in a neatly compartmentalised manner to suit the public domain without being allowed to permeate into and affect the private domain of industrialists in South India revealed the resilience of traditional family values and norms. Adapting to Western ways and yet supporting joint family and caste values was characteristic of Singer's Indian industrial family. Though Singer's work is not a direct response to the Parsonian fit between industrial society and the nuclear family, it makes a strong case for an Indian family's way of adaptation. On the other hand, the issue of jointness was delinked from the sole criterion of joint residence. Thus retaining the jointness of the family is possible without living jointly. Though nuclear residence is on the rise in what Beteille (1993) calls the service class in urban India, Sharma's (1986) and Vatuk's (1972) field studies in North India suggest a different picture. They find a branch of the joint family residing separately in the city and acting as a buffer for members of the joint family to join them for studies and urban jobs. The articles by Kaldate (1962), and Kapadia, Morrison, and the

deliberations at the symposium on caste and the joint family (2005) deal with the transition from the joint to the nuclear family.

The conceptual distinction between the kinship oriented family and the residence oriented household led to a great deal of analytical clarity in the understanding of the family both as a social ideal and a social fact. Shah (1998) has shown that the proportion of joint families has remained the same if not increased over the past several decades. Kolenda (1970) too reiterated the popularity of the prevalence of the joint family. To Shah (1973) the kinship dimension of the household pattern is important to make meaningful analysis of quantitative data. Norms and interpersonal relations are not to be left behind.

9.6 Types of Family Structure

We have already discussed the nuclear and joint types of families. From the empirical field studies in India (Shah 1973, Kolenda 1987 and essays in Patel 2005), we have learnt that families assume different class types of simple and nuclear households. Family structures based on the principle of descent distinguish between different types of families. Let us see the two main structural types of families.

i) The Patrilineal Family

The genealogical and siblingship links of kinship among a group of relatives in a family signals its structural formation. When the central kinship link in the organisation of a family is between father and son/s, the family is patrilineal. We have seen above that such a family could be nuclear and/or joint. A joint patrilineal family may be lineally or laterally joint. We have also seen how the patrilineal joint family has been assumed to be the typical Indian family. Most of the studies cited above in this Unit are studies of the patrilineal family.

ii) The Matrilineal Family

Now we shall see alternative family types which are not patrilineal in structure. A family composed of genealogical and sibling relations of kinship with primary focus on the mother-daughter bond and descent principle, is a matrilineal family. A matrilineal family too could be nuclear or joint and have varying household forms over its members' life-cycle.

The joint family in South India, particularly among the matrilineal Nayars, did not resemble the textual and scriptural family of the Indian liturgical texts. Not the whole of South India is matrilineal. Unlike the village, *gotra,* and *sapinda* exogamy in North India, the south Indian family formation is influenced by cross-cousin and uncle-neice marriages. Unlike the joint family of the Nambudiris (*illam*) based on patriliny, the Nayar family (*tarawad*) was based on matriliny. The patrilineal family in South India is different from that in North India in some respects. There are variations in family formation among the Nayars within Kerala, for instance, between South-West Kerala and Central and North Kerala. Malabar and Travancore differed in their practice of polyandry. Yet the institution of *tarawad* was strong. Dube's (1974) review gives an extensive coverage of the studies of matrilineal systems and families therein, both by Indian and non-Indian scholars. Sardamoni's recent book (1999) deals with Travancore, an area taken up by Puthenkalam (2005). Both have dealt with the *tarawad* as an intimately linked manifestation of the

central feature of matriliny which gives women certain entitlements, such as permanent rights to maintenance by and residence in their natal home (*tarawad*). The relatively greater autonomy of women in the *tarawad* is a reflection of both the principle of matriliny and the consequent *tarawad* formation. Polyandrous unions, visiting husbands, and ritually sanctioned Nambudiri husbands and children from these husbands, were typical features of the *tarawad*. The members of the *tarawad* ranged from 20 to 30 and more. This family system was rather complex and posed a certain difficulty in fitting with the family in patrilineal society.

Matriliny is not the mirror opposite of patriliny and thus the difficulty. Levi-Strauss (1971) considers the South Indian Nayar family as family at times, and does not view this grouping as the family at others. The matter is resolved when he sums up that the family is the emanation, on the social level, of those natural requirements without which there could be no society. Another difficulty is posed by the variation in the Indian family forms which did not easily match with the nuclear family of the industrial West. However, Puthenkalam (2005) gives a peep into the matrilineal joint family (*tarawad*), among the Nayars in Kerala. Neverthelss, the institution of *tarawad* gradually weakened, as Puthenkalam describes, during the colonial rule (for more on this transformation, see Saradamoni 1999). Whether the decline of the *tarawad* is a reflection of the disintegration of the matrilineal joint family is difficult to claim. It is not that the *illam* has replaced the *tarawad*. Nevertheless, in the process of disintegration of the *tarawad*, women's autonomy has been curtailed. The erosion of Nayar women's autonomy and entitlements raises a research question on the importance of materiality in kinship structures.

iii) Caste, Community and Family Structure

We have learnt earlier that the Indological approach had posited the patrilineal joint family prevalent among the higher castes as the ideal Indian family. This bias had generated a problem with regard to the family among the non-patrilineal as well as the non-Hindu communities in Indian society.

Chakravarty and Singh (1991) found a slightly higher proportion of nuclear over joint families for India as a whole. Of course, joint families are larger in size, the proportion of population residing in them is also larger. Based on the census data, Shah (1998) shows that the proportion of joint over nuclear households has not decreased over the decades. He suggests that increased life expectancy and pressures on urban living space are likely to increase joint living, while Visaria and Visaria (2003) estimate increased nuclear family living for similar reasons. However, it is clear that urbanization has not led to nuclearization of the family.

The evolutionary and Euro-centric bias was so strong that despite a lack of any conclusive evidence that the family in the past was a large joint one, Goode (1963) claimed so, and predicted that the family was moving forward to assume the form of the western family (see Uberoi 2000: 10-13 for a detailed discussion on Goode's analysis).

We are now clear that the patrilineal Hindu joint family is considered an ideal by most Hindus. But geographical mobility, among other factors, has increased various forms of household composition, and not necessarily just nuclear family households. Shah (1973) describes migrants and their residential

arrangements. Sharma (1986) and Vatuk (1972) respectively discuss the strategy of rural families in Himachal Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh where a part of the rural family moves to an urban area to access urban resources for the family's upward mobility through jobs, education etc. The rural families in both the studies make residential arrangements in urban areas to maximise the family's advantages through both rural and urban households and yet do not deviate from the joint family norm. By practising the dual residence pattern (rural and urban household), such a family enhances its economic, social, cultural as well as symbolic capital.

Lower caste Hindus are found (Cohn 1955, CSWI 1974, Shah 1998, Kolenda 1987) not following the norm of joint family. This should not mean that they do not consider the joint family as an ideal. Cohn (1955) delineates the factors responsible for the absence of joint families among the Chamars of Senapur. You are referred to unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme for the details. It is not sure if the lower castes also do not consider joint family as the ideal family. Careful research is needed to explore the family among the lower castes. Similarly, the family among tribals, the ideal, the norm and the actual, needs to be studied for better information. Though there is at least some research on the Muslim family (Ahmad 1976), there is a paucity of data on the family in the non-Hindu communities in India.

Action and reflection 9.3

Take five households of lower caste and five of upper caste in your locality. Make a chart of the household composition. See 6.4 of unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme and ask if there is joint property, cooperation and sentiments and ritual bonds of jointness among the members of the household with other collaterals who may not be residing in the (your selected) households.

Discuss the comparative findings at your Study Center.

9.7 Changes in Family Structure

Research involving the application of the modernisation thesis on the Indian joint family discussed earlier (see also Patel 2005) viewed the changes in the size, structure and composition of the family over time. Patel (2005) views the family as the workshop of kinship and marriage norms and practices. Studies on changes in the family in the last quarter of the 20th century have been scarce. Societal and structural changes have influenced the family size and structure (see unit 6 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme for the factors influencing the changes in the joint family).

Since the second wave of feminism in the 1960's, the family has been viewed with some amount of skepticism at least by feminist scholars. Increased female labour force participation, legislation impacting gender, personal law and international migration, advances in science and technology including new reproductive technologies among others, have interacted with the family. How has the family dealt with change? Whether it moved in the 'cultural lag' thesis direction or the resilience one, is yet to be explored. The past two decades have seen a decline in total fertility rate on the one hand and increased life expectancy on the other. This is bound to impact family living. Simultaneously, emigration to foreign countries is on the rise leading to the

phenomenon of the emptiness. Also the marital breakdown i.e. divorce is on the rise, and so is remarriage of widows and divorced women even among upper castes where it was earlier prohibited. It is not unheard of for a female to remain unmarried today. How the family deals with these changes is not yet studied seriously in Sociology. What is happening in the family in matrilineal communities? See Jain (1996) and Shardamoni (1999) for family, kinship and marriage and changes in matrilineal communities in India. What happens to families and households in the following contexts: a) intercaste marriage, b) inter-religious marriage, c) economic liberalization, and d) religious conversion? The way in which these contexts impact family formations in India is not yet studied.

9.8 Perspectives on the Family

After having studied the concepts of the household, its privileging over the family and the studies in this respect, we shall study the theoretical perspectives on the family.

1) Functionalist Perspective

On the basis of the institution of the family in 250 societies varying from small hunting bands to large industrial societies, Murdock (1949) drew two conclusions: that the nuclear family is a universal institution and it is a functional group indispensable to society. In the post-War transition period, the eminent sociologist and social theorist Talcott Parsons's (1959) structural, functional and comparative theory of society and social change predicted an isolation, differentiation and specialisation of the nuclear family as a bounded sub-system of the American society, while denying the growing post-War perception that the declining sexual morality and the marital breakdown portended the eminent breakdown of the American family. Two basic and irreducible functions, common to the family in all societies, Parsons said, would be performed by the American family. These are the primary socialisation of children and stabilisation of adult personalities of the population. It is in this context that the fit between nuclear family and the industrial society was forwarded. The functions performed by the wider kin group, Parsons' said would be taken over by formal institutions in the industrial society and be shared with the conjugally bounded nuclear family. This way the two essential functions of the family continued to be performed and the American family would remain stable. To Parsons the genealogical and siblingship links in the family were retained in their basic elementary form. Power and authority of parents over children and both instrumental and expressive functions between spouses and generations enabled the nuclear family to continue to perform its basic functions.

Typical of the integrated and harmonious view of the functionalist perspective, Parsons saw the generational hierarchy and division of labour in the American family as functional. Secondly, the ideal middle class American nuclear family, to him, had reached the ultimate level in the evolutionary process. Parsons's evolutionary perspective was adopted by Goode (1963) in his study of world revolution in family patterns.

The functionalist perspective has been out of favour for sometime now. Parsons was criticized for assuming the white middle class American families as the ideal nuclear families. Morgan (1975) finds no class, regional or religious variation in Parsons' family. Like Mudock, Parsons assumed the family to be universal. Besides, there was no exploration of alternatives to the family.

Besides, as stated earlier, the parent-child hierarchy and gender roles in the family were in harmony, but it was only partially true. Family tensions and conflicts (Vogel and Bell) and exploitative relations (Laing 1971) do exist in families. Leach (1967) has found that members of nuclear families take immense emotional toll on each other.

2) Conflict Perspective

Engels' famous work on the state, family and private property (first published in 1884) was the first Marxian attempt to analyse the family. Like Parsons, Engels too took an evolutionary approach alongside the materialist interpretation of history. Restrictions on sexuality and sexual relations and control over women's reproduction were linked with the emergence of the state and the emergence of private property. Control over sexuality and the monogamous family came to be closely related in Engels's work drawn from different historical epochs, conjectures, and the work of Morgan (1871). The monogamous family was based on the supremacy of man for undisputed paternity to enable certainty of a natural heir to the family inheritance.

The marriage between Marxian ideas and feminism during the second feminist wave in the 1960s and 1970s employed Marxian concepts in critiquing the family. Women as producers of one of the basic forces of capitalism, the labour force, were tied down with reproduction and the domestic space without any payment for their contribution. Rowbothom (1973) elaborates through other research how reproduction functions as a hidden subsidy to the capitalist and hidden tax on the proletariat. Raising children discourages workers from bargaining (by withdrawing/holding back) in the wage market. Women's oppression and their acceptance of male aggression is viewed as an expression of workers' legitimate anger at their powerlessness in the public domain.

David Copper (1972) in "The death of the family" extends reproduction to incorporate ideological conditioning for an obedient and submissive labour force. Thus parental authority is also viewed in Marxian terms as a means to reproduce human beings who would accept the hierarchical order of the capitalist society. The family works as the facilitating institution for capitalism. Feminists found reproduction as the main source of women's oppression which essentialises and oppresses the woman. Property rghts, rights over children and such other entitlements follow from gender relations in the family (Agarwal 1994, 1997). Motherhood had to be overcome if women were to be liberated and achieve equality with man. Everingham (1994) analyses the shifts in feminist positions since the 1970s with respect to women's autonomy, (as form of subjectivity). The 'domestic mode of production' is Delphy's (1970) thesis on the domestic unit's and thereby women's oppression in the capitalist society. The capitalist state works in a manner exploits women and families through family ideology and sentiments. The sentimentality veils the exploitative character of capitalist relations of production through the domestic mode of production.

3) Cultural Perspective

Family studies achieved a conceptual advancement in privileging the 'household' over the 'family' that enabled more rigorous cross-cultural comparative research in the field. The stress of numerical composition somehow came into limelight through perhaps the popularity of the term 'household' in the census, while the principles of relationship and family

organisation got lesser attention. Of late, other aspects of family have attracted academic attention.

Attempts at understanding the ideology of the family and particularly the joint family has thrown up a few interesting studies. Research on emotions in the family has found some favour. Shah (1998) comments on norms and values held by different members of a family and their comportment and behaviour in relation to others for commensality in the family.(Se Lynch 1990 for more on other societies)

Theories of procreation are related with differential power, rights and entitlements by age and sex in the family in India (Dube 1986, 1997). The ubiquitous procreation metaphor of seed and earth, assume the male as the active principle, while the female as the passive one. She is a vessel, a passive principle in the unequal contribution of reproductive resources for the family (see del Valle 1993 for a somewhat differential contribution of genders in reproduction in Nepal). The Nepali mother is not simply a passive field but is believed to contribute in forming some parts of the foetus, while the father is the important one. Dube (1997) also acknowledges the significance of the mother in forming the child's identity, since the caste of both parents goes in placing the child in the caste hierarchy. Hypergamy and hypogamy practices are linked to this conception about parental contribution as are rules of sapinda exogamy. In matrilineal communities such as the Khasi, the perception about the contribution of different sexes in reproduction is quite contrary to that in patrilineal societies (see Nongbri 1993).

The cognitive character acknowledged in the descent principle translates into social, symbolic, reproductive and material rights and entitlements at most stages in a person's life in the family, both in matrilineal as well as patrilineal societies (see Agarwal 1994, Gray 1995, Uberoi 1996, Dube 1997, and Patel 1994) The impact of this on reproduction is studied by Dyson and Moore (1981), Basu (1992). For related dimensions of autonomy through the life cycle approach, see Patel (1994 and 1999). A somewhat different understanding of the contribution of genders is found in communities operating the alliance principle (see unit 12 of this block for details and Dumont 1966).

The household as a structure of consciousness (see Gray 1995 for the Nepali householders' views), its priority over individual interests (Patel 1994) translates into everyday life forms. Love (Anpu in Tamil) as a holistic emotion in society, not merely erotic or conjugal in Trawick (1990) is a fresh insight into family relationships [see the restraint on expressive affection for one's infant over other family members' children in Patel (1994)].

Dube (1998), Chodorow (1978) and Gilligan (1982) provide a different voice regarding the social reproduction of gendered beings in the context of socialisation in the family. The ideology of care lends itself into a heavier burden of care on women in the family (Dalley 1988). At the state legislation level welfare programmes are critiqued (Rissew and Parliwala 1996).

4) Cooperative — Conflict Perspective

We have seen above that the 1960s was a watershed in the history of family studies. It was discovered that Love, conjugality and oppression co-exist in

the family alongside unequal gender relations. The post War development project came under critical scrutiny when feminist economists pointed out the futility of some of the assumptions of economic theory applied on the family as a unit of the analysis in state policies and development programmes. The dialectical relationships at family level rather than viewing the family as a safe haven in the unkind world or as an institution on the verge of breakdown need to be seriously explored. We shall see the cooperative conflict perspective in unit 11 in greater detail.

9.9 Conclusion

In this unit you have learnt about the institution of family. It is a unique institution since it has both a private as well as a visibly public characteristic at one and the same time. The family is more or less a universal institution since most of us, all over the world belong to a family. The very visible and commonplace presence of the family gives the impression that it can be understood by anyone and is rather a soft subject in Sociology or vice-versa. Research on family therefore is full of constraints as it also deals with sensitive details. However, traditionally, the family has been considered to be significant and social philosophers throughout history have attempted to understand its nature.

You learnt about the meaning of the terms 'family' and 'household' and their interlinkage with marriage and kinship. Family has been broadly described as the primary group comprising husband-wife unit (parents) and their children. Household is the residence shared by a family or a part of the family. The family is based on the principles of kinship, and its members usually share a common residence, which is called a household.

A brief description about the large joint families, as described in the Hindu epics like the 'Ramayan' and 'Mahabharat' has been given. The ideal type of joint family as described by these epics is greatly admired by most Hindus in India. Notions of filial piety i.e. the relationship between father and son is held in high estimation. 'Ramayan' is the ideal for people to emulate as filial ties are underscored over conjugal ties. You learnt that the two kinship links between (i) parent-child and (ii) siblings are found to exist in reality in various permutations and combinations. It is in this manner that one can distinguish between nuclear/elementary and joint/extended families.

Research on the family in India has adopted different approaches. Like any knowledge of a cultural reality, family research has also been conducted from different points of view. In this unit you have learnt about the textual view of family as well as the field view. The research on family has a history of nearly three decades from 1950s onwards in Sociology and Social Anthropology both in the West and in India. Goody's (1962) influence on family studies took some time to influence studies of the family in India, but empirical studies of the family continued to be under the influence of the basic difference between the oriental and the occidental types of family. This type cast remained a given fact. However the notion of the 'domestic group' as well as the developmental cycle of 'the household' provided a processual view of the family, which brought the lived reality of family structure and composition closer to sociological scrutiny.

You learnt about the contributions of Indian sociologists and social anthropologists in the field of family and kinship studies. There has been an

over-whelming interest in family studies (Dube 1974). It was only next to caste in significance at the time of the emergence of Sociology and Social Anthropology in India. The effect of liturgical and legal texts continued to linger in studies of the joint family and the changes therein. The overlap of the ideal, normative and behavioral with that of value and fact in family studies continued until the concept of the household as a heuristic device rescued the sociology of family.

In this unit the in-depth description of 'household' and its development providing the processual aspect of a 'domestic group' has been critically analysed. The pattern of the developmental cycle in each society is affected by three major factors, such as, demographic factor, series of explicitly stated norms regarding residence of different relatives in a household and the interpersonal relations of the members. The processes of 'fusion' and 'fission' have been explained.

The myth of the disintegration of the joint family is related to the evolutionary thesis that the nuclear family characterised industrial societies while joint families were characteristic of feudal Asiatic societies. Most sociologists have studied the 'patrilineal' forms of family. However, some studies for example, of the 'Nayars' of Kerala have focused on the 'matrilineal' family. The joint family in South India, particularly among the Nayars who were matrilineal, did not resemble the textual and scriptural family of the Indian liturgical texts. Both the matrilineal, as well as, patrilineal families of South India differed from those of the patrilineal joint families of North India.

In this unit the changes in the family structure have been described. Family has been viewed as the workshop of kinship and marriage norms and practices. Societal and structural changes have influenced the family size and structures. You read about the feminist scholars' skeptical views on family after the second wave of feminism in the 1960s.

Finally, the brief outline of different sociological perspectives has been provided to you in this unit. These are the functionalist perspective, the conflict perspective which included the feminist views of the family, the cultural perspective and the cooperative conflict perspective. In the next unit you will learn further about the household as a cooperative-conflicting unit.

9.10 Further Reading

Anderson, M. (ed.) 1980 [1971]. *Sociology of the Family*. Penguin Books: Harmondsworth.

Chakravorty, C., and A.K. Singh. 1991. *Household Structures in India*. Census of India, Occasional Peper 1. Census of India: New Delhi.

Dube, L. 1974. *Sociology of Kinship*. Popular Prakashan: Bombay.

Karve, Irawati. 1953. *Kinship Organization in India*. Deccan College Monograph Series: Poona.

Unit 10

The Household as a Cooperative–Conflicting Unit

Contents

Learning Objectives

Unit 10 has the objective of introducing a critical thought process in the minds of students on the basis of research in the field of family and household as operational sites of human behaviour. After going through this unit, you should be able to see that 'household' in this unit connotes a co-residential unit of the family. Also you will be able to:

≈ See the household as a workshop of family life;

≈ Understand that functionalist and conflict perspectives have contributed to the cooperative-conflict perspective and that feminist thought has substantially contributed to this perspective;

≈ Understand that a household is not a unified and undifferentiated category;

≈ Explore the idea that sex, reproduction and economic considerations impinge on household members differently according to age, sex, gender relations and kin ties;

≈ Find out how state impinges upon the household and its members; and

≈ See that the cooperative-conflict perspective initially focussed on the household economy alone but we are extending the argument in this unit to include reproduction, state, religion, community and violence.

10.1 Introduction

In Unit 9 we have seen that the household and family are organised along the lines of residence and kinship respectively. The two may or may not coincide with each other at all times and places. Desai (1964) and Shah (1973) have shown us that the census of India analysed the household data on the basis of the numerical size of the household and arrived at the conclusion that the joint family was giving way to nuclear family in India. This was challenged by examining the numerical data from the dimension of kinship and jointness of the family.

In a somewhat similar manner, feminists, and particularly feminist economists challenged the conventional assumptions in economic theory that all members in a family are identical for purposes of economic analysis. We have seen that like Marxists, radical feminists saw the family as an exploitative and oppressive institution that was in turn exploited by the capitalist structure. But liberal and socialist feminism did not, unlike radical feminism, think that

the family was dispensable and technology could liberate women by taking over the reproductive functions. To them, the family was the chief institution of patriarchy. The alternative institution did not surface as a viable possibility, despite efforts such as the 'kibbutz'.

The family has been the bone of contention in feminist thought. Socialist feminists did think that the family and reproduction tied women down. Their resolve was for women to move into the public sphere and be like men to be equal with them both inside and outside the domestic sphere. Women's entry into the public sphere was to prove that women were as good as men. This would not keep them reduced to the status of the 'second sex', to use Beauvior's (1972) expression. While socialist feminists' route to equality with men was through the entry of women into the public sphere, liberal feminists wanted liberty, justice and equal rights as citizens. Wollstonecraft (1792) argued against the wife's dependency within marriage and being an ornamental symbol of man's success rather than his partner. She spoke against the suspension of the very legal existence of the wife, or at least her incorporation and consolidation into that of the husband. It was in this context that Wollstonecraft insisted that women had an independent right to education, property and the protection of the civil law. The woman's rights as a citizen were needed to ensure that women were not forced into marriage through economic necessity, and wives were not dependent on the goodwill of their husbands.

Reproduction and mothering roles of women in the family do not easily lend themselves into the public/ private dichotomy when citizenship rights are at stake. But motherhood as a form of citizenship which Wollstonecraft argues for, does not solve the problem of male privilege in formal political and legal power while leaving women as dependents of men. The dilemma between motherhood and citizenship rights without being dependent on men is termed as 'the Wollstonecraft dilemma' (Pateman, 1988). Wollstonecraft, like liberal feminists today, was seeking citizenship for women on gender-neutral grounds, at the same time recognizing their specific qualities and roles, especially mothering, within a framework that allowed women to become full citizens only by being like men. Today feminists look at difference among women obtained in class, race and community differentials, as interfering with the project of gender equality. Thus questions of inequality between men and women cross-cut those with class, race and community (caste and religious). See ICSSR 1974 for a comprehensive coverage of gender inequalities in India. It is in the above context that intra-family differences gained privilege in research. We shall learn about this perspective below.

10.2 The Socio-economic Dynamics of the Household

The standard literature on economic development was, until the 1970s, frequently reluctant to consider the position of women as a separate problem of importance of its own. Gender-based analysis was often seen as unnecessarily divisive. In economic development studies, many writers insisted on keeping the deprivation of entire families (actually meaning households) as the right focus of studying misery and for seeking remedies, thus placing households in the class-structure and in the economic strata for analysing the poverty-prosperity range in a given setting.

As mentioned in 10.1 above, feminist thought, especially feminist economics literature was critical of standard economic development studies in late

1970s and early 1980s. Besides, socio-economic development instead of economic growth driven development also emerged as an alternative perspective and possibility around the same period. The challenge to the modernist project was to incorporate a range of socio-political and cultural variations rather than take societies/ communities as monolithic, undifferentiated categories. Gender sensitive development literature (Moser 1993) too critiqued the undifferentiated analysis in economic development literature as it evolved its analysis from the women in development (WID) approach to the gender and development (GAD) approach.

Though the non-gender view may have a plausibility in some contexts, in others, income and class categories are over-aggregative and even misleading. Gender is a crucial parameter in social and economic analysis in relation to variables such as class, income, ownership, occupation and household status. It is now well-known that women have a lower status within and outside the household compared to men; even in women-headed households, women face adversity in economic terms. Women-headed households constitute a majority of the poor households. Feminisation of poverty speaks about the gender dimension of poverty. Thus concentrating on household poverty without looking at the gender dimension is misleading in understanding the causation, consequences and relationships that work in the poorer households. Sen (1987) argued for promoting research incorporating the gender dimension order to arrive at a better understanding of the household dynamics. You can refer Sen (1993) where he has taken up three different analytical views of the family (actually meaning, household) and evaluated their contributions and shortcomings and privileged the cooperative-conflict perspective.

Though the family was criticized by Marxists as a selfish and individualising institution, there exists contrary evidence where love, care and sacrifice/ selflessness, conflict and violence go on simultaneously in the family. We have seen above that there has not yet been an alternative to the institution of the family though its size and structure, including the normative structure has not remained the same over time (see Patel 2005 for the changing unchangeable of the family i.e. that aspect of family which is considered to be beyond changes, such as, the norms, values etc. In this light let us consider the three kinds of assumptions about the family discussed by Sen (1993). The Glue-together family (household) assumes the family as a unit which takes decisions about income, occupation, distribution and allocation among its members and other expenditure heads. In such a view, there are no individual decisions, individual utility, etc. but only family decisions. This model aggregates all individuals in the household into a unit and adds other households in a society to be analysed only according to their income, expenditure, property ownership, etc. disregarding age, sex, kinship and relationship differentials which are socially and culturally organised. The latter constraints are also stretched and bended as household members strategise even while acting in typified ways.

The second case, Sen takes up is based on Becker's (1981) assumption that the household is 'the super-trader family'. Becker views the family from an economic approach where each individual in the household is maximising individual utilities, through their activities including entering into marriage and reproduction, besides everyday, routine behaviour. Becker ignores that this utility maximisation is not carried out uncompromisingly – without constraints of propriety, norm and convention (see Patel 1994 for more on Becker and his thesis of 'a baby or a car' in the socially organised and

situated fertility behaviour in rural Rajasthan). The 'bargaining model' brings into the arena of the household, principles of rational self-interest — a needed demystification of the 'veil of enchanted relationships' which obscures family dynamics. The relational character of the family — household is eclipsed though, in focusing on family members' actions solely in their capacity as individuals. Perhaps one could see 'negotiation' as a key principle in the arena of the family-household, where men and women perceive themselves as operating in and through relationships, and where, using the structural gaps and ambivalences in the system, pushing the limits, drawing upon the available alternate conceptions, women work their way through kinship structures which are both oppressive and — particularly in the absence of state responsibility for social security — supportive, providing them their primary security network (Ganesh 2001:29-30).

The third assumption Sen takes up is that of 'the despotic family'. This approach assumes that the despotic head of the family takes all decisions and others just obey. Sen points to the literature produced on 'status of women' and 'feminisation of poverty' which shows a variance from 'the despotic family' view. Besides, it ignores the constraints of propriety and norms which too are not uniform for entire societies. For gradual shifts in the position of different members of the household during their life course, see Patel 1994 (chapters 6 and 7) on how women are able to negotiate their fertility preferences after a certain stage in their life. The ability to negotiate and decide does not remain static but varies over time and in different permutations and combinations with differential experiences of the household members and invocation of norms, constraints and propriety. It is here that the household is visible in its cooperative-conflict unit form (see Sen 1993 for capabilities and comparisons by gender in health, education, survival, including sex-ratio and such other human capital development parameters).

Reflection and Action 10.1

Interview 5 women of different age groups 16-20, 25-30, 35-40, 45-50, and 55-65.

Ask them about the different roles they play in their household; socially, economically, in decision making. Write a note of about 5 pages on "Role and Status of Women in an Indian Household" comparing the data collected through the interview. Share your note with other students at your Study Centre.

The systematically inferior position of women inside or outside the household in many societies points to the necessity of treating gender as a force of its own in development analysis. The economic hardship of women-headed households is a problem both of female deprivation and of family poverty. Furthermore, females and males in the same family may well have quite divergent predicaments, and this can make the position of women in the poorer families particularly precarious (on female-headed households see Gulati 1981 Profiles in Female Poverty).

Over the last few decades, there has been substantial documentation from a women's studies perspective of the gender bias in the household which lead to measurable negative outcomes for women. In view of the dominance of patrilineal kinship over large parts of India, it is an obvious step to ascribe

to it the devaluation of daughters and the son-preference which are salient features in contemporary Indian families. But this is too broad a generalisation to capture nuances and retain a cutting edge. It is necessary to scrutinize the family-household to see in what ways and to what extent it is the site for working out of rules and principles not derived from descent or even from kinship. There is a need to keep in mind the distinction between household as a site of gender bias, family as an agency for socialisation of members to accept and transmit the bias and as a monitoring agency responsible for punitive action, and the ideology of the descent system as a source of devaluation of females, insofar as it permeates the family – household. The household as a concrete institution is only partly constituted by patrilineal kinship. Other traditional and modern institutions contribute to the articulation of patriarchy. These include caste-based institutions and their ideology, the state and its policies, religious institutions, economy, media — thus, the culture and society at large. Insofar as they assume and project certain ideas of male and female, these inevitably percolate into the matrix of the family- household. The source of these ideas is not necessarily the descent system. Patriarchy has often been used to describe a society which at various major institutional levels codes and expresses male dominance and in such a society, kinship is often but not necessarily patrilineal. There is no doubt that entitlements to familial resources are based largely on kinship rules, and in this regard, patriliny is unbalanced and works to the disadvantage of women (see unit 6 of ESO-02 Society in India of IGNOU's B.A. Sociology Programme). But the specific character of patriliny in India also reflects what could be called cultural concepts and values such as the idea of marriage as destiny, the spiritual merit of *dana* particularly *kanyadana* ('gift of the virgin'), the auspiciousness of the married woman and the inauspiciousness of the widow, the *anuloma-pratiloma* rule of intercaste marriage, the idea of transformation (or 'transubstantiation' as it is sometimes called) of a woman's body upon marriage, and the sacramental character of her ritual incorporation into the affinal household. These are not inherent in patrilineal systems, but are specific to Hindu India and they have definite implications for women's life trajectories in the subcontinent. More critically, many aspects of the workings of the household, including what can be called familial ideology, are derived from the exigencies of caste (Ganesh 2002: 26-27).

There are also systematic differences among the developing countries in the survival rates of females vis-à-vis males. Asia has a sex ratio (female per 1000 male) of only 950, but Africa comes closer to Europe and North America with a sex ratio of 1020 indeed considerably higher than in sub-Saharan Africa. Even within Asia the sex ratio is higher than unity in some regions such as South east Asia (1001), but much lower in China, India, Bangladesh and west Asia (940) and in Pakistan (900). There is substantial variation within a given country: for example, in India the sex ratio varies from 870 and 880 in Haryana and Punjab to 1030 in Kerala. It is clear that had the average African sex ratio obtained in India, and then given the number of men; there would have been about 30 million more women in India today (see Sen 1988). The corresponding number of 'missing women' in China is about 30 million the cumulative contrast of sex specific mortality rates – not unrelated to social and economic inequalities between men and women-find expression in these simple statistics, which form something like the tip of an ice berg much of which is hard to observe. Later studies (Agnihotri 2000) and Bose and Shiva (200?) highlight the sharper unfavourable differences in sex ratio over time and regions in India.

There is no dearth of evidence on the gender discriminatory ethos in the contemporary scene. John Hoddinott (1996) contributes to the literature in this area. Presenting evidence from the Phillippines and Bangladesh, Hoddinott points out that nutritional adequacy at the household level correlates poorly with that at the level of the individual household member. The data he cites show that of the individuals comprising study households, a substantial proportion were subject to relatively low food intake even when aggregate levels of household nutrition were high, and further, that within households, food allocations favoured males over females. Disparities such as these have ofcourse been explained in terms of the social and cultural manifestations of gender discrimination. Hoddinott shows in his paper that there is another dimension involved as well.

In making his point, he invokes the economic principles of efficiency, equity and bargaining. Of these, the first makes for a distribution of food such that the household's nutritional resources accrue preferentially to its economically more productive members. This forms the basis of food allocations deliberately tilted in favour of males. Maximisation of the household's productivity and income is the rationale here. One implication of this, the author points out, is that school meals programmes targeted at girls can be thwarted when households 'compensate' by reducing the quantities of food given to girls at home and reallocate the 'surplus' to the family's economically more productive members. Gender discrimination in the household is thus overlaid with an economic rationale. But the principle of efficiency is not inexorable, for there are times when it is eclipsed by the principle of equity. Evidence from rural India suggests that the former is likely to operate less during seasons of plenty, at which time equity considerations are likely to come to the fore.

The third principle — bargaining — draws upon non-cooperative game theory. The advantage to household members when they pool their resources, Hoddinott (1996) says, is jeopardized when any member implicitly threatens to go for an 'outside option', i.e. an economic opportunity that is available outside of a familial pooling arrangement. That forms a bargaining lever for laying claim to a greater share of a household's food resources. This empirical problem of perception and communication is indeed important. On the other hand, it is far from obvious that the right conclusion to draw from this is the non-viability of the notion of personal welfare. There are considerable variations in the perceptions of individuality even within such a traditional society, and here the lack of perception of personal welfare is neither immutable nor particularly resistant to social development. Indeed the process of politicisation — including a political recognition of the gender issue — can itself bring about sharp changes in these perceptions.

The systematically inferior position of women inside and outside the household in many societies points to the necessity of treating gender as a force of its own in development analysis. The economic hardship of woman-headed households is a problem both of female deprivation and of family poverty. Furthermore, females and males in the same family may well have quite divergent predicaments, and this can make the position of women in the poorer families particularly precarious. To concentrate on family poverty irrespective of gender can be misleading in terms of both causation and consequences.

The fact that the relative deprivation of women vis-à-vis men is by no means uniform across the world does not reduce the importance of gender as a

parameter of analysis. This variability is an important reason for giving serious attention to the causal antecedents of the contrasting deprivations. To take an extremely simple and crude example, it is clear that despite the evident biological advantages that women seem to have over men in survival and longevity (when there is some symmetry in the attention they receive on basic matters of life and death, such as nutrition, health care, and medical attention), there is nevertheless a remarkable preponderance of surviving men over surviving women in the population of less developed countries taken as a whole, in sharp contrast with the position of the more developed countries. Whereas there are about 106 women per 100 men in Europe and North America, there are only 97 women per 100 men in the developing countries as a whole. Since mortality and survival are not independent of care and neglect, and are influenced by social action and public policy, even this extremely crude perspective cannot fail to isolate gender as an important parameter in development studies.

It is, however difficult to translate this elementary recognition into practice and to find an adequate framework for the use of gender categories and sex specific information in social analysis. Sen (1990) asserts that the problem is far too complex and basic to be 'resolved' by any kind of simple model, but one could go some distance toward a better understanding of the problem by broadening the conceptual structure and the informational base of gender analysis in economic and social relations. He thus extends the income and distribution of resources within the household to incorporate the following elements in his analysis.

10.3 Capabilities, Well-being, Agency and Perception

Sen (1990) examines different theories of household economics such as standard models of "household production", "family allocations", or "equivalence scales" in capturing the coexistence of extensive conflicts and pervasive cooperation in household arrangements. But these too have an inadequate informational base and are particularly negligent of the influence of perceived interests and perceived contributions. In this light, not only are capabilities, well-being and agency important but so is perception regarding these qualities and such other attributes.

An alternative approach to 'cooperative-conflicts' is then sketched, identifying certain qualitative relation in the form of directional responses of the out-come to certain determining variables in the informational base. These relations are translated into a format of 'extended entitlements', based on sharpening the concept of 'entitlements' (already used in studying famines and deprivation of households) by incorporating notions of perceived legitimacy in intrahousehold divisions.

Each person has several identities. Being a man or a woman is one of them. Being a member of a family is another. Our understanding of our interests, obligations, objectives, and legitimate behaviour is influenced by the various — and sometimes conflicting — effects of these diverse identities. In some contexts the family identity may exert such a strong influence on our perceptions that we may not find it easy to formulate any clear notion of our own individual welfare. Based on empirical observations of the family-centred perception in some traditional societies (such as India), some authors have disputed the viability of the notion of personal welfare in those societies (Das and Nicholas 1981). It has often been observed that if a typical Indian

rural woman was asked about her personal "welfare", she would find the question unintelligible, and if she was able to reply, she might answer the question in terms of her reading of the welfare of her family. The idea of personal welfare may not be viable in such a context. This happened not only with women but with men also. This was observed during the fieldwork among the elderly in Rajasthan (Shah, Patel and Lobo 1987). Neither men nor women found meaningful and relevant the questions on income (personal) and having a room for oneself. The nearest they could go to was personal expenses on items no one else in the household consumed, e.g. tobacco, snuff, opium etc.

Insofar as intrafamily divisions involved significant inequalities in the allotment of food, medical attention, health care, and the like (often unfavorable to the well being- even survival- of women), the lack of perception of personal interests combined with a great concern for family welfare is, of course, just the kind of attitude that helps to sustain the traditional inequalities. History bears evidence to the fact that acute inequalities often survive precisely by making allies out of the deprived. The underdog comes to accept the legitimacy of the unequal order and becomes an implicit accomplice. It can be a serious error to take the absence of the consciousness of that inequality as evidence of the absence of that inequality (or the non viability of that question) argues Sen. We can go back to the example given earlier from fieldwork experience with the elderly. Not only the women but even the men found questions of personal/ individual income and room absurd. These men were by no means the underdogs in their families, nor were the elderly women. Perception is based both on facts and on cultural notions, connotations and values about those facts, thereby making the study of deprivation and interests of family members a complex one.

Sen further states that personal interest and welfare are not just matters of perception; there are objective aspects of these concepts that command attention even when the corresponding self- perception does not exist. For example, the 'ill fare' associated with morbidity or undernourishment has an immediacy that does not await the person's inclination or willingness to answer detailed questions regarding his or her welfare. Indeed, the well being of the person may plausibly be seen in terms of the person's functionings and capabilities; what he or she is able to do or be (e.g. the ability to be well nourished, to avoid morbidity or mortality, to read and write and communicate, to take part in the life of the community, to appear in public without shame). It is here, that Sen's economics comes back rather strongly. He argues for individualism and this is in accordance with western liberal thought in the utilitarian tradition.

It is also possible to distinguish between a person's 'well-being' and 'agency'. A person may have various goals and objectives other than the pursuit of his or her well being, although there are obvious links between a person's well being and the fulfilment of his or her other objectives. The overall success as an agent may not be closely connected- and certainly may not be identified- with the person's own well-being. It is the agency aspect that is most influenced by a person's sense of obligation and perception of legitimate behaviour.

10.4 Social Technology, Cooperation, and Conflicts

The 'social' content of technology is what Marx called 'the combining together of various processes into a social whole'. The so-called 'productive' activities

may be parasitic on other work being done, such as housework and food preparation, the care of children, or bringing food to the field where cultivators are working. Technology is not only about equipments and its operational characteristics but also about social arrangements that permit the equipment to be used and the so-called productive processes to be carried on.

Household activities have been viewed in many contradictory ways in assessing production and technology. On the one hand, it is not denied that the sustenance, survival, and the reproduction of workers are obviously essential for the workers being available for outside work. On the other hand, the activities that produce or support that sustenance, survival or reproduction are not typically regarded as contributing to output and are often classified as 'unproductive labour'.

Sen (1990) gives a hypothetical example of a household to combine the material (monetary), the capabilities and the perceptions as co-existing in a household. He says that an integrated view should be formed of the pattern of activities outside or inside the home that together make up the production processes in traditional as well as modern societies. The relations between the sexes are obviously much conditioned by the ways these different activities sustain and support each other, and depend inter alia on the particular patterns of integration.

The prosperity of a household depends on the totality of various activities-getting money incomes, purchasing or directly producing (in the case of, say, peasants) food materials and other goods, producing edible food out of food materials, and so on. But in addition to aggregate prosperity, even the divisions between sexes in general, and specifically those within the household, may also be deeply influenced by the pattern of gender division of work. In particular, the members of a household face two different types of problems simultaneously. One involving cooperation (adding to the total availabilities) and the other conflict (dividing the total availabilities among the members of the household). Social arrangements regarding who does what, and who takes what decisions can be seen as responses to this combined problem of cooperation and conflict. The sexual division of labour is one part of the social arrangement.

Seeing social arrangements in terms of a broader view of technology and production has some far reaching effects. First, it points to the necessity of examining the productive aspects of what are often treated as purely 'cultural phenomena'. Contributions that are in effect made by labour expended in activities that are not directly involved in 'production' narrowly defined. Second it throws light on the stability and survival of unequal patterns of social arrangements in general and deeply asymmetric sexual division in particular. An example is the resilient social division of labour in most societies by which women do the cooking and are able to take on outside work only insofar as that can be combined with persisting as the cook. Third, it points to the division between paid and unpaid work in the context of general productive arrangements, and fourth, the specific patterns of sexual divisions outside and within the household. The nature of cooperative arrangement implicitly influences the distributional parameters and the household's response to conflicts and perception of interest. Systems of kinship orient members of different kinship systems differentially to many activities. Perceptions of activities may differ in societies with patrilineal, matrilineal

and bilineal kinship systems. Nevertheless, we must acknowledge the spread and influence of patriliny as a macro ideology in the world. Dube (2001) has contrasted the three kinship systems by which the quality of gender relations and position of women vary in and outside the household.

By introducing the capabilities, agency and perception dimension to the household as a cooperative –conflict unit, Sen (1990) has broadened the scope of this perspective to cover a number of dimensions other than income and distribution of resources.

Action and Reflection 10.2

1) Read Dube 2001 (chapter 6) and discuss the comparative position of women in the household in the three kinship systems she describes in her essay or

2) Take five households in your neighbourhood. Make a list of activities and dietary intake of each of the members. Classify this data by sex, age and kinship ties with the head of the household.

Discuss the differentials both within and outside the household in work and diet among the members.

10.5 Conclusion

This unit focussed on the perspective that views the household as a cooperating and at the same time a conflicting unit. In the previous unit, unit 9 we had seen how emotions in the family and the household include not just the positive emotions of love and affection but also those such as tensions, hate, rivalry and jealousy. The cooperative conflict perspective came up in the backdrop of feminist thought and struggle. This thought also influenced economic analysis and questioned the value of studying the household as a unified whole without internal differentiation by gender. Subsequently, further advancement in the analytical parameters took place by incorporating issues of capabilities, well-being, agency, perception and social technology.

We have seen how kinship systems have differential meanings for similar activities. This will be further clarified in units 11 and 12 of this Block. We have also included the dimension of 'reproduction and gender differentials' in the household as cooperation combined with conflict in varying measures. We have discussed this issue in the introduction to this unit. We can also include the role of perceptions and see how perceptions regarding distribution of resources and inputs of different members in fertility decisions are influenced by the state through its policies. In a similar vein, the influence of caste and religious community on the household is strong and can affect the social technology, capability, agency and perception of activities in the household. These may range from franchise, political representation, choice of marriage partner, divorce and remarriage, biological and social reproduction, access to healthcare, etc. Population policies of India and China have impacted reproduction in the household quite differentially. State policies and the household / family may be analysed from the cooperative-conflict perspective.

10.6 Further Reading

Agnihotri, S.B. 2000. *Juvenile Sex Ratio Patterns in the Indian Population*: *A Fresh Exploration*. Sage Publication, New Delhi.

Dube, L. 2001. *Anthropological Explorations in Gender*. Sage, New Delhi.

Gulati, L. *Profiles in Poverty,* Hindustan, New Delhi.

Sen, Amartya. 1993. *Economics and the Family*, In Uberoi, P. ed. *Family, Marriage and Kinship in India*. Oxford University Press. 452-463, Delhi.

Unit 11

Marriage and Its Changing Patterns

Contents

Learning Objectives

Unit 11 aims to analyse the changing patterns of marriage in India. After going through the unit, it is expected that you would be able to:

≈   question the universality of the institution of marriage in India;

≈   discuss the aspect of age at marriage;

≈   discuss variations in the pattern of selection of spouse;

≈   describe the basic rites of marriage in different communities;

≈   explain how marriage reflects the status aspirations of the groups involved in the material and symbolic transfer of wealth and prestige accompanying marriage; and

≈   examine the issues of divorce and remarriage.

11.1 Introduction

We take for granted that the institutions like family, marriage and kinship are universal in India and sociologists need to discuss the variations in these institutions based on region, religion, language, caste, class and occupation. Owing to the whole range of variations they find it difficult to make generalisations about such institutions of the Indian social structure.

The basic question that will be raised in Unit 11 is the validity of discussing only the common and different elements in the institution of marriage in India. Does this give us an understanding of the institution of marriage as it obtains today in our country? Dealing with the feature of near universality of the institution of marriage and discussing the issue of age at marriage in India may bring out the unity that exists, across the regions, relating to these two features of marriage. You may on the other hand discuss such features in the context of diversity as the forms of marriage, patterns of selection of spouse, rites of marriage, material and non-material transactions involved in marriage, and the possibilities and mechanisms of divorce and widow remarriage in India. Most of these features relate to the primary marriage of a man or woman (i.e. marriage for the first time). Secondary

marriage of a widow/ widower or a separated or divorced woman/ man is accompanied by a nominal ceremony, where there are generally no or only a few rites. Similarly, the pattern of selection of spouse may differ in a primary and a secondary marriage.

Yet, having completed this process of looking at common and diverse features of the institution of marriage in India, you would still not have looked at the churning of ideas, values, practices and conflicts that the very notion of marriage brings to mind in the context of its changing patterns. We find that today the very concept of marriage and its epistemology is a subject of much questioning. Feminists, *dalit* scholars and leftists have in both theoretical and practical terms critiqued the prevalent notions about marriage. Some have accepted the ever-encompassing hold of the institution of marriage in everybody's personal life and attempted to negotiate it from its prevailing vantage point. In the feminist discourse, you would find that marriage is a major site or an organising platform through which the feminists have not only tried to understand oppression but also negotiated and established a more equal playing field. Along with the usual coverage that accrues to the topic of marriage generally you should also pay attention to emerging perceptions regarding the institution of marriage and its changing patterns. The examples of changing patterns and their theoretical significance that are cited here, have been derived from the coverage of a symposium, Marriage, Family and Community, with contributions from Shah (2005: 709), Hansman (2005: 709-712), John (2005- 712-715), Rao (2005: 715-718) and Rinchin (2005: 718-721). It has to be acknowledged here that their articles have helped in building the case for re-thinking our notions of marriage in India.

In the course of discussion of each of the above mentioned aspects we shall talk of the patterns of marriage with particular reference to the changes that have taken place in India since Independence. For descriptions of various aspects of the theme I have also referred you to detailed accounts already provided in the course material of Sociology courses of IGNOU's B A programme. Reading the referred portions will help you to obtain background information and explanations of basic concepts.

We will discuss each aspect of marriage with suitable illustrations from some of the major communities like the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians. Except for passing references, patterns of marriage that are found among the tribal population have not been described mainly because there is a separate Block in this Course on tribal population.

11.2 Is the Institution of Marriage Universal in India?

Marriage is an important social institution and therefore we need to assign a definition to it so that it has a universal reference and application. All the same it is a relationship that has, in the context of India, given rise to many controversies relating to the definition of marriage. Though the debate took place with particular reference to the Nayars of Kerala, the concerns it took up had a general relevance. You may like to know a little about this debate over problems of defining 'marriage'.

Leach (1955: 107-108) considered marriage to be "bundles of rights". The rights included

≈   Legitimating offspring

≈   Socially approved access to the spouse's sexuality, labour and property

≈	Establishment of affinal relationships between persons and between groups.

It is possible to add as per a particular ethnographic context some other features to the above list of rights. But if you were to make a comparative study of marriage in different societies, you would like to define the term in a more precise manner so that your cross-cultural comparison refers to the same kinds of phenomenon. It has been quite common to refer to the 'Notes and Queries' to find such definitions. The 'Notes and Queries' (1951: 110) defines marriage in the following manner.

> Marriage is a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognised legitimate offspring of both partners.

I suppose that you would gladly accept this definition of marriage in the context of society in India. But Gough, who studied the Nayar community of Kerala , found that the unions between Nayar girls and Nambudiri Brahman men could not be understood in terms of the above definition (for details of this particular case see Jain 1996: 151-190 and Unit 9 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B. A. programme). Gough (1959: 32) preferred to modify the definition of 'marriage' in the following words.

> Marriage is a relationship established between a woman and one or more other persons, which provides that a child born to the woman under circumstances not prohibited by the rules of the relationship is accorded full birth-status rights common to normal members of his society or social stratum.

This definition enlarges the scope of viewing marriage in a broader context than the definition of the Notes and Queries. It would include the case of Nuer woman-woman marriage, mentioned by Evans-Pritchard (1951: 108-109). It would also include the case of levirate unions, which consider the child as the legitimate offspring of a man other than its genitor. As you may already know that levirate is a quite common practice found in some parts of India. For example, Gazetteer of India (1965: 541) has mentioned the prevalence of levirate alliances among the Ahir of Haryana, some Jat communities and Girijan and several castes in Uttar Pradesh and among the Kodagu of Mysore. Levirate refers to a marriage in which a man has the obligation to marry the widow of his brother.

You can now make out that Gough's definition is an improvement on the one given in the Notes and Queries. You may also be aware of several cases published in newspapers about caste-based violence on young men and women opting to marry against caste or sub-caste norms. If a *jatav* boy wants to marry a *thaku*r girl, the two would have to face violence at the hands of their respective caste panchayats. This sort of periodic reporting in the media shows that marriage has become a contested site in our fast changing social world. Fernandez (1999) and (Gopal) 2002 have documented cases of forced marriages, excommunication, unlawful locking, outright murders or last option suicides of those who have defied the existing norms of their castes/ classes.

The events mentioned above give rise to questions about the very nature of marriage and the variety of relationships it is to include in its scope. In India, as per Section 377, the law recognises for social and other purposes only blood and marriage relationships. In 1988, the first media reports of the Madhya Pradesh policewomen deciding to marry each other, brought out

into the open some other examples of 'alternate relationships', which had come up alongside marriage in different castes/ classes in both urban and rural India. Here is a 'Reflection and Action' exercise for you to ponder about yet other forms of marriage and decide if Gough's definition or any other definition that you know about includes such cases.

Reflection and Action 11.1

Cline (1936) has described the homosexual unions of Western Egypt. Does Gough's definition of marriage include this case?

'Hindustan Times' of August 2004 published a news item "Girlfriends shun families". It referred to two young girls living in a slum in Bhopal. The parents of one of them had forcibly married her to a man but her 'girlfriend' disrupted the marriage and the two girls decided to live together. The police and the counsellors tried to help the girls to return to their families but the girls did not oblige them. Does Gough's definition include this case?

Write your answers to the above questions on a separate sheet of paper. Then provide your own definition of 'marriage' that may have a better applicability in cross-cultural comparisons.

There is apparently one more problem with the above definitions, which make legitimating of children an essential component of marriage. Does it mean that all such marriages where no child is born are invalid? Is marriage not more than procreation? Can it not be considered as an existing fact if there are no children born? Bohanan (1949), has discussed Dahomean marriage and distinguished the rights of a woman as a wife (rights in *uxorem*) from rights over the children she may bear (rights in *genetricem*). 'Times of India' of 5th May 2005 published a news item on its first page with the title "Man tells HC: Wife can't abort my child". He appealed to the High Court to protect his right to fatherhood. This is an example of the kinds of rights we need to ponder about. These media reports have been quoted here to indicate the symptoms of wide-ranging changes occurring in the very notions of rights involved in marriage.

The above discussion shows that perhaps Leach (1961: 105) is right in saying that "all universal definitions of marriage are vain" and so also is Needham (1971), who holds that marriage in cross-cultural contexts refers to serial likenesses and does not reflect common structural features. As a matter of fact, Gough (1959: 23) too considers marriage as polythetic with an open-ended checklist. You may ask that if this is so, then why use the word 'marriage' and why not refer to such relationships by some other term?

The answer to this question is that nominally the word marriage has its reference to the context in which it exists and therefore we need to retain it till we can by consensus replace it by some other term. In India, the relationship is defined and sanctioned by custom and law prevalent in a hetero-normative and patriarchal social milieu. The definition of the relationship includes not only fairly understood guidelines for behaviour relating to sex but also regarding things like the particular way labour is to be divided and so are also other duties and privileges. Children born of marriage are considered the legitimate offspring of the married couple. Increase in the rate of marital discord has brought before the courts of law some

vexing questions about the right to fatherhood versus a woman's right over her own body.

The issue of legitimacy is important in the matters of inheritance and succession. Marriage is not only a means of sexual gratification but also a set of cultural mechanisms to ensure the continuation of the family, establishment of relationships of alliance between persons and between groups. Marriage is in this sense an almost universal social institution in India. With globalisation of culture and liberalisation of economy, the phenomenon of the wedding ceremony is the most visible reference to marriage in India. So you would agree with me that it is very hard indeed not to retain the term 'marriage' and discuss it with reference to the conceptual and socio-cultural context in which it appears.

11.3 What and Why of Marriage

You may be able to cite the religious texts of many communities in India outlining the purpose, rights and duties involved in marriage. Among the Hindus, for instance, marriage is regarded as a socio-religious duty. Ancient Hindu texts, such as the 'Dharmashastra' (see Trautman 1981), point out three main aims of marriage. These are *dharma* (duty), *praja* (progeny) and *rati* (sensual pleasure). The aims of marriage show that it is significant from both the societal as well as the individual's point of view. Marriage is significant in that it provides a legally and socially recognised process of acquiring 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 source of support in old age to parents and as the most important source of economic prosperity of the family. Marriage, in the Hindu system of four stages of life, enables a man to enter into the stage of a householder. Both a man and a woman are regarded incomplete without marriage.

The brief description above shows quite clearly that marriage for the Hindus finds its location in a hetero-normative, patriarchal family structure, in which organisations like the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, are vehemently against inter-religious marriages.

The notion of equality within marriage based on an ethic of justice does not find a place in the Hindu construction of the notion of marriage. This is the reason why there have been, historically speaking, a spate of experiments to change the form and practice of marriage itself by social reformers like Jotirao Phule, who along with his wife, Savitribai, established a school for untouchable girls in 1848 and a home for upper caste widows in 1854. Sensitive to oppression of women through burdens of chastity and caste purity that determined the code of conduct for women, Tarabai Shinde, an activist of Satyashodhak Samaj, followed in the footsteps of Phule and wrote a critique of gender relations in her piece, *Stri-Purush Tulana*. Shinde (1882) commented on sexual economics of marriage and prostitution and considered them as two sides of the same coin. Not only in western India, E. V. Ramaswamy Naicker, in southern India, challenged Hindu orthodoxy and recommended 'self-respect marriages', which undermined the connexion between marriage and religious rites. Similarly, Ambedkar's act of burning the 'Manusmriti' and writing *Riddles of Hinduism* in 1927 as well as Periyar's putting on a garland of shoes around the necks of Hindu religious idols symbolised the assaults on

the religious tenor of everyday life and provided a critical look at the institution of marriage in India.

Notwithstanding the activities of social reformers, you may rightly argue that even other communities in India regard marriage as an essential obligation. Islam views marriage as "*sunnah*" (an obligation), which every Muslim must fulfil. To bring yet more evidence of churning of ideas about marriage, you can refer media reports that in the case of Muslims in India, the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board on 1st May 2005 issued a model 'Nikah-Nama' (see the 'Times of India' and the 'Hindu' of Monday 2nd May 2005). This shows the Board's commitment to initiate social reforms and rooting out of social evils. The model 'Nikah-Nama' gives cognisance to the rights of the wife to food, shelter, clothing, medical treatment and maintenance and declares dowry as a crime. The document focuses on the present school and college-going generation. Though still continuing with the institution of 'triple talaq', the document makes divorce the last resort (see more comments on this matter in a later section of the unit). Christianity too, like other religions, holds marriage as critical to life and emphasises the establishment of a mutual relationship between husband and wife and adhering to their duties to each other.

You can further argue that marriage is significant as we find that only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried. According to the Report of the Committee on the Status of Women in India (CSWI 1974: 81), only 0.5 per cent of women never marry in India. By and large, girls in India believe that marriage is a woman's destiny. Married state is desirable and motherhood is a cherished achievement for most of us in India. You would find that only a very small percentage of men and women remain unmarried by choice.

Despite the near-universality of marriage among Indians, we find that goals of marriage are changing in general and for the urban and educated sections of the population in particular. A clear preference for small-size family has replaced the older notions of family with a large number of children especially sons being the source of status for parents. On the individual level, younger couples view marriage as a relationship for self-fulfillment rather than primarily for procreation.

There is also a strong protest movement among the *dalit* women against caste and gender violence and against the legal recognition of only *anuloma* marriages where upper caste men marry or live with lower caste women and not *pratiloma* ones where women of higher castes marry or live with lower caste men. Reforms among the lower caste and *dalit* communities include rehabilitation of women and men married to divinities like Khandoba and Yellamma. See '*Somavanshiya Mitra*' of 1st December 1908 and 1st July 1909 about the marriage of Shivubai Lakshman Jadhav, a woman married to a divinity. An activist, Ganpatrao Hanmantrao Gaekwad had set an example by marrying her. While discussing marriage and its changing patterns in India we cannot ignore what is occurring at the level of marginalised communities and therefore all such details as mentioned above need to be incorporated in our discussions of marriage in India. You may already know about the role of social reformers in opposing child-marriage and creating an environment for the law to fix a minimum age for marriage of a girl/ boy.

11.4 Age at Marriage in India

Apart from marriage being almost universal, early marriage is also common in India. As early as the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, efforts were made to curb infant or child marriage. Reformers like Raja Rammohun Roy, Ishwar Chandra Vidyasagar, Jotirao Phule and others in the nineteenth and early twentieth century opposed child marriage. According to Das and Dey (1998: 92), the current level of age at marriage in India is low in comparison to most of the low fertility countries (for a historical background to this discussion see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B A programme). You should also pay attention to differences between various religious groups, classes and castes in the matter of age at marriage.

The median age at marriage is low in India. This is in spite of legislations, multi-pronged strategies to spread awareness regarding the dangers of early marriage. Starting with Rajasthan, where the female age at marriage was 17.5, the lowest in India in 1991, and going upto Assam, where it was 21.1, the highest in India in 1991, the mean age at marriage for females for 1991 was 18.3 (see the 1991 census of India). In newspapers and journals we read about marriage fairs (*mela*), especially in rural areas, in which the average age of the bride is reported to be below fifteen years. In some states like Orissa, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Rajasthan, child marriages continue (National Perspective Plan 1988). Both the 'Times of India' and the 'Hindu' reported on the occasion of Akhteej festival of 2005 that the girls in some areas refused to participate in such marriage fairs and expressed a strong desire to continue their studies. These girls were aware that the minimum legal age at marriage is 18 years for girls. More than the awareness about the minimum legal age at marriage, the change in attitudes of young girls and a positive articulation of the choice of continuing their education are the signs of changing patterns of marriage in India. For the connexion between low age at marriage and the notions of preserving the chastity or purity of women see CSWI: 1974.

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 was two years. According to Das and Dey (1998: 109), this indicates that in spite of rise in age at marriage a wide gap in this matter persisted between the rural and urban areas of the country.

It is important to note the variation in the age at marriage among different communities in India. For instance, the average age at marriage is as low as 15 years for girls among many of the hill tribes in India, while 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 (see CSWI 1974: 82 for the factors that help to raise the age at marriage). It is a good idea to complete Reflection and Action 11.2 exercise for gathering your own mini database on age at marriage in India.

> **Reflection and Action 11.2**
>
> Interview at least fifty married persons of your family and in your neighbourhood on the following aspects of marriage. Please make sure to include at least fifty percent women in your sample of fifty persons. Note down each person's age, sex, educational qualifications and religion before you ask her/ him the questions.

i)   Has any one in your family remained unmarried after the age of 35? If, yes, what are the reasons for this?

ii) At what age did you get married? Relate the answers to what has been discussed in the unit, and find out if the person remained unmarried by choice or by necessity. That is to say has he/she taken a voluntary decision to remain single? Or, has the person remained unmarried because of reasons like physical defects, poor economic status of the family or dowry etc.? Secondly, find out reasons for the person's marriage at an age much below or above the minimum legal age at marriage. Compare your answers with those given by other students at your study center and basing on your findings, write a short essay of one thousand words on 'age at marriage in my family and neighbourhood'.

11.5 Rules Regulating Marriage

In all societies we find ways of regulating who may not marry whom and who may marry whom.

Incest rules

The rules of incest decide who is outside the category of those one can marry. Can you quickly count up to ten such persons whom you are not allowed to marry under any circumstances? If yes, you already know about incest rules. Incest refers to sexual union of near kin.

Positive (endogamy) and negative (exogamy) rules

There are positive and negative rules of marriage to determine the unit within which one should marry and the unit within which one must not marry. The positive rules pertain to the unit of endogamy within which one can marry. In India, among the Hindus this refers by and large to one's caste or sub-caste.

The negative rules pertain to the unit of exogamy within which one must not marry. Among the higher caste Hindus, this unit is one's gotra, within which one is not allowed to marry (for the four clan rule of *gotra* exogamy see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme). Do you remember reading in the newspapers reports about marriages between persons of the same gotra? Local caste panchayats have reportedly taken action against such couples though the courts have upheld their marriages. Such cases are indicators of changes in the perceptions of people about rules of marriage. Even the unit of endogamy is no longer a universally accepted unit of positive rules of marriage. For a detailed discussion of the rules of endogamy including the rule of hypergamy and hypogamy see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme.

Inter-caste/inter-religion/same sex marriages

You must have noticed many inter-caste and inter-religion marriages taking place in modern times. In legal terms all such marriages are valid and in social terms too they are fast gaining full recognition. As long as marriages follow the norms of heterosexual unions, society in India is culturally accepting such marriages. Indeed as mentioned before, there are yet more alternate forms of marital unions reportedly taking place in India and we have to wait and watch their fate in our socio-cultural milieu. Such unions relate to two persons of same sex deciding to live as husband and wife. It is not clear

what terms we should be using to describe such relationships. It is apparent that the current predominance of heteronormativity in marriage relationships leaves little scope for exploring different forms of relationships. One is not sure if queer or marginalised sexualities can occupy a recognisable space in the mainstream culture.

The case of migrant tribals

I would also mention at this point the little mentioned situation with regard to tribal populations in India. With the erosion of the socio-cultural fabric and traditional economic structures of most tribal groups in India, we find them occupying spaces available to migrant labour. Staying back in native territories means to them the spectre of starvation and moving out in search of livelihood gives them subsistence at survival level. In the midst of this scenario, most migrant tribal women labourers continue to live with the constant fear of sexual abuse. Will it then make any sense if we were to discuss different forms of marriage traditionally found among the tribal communities of India? In this context, you can usefully look at the case-studies carried out under the auspices of the Centre for Women's Development Studies, by Banerjee 1987, Mitra 1987, and the study by Schenk-Sandbergen 1995 and by Sen 1995 on migrant tribal women.

Rules applicable to married adults

Besides the above issues, we need to also consider those rules, which regulate the conduct of already married persons. The negative rules are those of adultery that restrict sexual access to those already married. You may observe the positive side of rules in polygamous and the levirate or sororate or Islamic short-term marriage (*mut'a*), whereby already married persons have sexual access to specified married persons.

Breaking rules of marriage

Discussions of rules of marriage throw better light on basic structures and processes when we study them in the context of the rules being broken. For example effectiveness of caste or sub-caste endogamy can be judged only by looking at the number of inter-caste marriages and their 'sooner or later' acceptance by the kin group. In this connexion, the interface between caste and class gains relevance and the relative class status of the spouse is often a sufficient condition to render an inter-caste marriage more acceptable in due course. Further, increase in the number of so-called urban villages has made inroads into the levels of socio-cultural acceptance of the deviant behaviour of the younger generation.

In India we find the commonly listed forms of marriage such as monogamy (marriage of a man to a woman at a time), and polygamy (marriage of a man or woman to more than one spouse). The latter, that is polygamy with its two forms, namely, polygyny (marriage of a man to several women at a time) and polyandry (marriage of a woman to several men at a time) is also prevalent in different parts of the country. For a detailed account of the various forms of marriage in India see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme. In ancient texts of the Hindus we find references to eight forms of marriage (For details see unit 15 on Hindu Social Organisation in Block 4 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme). These forms refer basically to the methods by which a spouse is acquired.

Let us now take a brief look at the patterns of selecting one's spouse. Before moving on to the discussion of spouse selection, let us complete Reflection and Action 11.3 for grasping the nature of changes occurring in the patterns of marriage in India.

Reflection and Action 11.3

Carry out a mini survey of fifty to seventy households in the area where you live. Select the households on the basis of a random sample. Visit the selected households and ask the following questions to whoever in the family is willing to answer them. Before asking the questions, note down details about the respondent, like the caste/ sub-caste, class, region, religion, mother tongue, nationality and any other factor that you may like to include.

Questions

How many ever-married persons live in the household?

What was the form (referring to inter-caste/ inter-religion etc) of marriage of each married person?

Based on your findings, write an essay of one thousand words on "Rules of Marriage Observed in My Area".

11.6 Patterns of Spouse Selection

The phenomenon of arranged marriage

It is a general perception among all of us that most marriages in India are fixed or arranged by parents or elders on behalf of and/or with the consent of the boy or the girl involved in marriage. We give this pattern of selecting a spouse, the label of 'arranged marriage'. In contrast to marriage by self-choice, this pattern of spouse selection is deemed to be an arranged process. In popular usage a marriage by self-choice is known as 'love marriage'. You may also find in some cases both patterns of spouse selection. There seems to be some arbitrariness about the usage of the two terms. Shah (2005: 22) has made a perceptive observation about arranged marriages.

> We presume that there was no choice in arranged marriages in traditional India. Of course, in a regime of child marriage a child did not have a choice. This does not, however, mean that the child's parents and other elders did not have alternatives to choose from. Conversely, in the so-called love marriages among adults in a certain section of society today choice is restricted by a number of social factors.

With the above comment in mind you can discuss the prevalence of arranged marriages in India in relation to

i)   the rules of endogamy (pertaining to caste/ sub-caste among the Hindus), which limit marriage alliance within certain groups.

ii)   the rules of exogamy which disallow marriage within *gotra* among the higher caste Hindus.

iii) regulations about positive/ prescriptive (allowing) and negative/ proscriptive (prohibiting) rules about marriage with parallel and cross-cousins among the Hindu/ Muslim and Christian sections among speakers of Dravidian languages.

iv)   customs, which indicate a specific preference for marriage between certain types of relatives or groups, especially among the tribal groups.

All the above factors make arranged marriages the somewhat more desirable pattern of selection of spouse. For a good number of high caste Hindus, matching of horoscope (charts relating to one's birth under certain astrological calculations) constitutes an important element in the final choice of the marriage partner. With the advent of information technology tools and their easy availability, apart from astrologers matching the horoscopes of a boy and a girl, computers are used to match horoscopes. Application of information technology can be seen in the proliferation of websites dealing with matchmaking.

Marriage by self-choice

In the light of raised age at marriage, prescribed by law, and easy access to information technology for finding a spouse, it is relatively easy for the concerned boy/ girl to find a spouse by self-choice. The traditionally placed restrictions on free interaction between a boy and a girl in India are now almost impossible to enforce and this is yet another factor which has given impetus to marriage by self-choice.

The measure of participation in choosing one's life partner shows variations between different groups. For example, among the Muslims, by and large, the parents, elders or *wali* (guardian) arrange a marriage (Gazetteer of India 1965: 547 and CSWI 1974: 62). But owing to forces of modernisation along with the spread of education in minority communities, self-choice in selecting one's spouse is equally prevalent in their cases too.

Blumberg and Dwarki (1980: 139) found the following patterns of spouse selection in India.

i)   Marriage by parents'/elders' choice without consulting either the boy or girl

ii) Marriage by self-choice without consulting parents/ elders

iii) Marriage by self-choice but with parents' consent

iv) Marriage by parents' choice but with the consent of both the boy and the girl involved in the marriage

v)   Marriage by parents' choice but with the consent of only one of the two partners involved.

Very often, parents/ elders consult the boy and obtain his consent in the choice of spouse. Often, parents/elders do not consider it important to ask the girl whether she approves of the match. Among the urban educated classes arranged marriage with the consent of the boy and the girl appears to be the most preferred pattern. Very often the parents and sometimes the boy/ girl concerned arrange the marriage through newspaper advertisement.

11.7 Marriage Rituals and Status

Wedding ceremonies and rites

Marriage in India, like everywhere else in the world, entails some rites and ceremonies. Of course, variations exist in rites not only in terms of religion but also in terms of caste, sect and rural/ urban residence. For descriptions of some of the basic rites in a few communities in India see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A programme.

Wedding processions and feasts are generally common features of wedding celebrations of all communities in India. Their scale generally follows the socio-economic status of the families of the bride and bridegroom.

You may occasionally find certain sections or groups of people who do not have religious rites in marriage. Such marriages are referred to as customary marriages, which include quite simple practices. For example, among 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 features of those groups, which permit and practice divorce and secondary marriages. The secondary marriage of a widow or a separated or divorced woman has a simple ceremony to indicate the renewal of her married status (CSWI 1974: 83).

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. All the same, weddings are generally an expensive affair for a large majority of people. Let us examine in the next section why weddings continue to initiate a larger cycle of exchange of material and non-material aspects of status.

Marriage and status

We find that in most societies, so also in India, wedding ritual and ceremonies involve both material as well as non-material transactions between the bride-giver and the bride-taker. Such transactions reflect the social structure of the concerned society. Barring some exceptions (relating mainly to matrilineal societies) you would notice that there is the transfer of the wife to her husband's family.

Besides the transfer of the wife, there are two major types of transfers of material wealth that accompany marriage. In one, wealth travels in the opposite direction of the bride and in another it travels along with the bride in the same direction. The former is identified as bride price and the latter as dowry (CSWI 1974:69). The following figure from Barnard and Good (1984: 115) shows the movement of goods in relation to women in both bridewealth and dowry.

Certain patrilineal tribes and some castes in the middle and lower rungs of the caste ladder practice the custom of brideprice. For details about variations in the form and amount of bride price, from region to region, from tribe to tribe and within a tribe from time to time see CSWI (1974: 68-72). Sharma (1980) has shown that in some parts of North India bargaining for brideprice is quite common. In some tribes, the bride's father gets the services of the groom as a form of brideprice. For instances of such 'bride-service' in other parts of the world see Barnard and Good (1984: 134-136). Mair (1971: 50) in the context of societies in Africa, and Goody (1976: 8) in a general context, hold that brideprice and bridewealth do not refer to an exchange of goods by the bride and groom. They refer to the exchange units that is the families of the bride and groom, respectively. For a somewhat long discussion of the usage of the two terms, 'brideprice' and 'bridewealth' see Barnard and Good (1984: 115-117). Goody (1973: 2 and 1976: 11) uses the term 'indirect dowry' for the transfers which involve the property passing from the groom (or other members of his family) to the bride herself. In the Indian context, we

call the same by the term *stidhanam*. Goody finds it wrong to label such prestations as brideprice. This brings us to the discussion of dowry or direct dowry.

Dowry

In broad terms, dowry involves the transfer of valuable gifts from the bride's side to the groom's side. Such a transfer of wealth is perceived to confer prestige and honour to both the sides. The bride-giver gains prestige within his community by giving dowry while the bride-taker receives both wealth and prestige in his own and other communities.

In 1961, the Government of India passed the Dowry Prohibition Act. In 1984 and again in 1986, the Government amended the Act to make the law more stringent and effective. For instance, the husband and his family can be penalised for demanding dowry if his bride dies within seven years of the marriage in other than normal circumstance. There is a Dowry Prohibition Cell to look into complaints about dowry.

The legal provisions do not imply the end of marriages with dowry. Though there are progressive young people who voice their strong opinion against dowry and marry without it; there are at the same time, young, educated people who accept this practice and see no harm in it. Some get away by saying that it is their parents (whose wishes they never want to disobey) who perpetuate this practice. Demand for dowry exists among other communities, like the Muslim and Christian. Often, continuous demand for dowry even after marriage causes discord in the family, leading to divorce. Let us look at the issues of divorce and remarriage in India in the next section.

Before moving on to the next section, let us complete the Reflection and Action 11.4 for constructing our own perception of the custom of dowry in India.

Reflection and Action 11.4

As reported by the 'Hindu' of 4th May 2005 (page 15), with reference to a public interest litigation, a three-Judge Bench directed 'the Centre and the States to consider framing of rules to compel men seeking government employment to furnish information whether they had taken dowry, if so, whether the dowry had been made over to wife as contemplated under the Act. The rules could also ask such information from those already in government service'. Further, the report says, "The court asked the State Governments to give wide publicity to Sections 3 and 4 of the Rules providing for the maintenance of lists of presents or gifts to the bride and bridegroom and to appoint a sufficient number of dowry prohibition officers with independent charge in each district of the State concerned; to take steps to step up anti-dowry literacy among the people".

Find out if your own family or a family known to you, gave or took dowry at the time of a marriage in the family. In the light of your findings and the above excerpt about latest efforts to promote the anti-dowry movement, write a short note of five hundred words on "Persistence of Dowry in Our Society", highlighting the causes and consequences of taking and giving dowry.

11.8 Dissolution of Marriage

You read at the beginning of Unit 11 that it is not easy to define 'marriage' with precision, so also correspondingly it is not easy to define 'divorce in clear terms, except saying that only those who marry can opt for divorce. Often, breakdown in a marriage is not a one time event. It happens in stages. We need to carefully study the circumstances under which it is possible to seek divorce and its particular mode acceptable in the context of a particular society. Mitchell (1961: 323) holds that there is general correlation between marriage stability, "geneticial rights" over offspring, and the form of descent. Barnard and Good (1984: 119) conclude,

> All things being equal, marriage should be stable and of long duration in patrilineal societies where such rights are vested in corporate descent groups; of medium duration and stability in unilineal societies wherein these rights are held by individuals rather than corporate groups; and of short duration and low stability in matrilineal societies where geneticial rights are never transferred out with corporate groups, and in "bilateral societies" where such rights are irrelevant.

The above quotation provides us with a reasonable basis for constructing hypotheses in the context of particular societies for studying the issue of dissolution of marriage.

a) Divorce

The possibilities and mechanisms of dissolving a marital union have varied through time, between and within communities. For details of the how, when and what of divorce in different communities in India, see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B A programme.

We need to make a special note of the efforts on the part of Muslim organisations in India to bring about changes in the practice of 'triple *talaq*' (refer to section in Unit 11 our earlier mention of a model 'Nikah-Nama'). Sharma (2005: 15) reported in the 'Hindu' of 4th may 2005,

> Hasina Khan of Awaz-e-Niswan, who represents one of several groups that have lobbied for a model 'nikahnama', told the 'Hindu' that the document presented by the AIMPLB was "ridiculous" and also "dangerous". ….She said that although the model 'nikahnama' does advise men to avoid divorce and the practice of saying 'talaq' in one sitting does not rule out that it is incorrect. "There has been no basic reform," she said.

Disturbed by the tenor of reforms in the name of a model 'nikahnama', Muskaan, a woman activist, according to the 'Hindu' of 7th May 2005, "tore the model 'nikahnama' drafted by the All-India Muslim Personal Law Board (AIMPLB) in Bhopal". The debate over Muslim women's rights has brought to the forefront the fact of women being treated as second-class citizens. The fact that AIMPLB has come out with a somewhat more flexible approach to the question of divorce shows that there is some space for negotiation and arbitration. These developments symbolise the transformation that we need to focus on while studying changing patterns of marriage in India.

Recognition of divorce leads us to the next logical step of the remarriage of a divorcee, and also of a widowed person.

b) **Remarriage**

Remarriage in the case of a divorcee or a widowed person is a matter of concern in almost all sections of the Indian population. The increase in the rate of divorce has given rise in the rate of second marriage for both men and women in India.

The state of being a widow/widower is a direct outcome of the death of a married person and this necessitates an examination of the rights, restrictions and duties entailing this state for both a man and a woman. For instance, Fuller (1979: 463) has reported that Brahman widowers cannot work as temple priests. Sharma (1980: 53-54) has observed that in parts of North India, as per custom (not legally), a widow without children may not inherit property. It reverts to her husband's natal family. Existence of many negative sanctions imposed on widows may encourage them to remarry. Many groups that did not earlier allow widows to re-marry, have now given more flexibility in this matter. For detailed accounts of widow and widower remarriage see Unit 7 in Block 3 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B.A. programme.

While summing up this section, you should consider the customary ban on remarriage of widows of higher castes among the Hindus. Those with education and relative affluence, thereby higher social status, do not observe such customs and the law of the land permits such marriages.

Remarriage brings into existence a variety of step-relationships. It is important to pay attention to the sociological aspects of such relationships. The data to collect is to be with reference to terms of referring to and terms of addressing such relatives as well as the rights to inheritance of stepsiblings. Children born and brought up in a nuclear family setting have been reported to find it a welcome extension of close relatives to socialise with. These impressions need to be explored in in-depth sociological studies.

11.9 Conclusion

Unit 11 focused on changing aspects of marriage in India. At the same time it discussed common and diverse features of marriage in different communities of the country. We raised the question about universality of marriage in India and pointed out the trends indicating deeper changes in the institution of marriage. In almost all aspects of marriage, namely, age at marriage, rules regulating marriage, patterns of spouse selection, wedding ceremonies and rites, issues of status and dissolution of marriage and occurrence of remarriage, we concentrated on the nature of changes taking place in the context of marriage in India.

11.10 Further Reading

Uberoi, Patricia 1993. *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

Jain, Shobhita 1996. *Bharat mein Parivar, Vivah aur Natedari*. Rawat Publications: Jaipur (chapters two to seven dealing with marriage and its changing patterns in North, North-east and South India).

Unit 12

Descent and Alliance Approaches to the Study of Kinship in India

Contents

Learning Objectives

After reading Unit 12, it is expected that you would be able to:

≈ Explain the descent and alliance theories (given in Appendix 1 attached to Unit 12), which some scholars have used to study the kinship systems of North and South India;

≈ Examine the application of the two approaches to the study of kinship systems in India; and

≈ Understand clearly that in unit 12, the discussion of the two approaches to the study of kinship systems refers to the patterns found among the numerically dominant Hindu population.

12.1 Introduction

Units 9, 10 and 11 have provided you an understanding of the social institutions of family, household and marriage in India. In order to fully understand the social relationships involved in family and marriage we need to raise our level of cognition to yet another level of abstraction, namely, rules, norms and patterns that govern the construction of social relationships in family and marriage. These are kinship rules, norms and patterns.

In India, a country of immense diversity in its regions and communities, we find a wide range of kinship systems and it is not easy to present an overall picture of these kinship systems. We may make an effort to talk about the two major geographical regions, the north and south of the country. Even the sociological literature has highlighted features of North and South Indian kinship systems. This does not imply that there are no other varieties of kinship systems in some parts of both North and South India (for details of such systems see Jain 1996: 151-270 and Uberoi 1994).

In order to study the North and South Indian kinship systems, sociologists have followed some approaches and Unit 12 discusses the application of descent and alliance approaches to the study of kinship systems in North and South India (for familarising yourself with basic concepts in the study of kinship systems and descent and alliance theories of kinship, you need to read Appendix 1 before reading Unit 12). For a comparative perspective of kinship systems in North and South India you can refer Unit 9 Kinship II in Block 3 of ESO-12 of IGNOU's B A Programme).

12.2 Application of Descent Theory to the Study of Kinship System in North India

For purposes of describing the kinship systems found in India, Irawati Karve (1953: 93) identified four cultural zones, namely the Northern, the Central, the Southern and the Eastern zones. You can locate the northern zone, according to Karve, 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 the main languages spoken in the region are Hindi, Bihari, Sindhi, Punjabi, Assamese and Bengali. In such a large region, you cannot say that there exists just one kinship system. The differences of language, history and culture have brought about a high degree of variation within the region. You may, however, try to look at the pattern of kinship organisations of the communities in this region on the basis of broad and general features. You can describe the basic structure and process of kinship system in this area in terms of four features (mentioned in Appendix 1), namely (A) kinship groups, (B) kinship terminology (C) marriage rules, and (D) ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin. Let us take up each of these features to discuss the kinship system in North India.

A) Kinship groups

Sociological studies in various parts of North India show that social groups, such as i) patrilineage, ii) clan, iii) caste/subcaste and sometimes also iv) fictive kinship provide the basis for cooperation or conflict among the people and therefore we now discuss each of these groups.

i) **Patrilineage**:

You can say that broadly speaking unilineal descent groups are the basis of kinship organisation in North India. When you trace the lineage membership of a group on the basis of shared descent in one line, you can name it a unilineal descent group. In North India, you find mostly patrilineal descent groups. This means that you trace the descent in the male line from father to son. Members of patrilineages cooperate as well as fight in various situations. Let us find out how 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. Lewis (1958: 22-23), Minturn and Hitchcock (1963: 237), Berreman (1963: 173) and Nicholas (1962: 174) describe the pattern of co-operation in their studies of kinship patterns in North India. From their studies of the kinship systems you can say that these studies follow the descent approach because they examine the pattern of cooperation and conflict in descent groups.

b) **Conflict:**

Lineage members help each other, but fights or conflicts also characterise kinship relations among them. For example, T.N. Madan (1965: 201) shows

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

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:

Transmission of status and property from one generation to the next takes place according to certain rules. In North India, the status and property generally pass in the male line. In other words, you find a predominantly patrilineal mode of inheritance in North India. For this reason, the composition of patrilineage becomes very important. The lineage members cooperate for economic and jural reasons. They share jural rights and therefore they cooperate in order to continue possessing the rights. 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. Land ownership in this case becomes the main principle of their social organisation.

After discussing patrilineage as a characteristic feature of kinship groups in North India, you can now move to the discussion of clans, the second feature of kinship groups in North India.

ii) **Clan**: A lineage is an exogamous unit. This means that 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 of a higher caste among the Hindus 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. In rural areas, often the members of a lineage live in close proximity and therefore have greater occasions for cooperation or conflict. Common interests or actions do not characterise the relationships among clan members because they are usually scattered over a larger territory and their relationships are often quite remote. You would observe that it is common to find these relationships assuming significance only in the context of marriage. That is why we will now discuss caste/ sub-castes as the third characteristic feature of kinship groups in North India. Castes/ subcastes are the endogamous units within which marriage takes place.

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 mentioned earlier, castes are endogamous, i.e., one marries within one's caste and people belonging to one caste group are kinsmen 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.

Subcaste is the largest segment of caste and it performs nearly all the functions of caste, such as endogamy and social control. In this respect, you can say that the internal structure of the subcaste would provide you the framework within which you can observe the operation of the kinship system. The members of a subcaste cooperate as kinspersons. They, depending on the context, work together as equals in the sphere of ritual activities and political

allies in socio-economic activities (for examples of the studies of subcaste see Box 12.3).

Box 12.1 and 12.2 are part of Annexure 1 at the back of the unit.

Box 12.3: Examples of the Studies of Subcaste

Vidyarthi (1961: 53-57), in his study of a very small subcaste, has shown that it is possible to 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 a subcaste as one's 'effective *jati*'. This refers to all those people of the sub-caste with whom one actually has relationships of cooperation or conflict.

Among the subcaste kin, we need to also include those related to a person through marriage. Here, generally a person's kin through the mother are called uterine kin and those through the 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 a person 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, the person would always have a string of relatives who do not belong to the person's lineage/clan/sub-caste.

We have already mentioned how sociologists like Radcliffe-Brown (1958), followed the descent approach to study kinship systems, and explained the fact of a special place of the relationship between a person and his/her mother's brother.

At the end of our discussion of kinship groups in North India, it is not out of place to mention two more sets of relationships, which assume significance in some situations. They pertain to fictive kin relationships and the relationships one maintains with step-siblings and other step-relatives.

Fictive kin and step relatives: You need to also mention, in passing, the recognition of fictive kinship among both urban dwellers and 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. You may refer to the studies by 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 (see Box 12.4 for an explanation of fictive kin relationships). Similarly, residents in a Mumbai chawl, hailing from a common place of origin, may behave like a clan group.

Box 12.4: An Explanation of Fictive Kin Relationships

Mahapatra (1969) points out that fictive kinship is a mechanism to provide kin-like mannerisms to those who are not ordinarily found to be so related 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.

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

In the urban context, you must have frequently come across small children who call any older man 'uncle' and an older woman 'aunty'. 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.

There are hardly any sociological studies of kin relationships among step-siblings and other step-relatives. This is a new area for exploration for sociologists of the younger generation.

We will now discuss characteristic features of the second aspect of kinship system in North India, namely kinship terminology.

B) Kinship terminology

Let us find out how an analysis of the various kinship terms used in the linguistic regions of the northern zone would help us to understand the kinship structure, its make-up and the behaviour associated with each term. We will first take up i) the descriptive nature of North Indian kinship terms and then discuss ii) social behaviour and kinship terms signifying social behaviour.

i) Descriptive nature of North Indian kinship terms

The kinship terminology is the expression of kinship relations in linguistic terms. In the case of North India, we can call the system of terminology as descriptive. This is because the kinship terms generally describe the relationship from the point of view of the speaker. In a few words, even the most distant kin relationships can be accurately described. Unlike the English terms, uncle, aunty, cousin, which do not reveal age, patrilateral/ matrilateral ties, the North Indian kinship terms are very clear. For example, when we say *chachera bhai*, it can be easily translated as father's younger brother's (*chacha's*) son, who stands in the relationship of a brother (*bhai*) to the speaker. Similarly, *mamera bhai* means mother's brother's (*mama's*) son. According to Dumont (1966: 96), the North Indian kinship terminology is descriptive in the sense that it describes elementary relationships in three steps starting from Ego or the speaker.

Step 1: The elementary relationships of filiation upwards and downwards, siblingship (sister/ brother) and marriage comprise the first set of terms.

Step 2: Then we have the relationships of the second order. These are formed by combining two elementary relationships, i.e. filiation + filiation, filiation + siblingship, siblingship + filiation, marriage + filiation, marriage + siblingship.

Step 3: The third order of relationships is represented by filiation + marriage + filiation. Further, for Dumont (1966), the North Indian kinship terminology is not a classificatory type of terminology because it does not classify the kinship terms according to the number of principles of opposition. All the same, to emphasise the patrilineal descent, North Indian kinship terminology observes a clear-cut distinction between parallel and cross-cousins. The children of one's brother are *bhatija* (for male child) and *bhatiji* (for female child). The children of one's sister are *bhanja* (for male child) and *bhanji* (for female child). A person's parallel relatives are members of his/her descent

group and therefore they also live nearby in the same village. In contrast, a person's sister's children or cross relatives are members of a different descent group. They are also residents of a different place. This distinction between brother's children and sister's children, which is made in the North Indian kinship terminology, is also of importance in the context of kinship system in South India (about this we will discuss later in this Unit). Now we see how kinship terms signify social behaviour.

ii) **Social behaviour and kinship terms signifying social behaviour**

Irawati Karve (1953) gave a list of kinship terms in North Indian languages. She made use of kinship terminologies to describe and compare kinship systems in various parts of India. She studied the terms and also used the findings for understanding the influences, which played a part in shaping them (see Box 12.5 for another example).

Box 12.5: Analysis of Indo-Aryan Kinship Terms by G. S. Ghurye

Besides Iravati Karve, we can also give another example of the analysis of Indo-Aryan kinship terms made by G.S. Ghurye (1946, 1955). He highlighted the jural and ideological aspects of kinship systems through a comparison of kinship terms in North Indian languages. For example, among the Sarjupari Brahmins the term 'maan' refers to the bride-taker. In ideological terms, 'maan' reflects the high status of the bride-taker as compared to the bride-giver. In jural terms it denotes the fact that bride-takers do not share property with the bride-givers (for a discussion of the term '*maan*' see Jain 1996).

The very usage of kinship terms also makes clear the kind of behaviour expected from a kin. For example, Oscar Lewis (1958: 189), in his study of a North Indian village, described the pattern and relationship between a person and his elder brother's wife. This is popularly known as *Devar-Bhabhi* relationship, which is characteristically a joking relationship.

A contrast to this 'joking' relationship is the behaviour of avoidance between a woman and her husband's father. Similarly, she has to avoid her husband's elder brother. The term for husband's father is *shvasur* and for husband's elder brother is *bhasur*. *Bhasur* is a combination of the Sanskrit word *bhratr* (brother) and *shvasur* (father-in-law), and is, therefore, referring to a person like the father-in-law.

Let us at this stage complete a 'Reflection and Action Exercise' to grasp the linkages between kinship terms and social behaviour.

Reflection and Action 12.4

Write down the kinship terms in your language for the following relationships.

Father, father's brother, Father's brother's son, Father's father, Father's father's brother's son, Brother, Brother's son, Mother's brother, Mother's father, Mother's brother's son, Mother's sister, Mother's sister's husband, Father's sister, Father's sister's husband.

Now, distinguish your consanguines and affines among these relatives. Next, write each set of relationships in short form. In addition, highlight the clear-cut distinctions, if any, between the relatives as reflecting in the kinship terms in your language. Finally, work out if any of the above kin terms explicitly connote either 'joking' or avoidance relationship.

C) Marriage Rules

Every time a marriage takes place, new kinship bonds come into being. This shows you clearly the relevance of marriage rules for discussing the patterns of kinship organisation. In the context of North India, you find that people have a good idea of categories of people one cannot marry. In sociological terms, you can express this norm by saying that there are negative rules of marriage in North India. You can also say that marriage is allowed only outside a defined limit. Later we will also talk about the limits within which marriage is permitted to take place.

Rules of exogamy

Let us see first find out what the limit or the rule of exogamy is in North India and what is the four clan rule that sets another limit of exogamy in North India.

i) Clan Exogamy

Marriage shows very clearly the boundaries of one's natal descent line. No man is allowed to marry a daughter of his patriline. In North India lineage ties upto five or six generations are generally remembered and marriage alliances are not allowed within this range. In such a situation the lineage turns into the clan and we speak of *gotra* (clan) and *gotra bhai* (clan mates). Widely used Sanskrit term *gotra* is an exogamous category within a subcaste. Its main use is to regulate marriages within a subcaste. Two persons of similar gotra cannot tie the knot.

Apart from the clan exogamy, there is also the four clan rule to draw a line to separate those men and women, who can and cannot marry each other.

ii) The four clan rule

In Irawati Karve's (1953: 118) words, according to this rule, a man must not marry a woman from (i) his father's *gotra*, (ii) his mother's *gotra*, (iii) his father's mother's *gotra*, and (iv) his mother's mother's *gotra*. In other words, this rule prohibits marriage between two persons who share any two of their eight *gotra* links. This means that the rule of exogamy goes beyond one's own lineage. Another related kind of exogamy, which exists in North India, is village exogamy. A village usually has members of one or two lineages living in it. Members belonging to the same lineage are not permitted to intermarry.
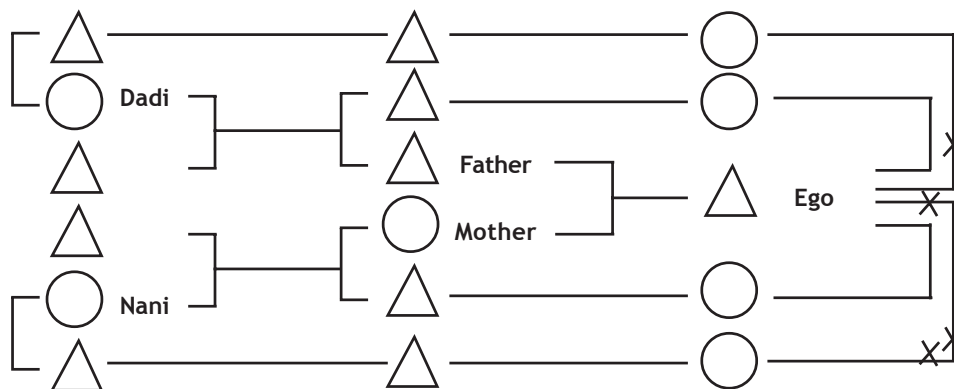
Fig. 12.3: The Four — Clan Rule

This principle extends even to the villages, which have more than two lineages. In other words, a boy and a girl in a village in North India are like a brother and sister and hence cannot intermarry.

It is important here to give you a word of caution. We have spoken about lineage, clan and subcaste in relation to organisation of kinship patterns. But we have not mentioned the terms like *kutumb*, *biradari*, *khandan*, *bhai bandh* etc. These denote various colloquial meanings of the general terms (lineage, clan and subcaste) in local languages. The local terms are used in various contexts to signify different levels of kinship arrangements. In our discussion, we have limited ourselves to social structure and function in broad terms and avoided conflicting usages of local terms.

Let us now look at the groups within which marriage is preferred/prescribed, in the context of North India. This refers to the rules of endogamy.

Rules of endogamy

As mentioned earlier, the kinship system operates within the families of the caste groups living in one village or a nearby cluster of villages. Castes are endogamous. This means that one marries within one's caste. Let us look at the rules of marriage within one's caste/ sub-caste.

Marriages within the sub-caste

Associated with local terms is the idea of the status of various units within the subcaste. Taking the example of the Sarjupari Brahmin of Mirzapur district in Uttar Pradesh, studied by Louis Dumont (1966: 107), we find that each of the three subcastes of Sarjupari Brahmins of this area is divided into three 'houses' (kin groups or lineages), which range hierarchically in status. The marriages are always arranged from lower to higher 'house'. This means that women are always given to the family, which is placed in the 'house' above her 'house'. In this context, we can also refer to 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 lejaing*" (i.e. once we have washed the feet of the bridegroom during the wedding ceremony, we cannot accept a girl from his family, because this will mean that we allow that side to wash our feet or allow the reversal of relationships). This shows clearly that marriage rules among Brahmins and other higher castes in North India maintain a hierarchic 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 patrilateral cross-cousin. This is called the rule of no reversal and can be shown in a diagram like this:

Fig. 12.4: The Rule of No Reversal

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

Lineage B has given the woman (M) in marriage to the man (P) of lineage A. P is given the high ritual status of 'pao puj' in marriage ceremonies. If P's daughter is married to the man of lineage B, then P will have to give the same high ritual status to the man of lineage B. But lineage B is, according to the rule of hypergamy, lower to lineage A and therefore, this marriage will be a reversal of roles. In North India, such a reversal is not allowed and thus, we find the rule of prohibition on marriage with patrilateral cross-cousins.

Another principle should also be mentioned here and this is the rule of no repetition. This means that if the father's sister has been married in a family (*khandan*), one's own sister cannot be given in marriage to that same family (Dumont 1966: 104-7). The term family or *khandan* is here used as a smaller unit of a lineage. This rule of no repetition implies the negative rule of prohibition on the marriage with matrilateral cross-cousins. In other words, a man cannot marry his mother's brother's daughter. This can be depicted in a simple kinship diagram like this:

Fig. 12.5: The Rule of No Repetition

Lineage B has given woman D in marriage to the man E of lineage A. In the next generation, if a woman is again given in marriage to a man of lineage A, then a repetition will occur. A prohibition on repetition shows that matrilateral cross-cousin marriage is barred in North India. Thus, we find that both patrilateral and matrilateral cross-cousin marriages are not allowed in North India. In other words, the two rules- the rule of no reversal and the rule of no repetition- put together define the negative rules of marriage in North India.

Highlighting the structural implications of marriage rules in North India, T.N. Madan (1965) in his study of the Kashmiri Pandits distinguishes three classes of wife-givers and wife-takers (these are the terms used by T.N. Madan in the place of bride-taker and bride-giver, used in this unit) from the perspective of the household: (i) those who give wives to it and those who take wives from it, (ii) those who give wives to those in class (i) and (iii) those who take wives from class (i). These three classes have unequal relationships. However, honour and prestige go in the opposite direction to women in marriage. This means that wife-takers are superior to wife-givers and by the fact of giving a wife to a group, one receives honour and prestige within one's own group. The following diagram shows how the rule of hypergamy in North India acts as a form of exchange between, women and dowry on the one hand and prestige and honour on the other.

Here, A, B and C are patrilineages which are ranked by high to low status. The upward arrows indicate that lineage C has given the woman and dowry to the man of lineage B. As bride-giver, lineage C is lower to B and lineage B is lower to A. The rule of hypergamy accords lower status to bride-givers.
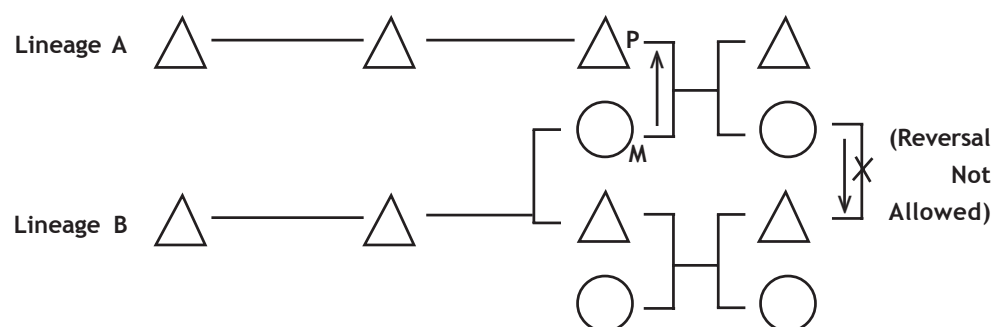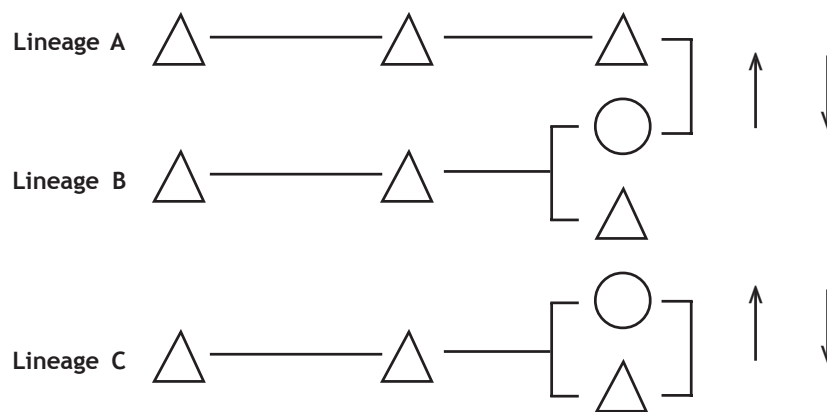
Fig. 12.6: Hypergamy in North India as an Exchange

At the same time by giving the women and dowry to high-status lineages, the lower status lineages gain prestige and power within their groups. Thus, the downward arrows indicate the movement of prestige and honour in the direction opposite to women and dowry. In other words, women and dowry are exchanged for prestige and honour among the hierarchically arranged lineages of a subcaste/caste in North India.

D) Ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin

Ceremonial exchange of gifts on the occasions of life cycle rituals provides us with the understanding of a patterned behaviour among various categories of kin. Generally, the bride-givers, in correspondence with their inferior status vis-a-vis bride-takers, initiate the process of gift-giving during marriage and continue to give greater amounts of gifts. In other words, you can say that gift-giving and receiving is a well-defined social activity See Box 12.5 for two examples of ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin.

Box 12.5: Two Examples of Ceremonial Exchange of Gifts among Kin

L. Dumont (1966: 91) has pointed out that mother's brother (uterine kin) and wife's brother (affinal kin) have similar ceremonial functions. Not only this, as wife's brother becomes, after a few years, mother's brother to the children, there is little difference between the two.

A.C. Mayer (1960: 232) has described in his study of kinship in a village in Malwa that all gifts given by one's mother's brother are called *mamere*. In contrast to the gifts given by the mother's brother, there are gifts known as *ban*, given by one's agnates. Ban is the term used also for the gift, which is given by other relatives such as the groom's sister's husband to the groom's wife's brother. This shows that the groom's sister's husband (or father's sister's husband in the context of the ascending generation) is viewed to be a part of agnatic kin vis-a-vis the groom's wife's brother (or mother's brother for the ascending generation).

In sociological vocabulary you can put the same thing in this way. You look at the groom's sister's husband (zh) or father's sister's husband (fzh) as a wife-taker. Similarly, we look at the groom's wife's brother (wb) or his mother's brother (mb) as a wife-giver. Now if the gift to A's wife-givers (i.e. mother's brother or wife's brother) by A's wife-taker (sister's husband or father's sister's husband) and by A's agnates are known by the same term '*ban*' then we can say that in opposition to A's wife-givers, his agnates and wife-takers have been merged into one category. This is so because for the groom's

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

wife's brother (or mother's brother) the groom is a wife-taker and groom's wife-taker is his sister's husband or father's sister's husband. These two sets of wife-takers are on one side and the wife-givers are on the other.

To this example of ceremonial gift-giving at a wedding, we can add one more in Box 12.6.

Box 12.6: Another Example of Ceremonial Gift-Giving

Dumont (1966: 93-5) has shown a similar distinction being made between wife-givers and wife-takers (the terms used by Dumont) in the context of gift-giving at the end of mourning in a village of Gorakhpur district in Eastern Uttar Pradesh. Here, the main mourner is generally a son or an agnate of the deceased. The ceremony of tying a turban on the head of the main mourner is done by an affine who has taken a wife. In other words, preferably sister's husband (zh) or father's sister's husband (fzh) ties the turban. Then again for the ceremony of *shaiyyadan* (gift of a bed), a sister's husband (zh) or father's sister's husband (fzh) is asked to receive the gift. This ceremony emphasises their status as wife-takers. The priest clearly asks for those who have taken the daughters to come forward for receiving the *shaiyya* (bed). Thus, of the two kinds of affines (the wifes-taker and wife-giver) the affines of the wife-taking type are preferred over the affines of wife-giving type. In the hypergamous situation, wife-takers are higher than the wife-givers and therefore in ceremonial gift-giving they remain as the recipient while the wife-givers remain at the giving end.

F.G. Bailey (1957) in Orissa and Oscar Lewis (1958) in Rampur have also recorded the flow of gifts from affinal kin (wife's relatives) and uterine kin (mother's relatives). According to A.C. Mayer (1960), the function of the gifts made by uterine and affinal kin is similar, i.e. to enhance the status of wife-takers. In sociological terms, we say that this type of exchange of gifts shows the hypergamous nature of marriage in North India. In other words, the woman is always given into the group which is higher in status, and the flow of gifts from the family maintains this distinction forever. This, in turn, explains the nature of kin relationships in North India.

12.3 Application of Alliance Theory to the Study of Kinship System in South India

South India comprises the geographical area covered by the states of Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Kerala. People of the four states speak languages of the Dravidian family. Quite like North India, the South too has its share of diverse kinship systems. The state of Kerala is distinct for its matrilineal system of descent and the practice of inter-caste hypergamy. Also, despite common elements, each of the four states has its own socio-cultural patterns of kinship. Just as we did in the case of North Indian kinship, we will focus on common elements in terms of the four major aspects of kin relationships, namely i) kinship groups, ii) kinship terminology, iii) marriage rules and iv) ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin.

i) Kinship groups

You can categorise kin relatives in South India in two groups namely, the patrilineage and the affines.

Patrilineage: Quite like in North India, in South India too, the fact of relating to various categories of kin beyond one's immediate family means a close interaction with members of one's patrilineage. Owing to patrilocal residence, the lineage members get the chances for frequent interaction and cooperation. The ties of descent and residence constitute a kin group. You may observe that each of the two regions, South and North India, has such a group. For example, in her study of the Brahmins of Tanjore district, Gough (1955) describes patrilineal descent groups, which are distributed in small communities. Each caste within the village contains one to twelve exogamous patrilineal groups (For another example see Box 12.7).

Box 12.7: Example of Kin Groups among the Pramalai Kallar of Madurai

In his study of the Pramalai Kallar of Madurai in Tamil Nadu, Dumont (1986) 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, in which the *kuttam* members participate, show its significance as a unit of kinship organisation. 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*, we find that after the death of the father, 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, known as *mama-machchinan*.

Affinal Relatives: The kin group of affinal relatives (those related through marriage) is opposite to a patrilineage. Beyond the patrilineage are the relatives who belong to the group in which one's mother was born, as well as one's wife. A person's uterine or *mama* (from mother's side) and affinal or *machchinan* (from wife's side) kin comprise a common group of *mama-machchinan*. This group of relatives includes also the groups in which a person's sister and father's sister are married. Dumont (1986) has described the nature of interaction between a patrilineage and its affines to be always cordial and friendly.

Indirect *Pangali*: If group A is one's patrilineage and group B is *one's mama-machchinan* (uterine and affinal kin), then members of group C, which is *mama-machchinan* of group B, will become classificatory brothers to people in group A. The term for such classificatory brothers is *mureikku pangali* (see Dumont 1950: 3-26). These relatives, though called a kind of *pangali*, are never equal to actual coparceners or sharers of joint patrilineal property. Beyond this circle of relatives, the rest are only neutral people.

Let us now discuss the South Indian kinship terminology, which places particular emphasis on affinal relationships. Those who follow the alliance approach are particularly interested in affinal relationships.

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

ii) Kinship terminology

Kin relationships in Dravidian languages follow a clear-cut structure with precision. According to Louis Dumont (1986: 301), main features of this system are that a) it distinguishes between parallel and cross-cousins and b) it is classificatory. Let us discuss these two features.

a) **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 other. Cross-cousins are those who are the children of the siblings of the opposite sex. This means that children of a brother and a sister are cross-cousins.

The kin terminology in South India clearly separates the two categories of cousins for the reasons that parallel cousins cannot marry each other while cross-cousins can. If the system of terminology did 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 cross-cousin with whom one is to remain distant and formal. The parallel cousins are referred as brothers/sisters. For example, in Tamil, one addresses all parallel cousins *annan* (elder brother) or *tambi* (younger brother) and *akka* (elder sister) or *tangachi* (younger sister). Cross-cousins are never brothers/sisters. For example, in Tamil, one refers to cross-cousins as *mama magal/ magan* (mother's brother's daughter/ son) or *attai magal /magan* (father's sister's daughter/ son). The following diagram will further clarify this simple formulation.

Persons within the Rectangle are Parallel Cousins While Those Outside The Rectangle are Cross Cousins.
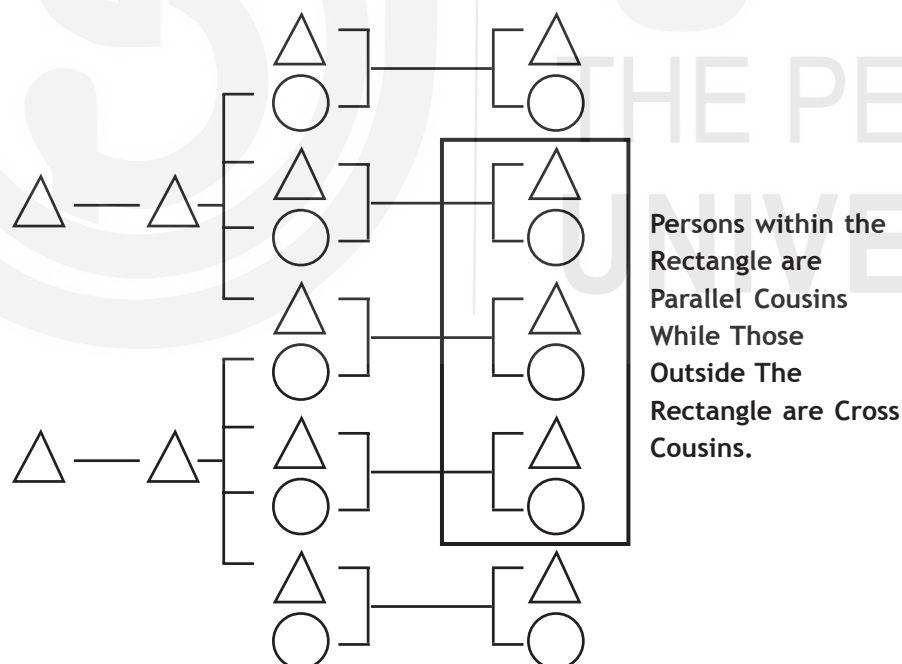
Fig. 12.7: Two Categories of Cousins

This system of kinship terms agrees with the practice of marriage among close relatives. It separates all descent lines into those with whom one can marry and those with whom one cannot marry. The terminology clearly tells that in a person's own generation, males are either one's brothers or brothers-in-law. Similarly females are either sisters or potential spouses. You can argue that in this very sense, Morgan (1981:394) described the Dravidian kinship terminology as 'consistent and symmetrical'.

For the sake of comparison, let us clarify that in North India, all cousins (be they parallel or cross) are considered consanguines or brothers/sisters. They are not allowed to marry each other. Then in this respect, you can see how North Indian kinship system is different from the one in South India and how the kinship terminology reflects this distinction.

b) **Classificatory nature of kinship terminology:** You can say that the Dravidian kinship terms are a mirror image of the kinship system in South India because classificatory nature of terminology matches perfectly with the distinction between parallel and cross-cousins. The terminology becomes classificatory in the following manner.

The person's own generation is terminologically divided into two categories.

a) One group 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' (above) relatives. In Tamil, this category is called by the term of *mama-machchinan*.

You can also see how the two classes of kin divide relatives in one's own generation and in both ascending and descending generations.

One's own generation: This bi-partition applies to the whole generation of a person. In other words, 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 either 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 (*pangali* and *mama-machchinan*) are both opposed and exclusive to each other. This classification, which has been explained above in terms of relatives in one's own generation, applies to groups, lineages, villages and so on. This bi-partition applies to both the generation above one's own and the generation below one's own.

Affines of affines: The principle of classifying relationships into the categories of *pangali* and *mama-machchinan* extends to even those who are the affines of one's affines. 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 mama-machchinan then has to be your *murei pangali* or classificatory brother.

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/

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

sisters and parallel cousins older to one's father are called *periyappa/ periyamma* and younger one's are *chittappa/sinnappa/chithi/sinnamma*, respectively.

The sex distinction is paired, says Dumont (1986: 302), 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* (grand daughter). 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. For example, Louis Dumont (1986: 301-9) has discussed in particular, features of kinship among the Pramalai Kallar of Tamilnadu. But here we are concerned with only the general and broad scheme of kinship terminology.

iii) Marriage Rules

Positive rules of marriage characterise the kinship system in South India. This means that preference for a particular type of alliance in marriage is clearly stated and practised. You may remember that in the context of North India negative rules of marriage tell us whom one should not marry. In South India the marriage rules are quite clear about who one should/ can marry.

Three types of preferential marriage rules:
The preferential marriage rules are of the following three types.

Fig. 12.8: Marriage with Elder Sister's Daughter

i) In several castes in South India, the marriage between a man and his elder sister's daughter gets the first preference. Among the matrilineal societies like the Nayars, this is not allowed. A simple diagram will show this positive rule of marriage in patrilineal South India in the following manner.

Here, ego is married to his sister's daughter.

ii) Next category of preferred marriage is the marriage of a man with his father's sister's daughter (fzd). In other words, we can also say that a woman marries her mother's brother's son (mbs). In this kind of marriage, the principle of return is quite evident. The family, which gives a daughter, expects to receive a daughter in return in marriage. In other words we can say that when ego marries her mbs, she is given in marriage to the family from which her mother had come. Thus, the principle of return is followed in this type of preference. Often, this process takes two generations to materialise. With the help of a kinship diagram we will see how this rule operates.
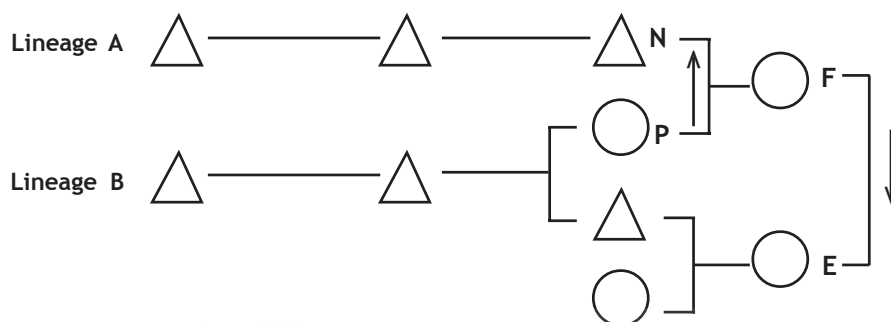
Fig. 12.9: The Rule of Return in Marriage

Lineage B gave the woman (P) in marriage to the man (N) of lineage A. In the next generation, lineage A gave the woman (F) to the man (E) of lineage B. Thus, a man's marriage with his patrilateral cross-cousin reflects the positive 'rule of return' in South India.

iii) The third type of preferential marriage is between a man and his mother's brother's daughter (mbd). In a way, this is the reverse of (ii) above. Some castes, such as the Kallar of Tamil Nadu, Havik Brahmin of Karnataka, some Reddy castes of Andhra Pradesh, allow only this type of cross-cousin marriage. In the castes, which have type (iii) of preference, there is always an underlying notion of superiority or hypergamy. This is not present in South India to the extent that is found among the bride-takers in North India. But in this type of marriage, the principle of no-return or a 'vine must not be returned' is practised and therefore the bride is given only in one direction. The bride-takers are considered to be somewhat higher to bride-givers. This unidirectional process is shown in the following diagram.
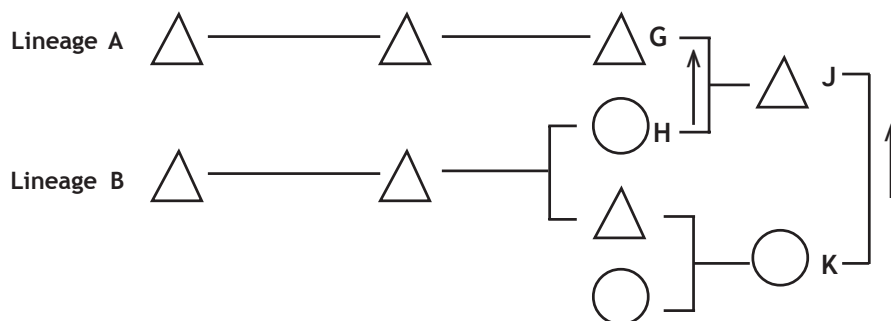

Fig. 12.10: The Rule of No Return or The Rule of Repetition

Lineage B gave the woman (H) to the man (G) of lineage A. In the next generation lineage B gave again a woman (K) to the man (J) of lineage A. Here a man's marriage to his matrilateral cross-cousin indicates the positive 'rule of repetition' among some castes in South India.

Descent and Alliance
Approaches to the Study
of Kinship in India

When one set of brother and sister marry another set of brother and sister, there is no distinction between patrilateral and matrilateral cousins in the cases of marriage of their children. In such a case the question of preference for (ii) or (iii) type does not arise, because the children of each set are cross-cousins to the other and they can and do marry. In the above three types of preferential marriage in South India we find a definite tendency towards marriages within a small kin group. This group is just outside one's immediate family. The family seeks to strengthen the already existing kin relationships through marriage. Thus, a woman may find that by marrying her mother's brother (mb) her mother's mother (mm) and mother-in-law are one and the same person. Or, if she marries her mother's brother's son then her mother's mother and her husband's father's mother are one and the same person. These examples go to show that marriages take place within the limited kin group. This also shows that village exogamy is not practised in South India. The agnates and affines can be found living in the same village. Affines in South India, living in the same village, are commonly involved in each other's social life. This kind of situation is rare in the context of kin groups in North India. But there are some other restrictions regarding marital alliances in South India. We shall now look at them. See Box 12.8 for restrictions regarding marital alliances.

Box 12.8: Restrictions regarding Marital Alliances

What are the restrictions imposed with regard to marriage between certain relatives? In certain castes a man can marry his elder sister's daughter but not his younger sister's daughter. Also a widow cannot marry her deceased husband's elder or younger brother or even his classificatory brother. Here we find that for each individual, the prohibited persons for marriage differ. Then there is, of course, the rule that a person cannot marry in one's own immediate family and one's lineage. The lineage in the case of the Kallar subcaste is known as *Kuttam* (Dumont 1986: 184). All individuals in the lineage are forbidden to marry persons of the lineage.

---

iv) Ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin

The process of gift-giving and taking reflects the principles governing the separation/ assimilation of various categories of kin relationships. This is the reason why we look at this aspect of kinship behaviour. You can distinguish between two categories of gifts and counter-gifts in South India from certain persons to other persons or from certain groups to other groups.

a) Gifts passing from the bride's family to the groom's family or the reverse can be seen as a series of exchanges between affines. This is one category of gift-exchange.

b) The other category of gift-giving and taking occurs within each of the two groups. We can call it internal exchange of gifts. It is sometimes possible for a person to make/receive gifts from both sides. Because of the positive rules of marriage between relatives, often certain individuals are placed in the positions of receivers and givers at the same time. In other words, there is a process of merging of relationships (complete Reflection and Action 12.5 to identify the examples of both categories of gifts).

Reflection and Action 12.5

Fill in the blank spaces and thereby identify both categories in examples from ethnographic studies made in South India.

Louis Dumont (1986: 256) in his study of the Pramalai Kallar subcaste of Tamil Nadu mentions a gift of money from the bridegroom's father to the ………….. It is known as '*parisam*'. The bride's father uses this money to get jewels for his daughter. But he is expected to spend twice the amount he receives. Thus, we may say that the bride's jewels are paid for half-in-half by the two families. This particular ceremony marks the …………. of the giving and taking of gifts between …….. It continues for a period of at least three years.

Then, the birth of the first child gives rise to another cycle of gift-exchange. In fact, among the Pramalai Kallar, when the newly weds set up an individual household after three years of marriage or after the birth of a child, the …………..provide the household articles. This gift is called '*vere pona sir*', literally meaning 'the gift for going apart'. So from '*parisam*' to 'the gift for going apart', we witness the series in which a gift is made and it is returned after 'doubling' its content. The series begins with a gift from the groom's side and ends with a gift from the bride's side. Thus, though there is a ………. of gifts between affines on both sides, it is quite clear that the ……….ends up paying more. In other words, gifts from the groom's side are mere excuses for getting more gifts from the bride's side.

Having seen the nature of gifts passing from the bride's family to the groom's family, now we also discuss the gifts given and taken within each group of …….

At weddings, both in the bride's house and in the groom's house respectively, a collection (usually in the form of the cash) is taken from the relatives present at the occasion. This is called the '*moy*' among the non-Brahmin castes in South India. The same is practised by the Brahmins under the name of 'writing the *moy*'. A person is given the charge of recording the amount of cash/kind given by a particular person. In this gift-giving also, there is the principle of …….. One gives '*moy*' to those who have already given or will give on similar occasions. Louis Dumont (1986: 256) tells us that among the Pramalai Kallar, the mother's brother is the first person to contribute to the *moy*. After the mother's brother other relatives make their contribution. Usually the money thus collected goes towards the expenses incurred for the marriage feast.

In the cycle of ……. gifts, the role of the mother's brother is quite prominent. After a child is born to a family, the mother's brother gives gifts on various occasions in the child's life. Among the Pramalai Kallar (see Dumont 1986: 256) the mother's brother gives to his sister's son at birth a gift of land or money. In a way, we can say that the gifts given by ………….. are a continuation of the series, which started at the mother's wedding. Then we called it an …….. of gifts between ……. Now, the mother's brother- an affine of ego's father, is merged in relation to the affines in ego's generation, among the common relatives of one group, either of the bride/or the groom. Secondly, the special place of the gifts made by the …………… points to the obligation the female side has to the male side. This is seen in the continuity maintained by the relatives on the mother's side in terms of gift-giving even to the next ……….

You may say that in the context of kinship behaviour at ceremonial exchanges of gifts in South India, the element of reciprocity is present, though the bride-givers have to pay more gifts than they receive. In comparative terms, you may also say that in North India, the gifts travel from the bride givers to bride-takers in a unidirectional manner. As a result, the bride-givers, in turn, receive the enhanced prestige and status in their own community. In South India, the positive rule of marriage means that gifts are exchanged among close relatives. There is always the difference in the amount of gifts both sides exchange but their flow has to remain both-sided. It cannot be as unidirectional as it is in North India (for a comprehensive comparison of North and South Indian kinship systems see Unit 9 in Block 2 of ESO 12 of IGNOU's B A Programme.)

12.4 Conclusion

In Unit 12 you have focused on four major aspects of kinship structures to discuss the application of descent and alliances approaches to understand kinship patterns found in North and South India. The four aspects refer to kinship groups, kinship terminology, marriage rules and ceremonial exchange of gifts among kin.

12.5 Further Reading

Dube, Leela 1974. *Sociology of Kinship*. Popular Prakashan: Bombay.

Jain, Shobhita 1996. *Bharat mein Parivar, Vivah aur Natedari*. Rawat Publications: Jaipur.

Karve, I. 1994. "The Kinship Map of India". In Patricia Uberoi (ed.) *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

Uberoi, Patricia (ed.) 1994. *Family, Kinship and Marriage in India*. Oxford University Press: New Delhi.

Approaches to the Study of Kinship Systems

In simple words you can say that kinship system refers to a set of persons, whom we recognise as relatives by virtue of blood or marriage relationship. I hope you will be able to identify in one category the family relationships and in the other category the marriage relationships. These are two basic social relationships we are all familiar with from close quarters.

In Sociology, we use a technical term, consanguinity, to denote all blood relationships and affinity to denote all relationships through marriage. It should not be difficult for you to give examples of the two types of kin relationships. Let us quickly complete a Reflection and Action exercise to find out if you can really do so.

Reflection and Action 12.1

Identify and sort out the following examples of kin relationships into the two categories we have just referred to.

Examples

Mother and son, father-in-law and daughter-in law, mother and daughter, father-in-law and son-in-law, father and son, mother-in-law and daughter-in-law, father and daughter, mother-in-law and son-in-law, sister and brother, two sisters-in-law, two sisters, two brothers, two brothers-in-law.

Place each of the above examples in one of the two categories of Consanguinity and Affinity.

As we go further in our discussion of kin relationships, you will discover that such seemingly simple categories are not actually all that simple. But for the time being, as the initial step to enter the discourse on kinship systems, this exercise is both sufficient and interesting.

It would not be wrong to say at this point that it is the social recognition of these relationships that is more important than the actual biological ties. You may already know that networks built around kin relationships play a significant role in both rural and urban social life in India.

Let us now look at the main approaches to the study of kinship in India, that is the ways in which sociologists have explained the systems of kin relationships found in society in India.

Sociologists have described, compared and analysed the kinship-related findings from various regions of India. We may classify their approaches to the study of kinship under two headings (i) the Indological approach and (ii) the anthropological/ sociological approach. Let us discuss each of the two approaches.

i) Indological approach

You would agree with me if I say that the social institutions of Indian society have their roots in literary and learned traditions of the country. Many sociologists have used textual sources to explain the ideological and jural

bases of our institutions. You can cite the example of K.M. Kapadia (1947), who has used classical texts to describe Hindu kinship system. Similarly, you can give another example of P.H. Prabhu (1954), who bases his description of Hindu social organisation on Sanskrit texts. I would add the examples of Irawati Karve (1940, 43-44 and 1958) and G.S. Ghurye (1946, 1955). Both of them have extensively worked on the Indian kinship system. Both have explained kinship pattern in different regions of India on the basis of textual sources. They have taken a socio-historical perspective to discuss the various kinship systems. In this sense, the Indological approach to the study of kinship has provided a framework to understand the elements of continuity and transformation in the system.

ii) Anthropological/sociological approach: descent and alliance

Anthropological and sociological studies have looked at kinship systems from the point of view of descent and alliance. Some of you may ask: what is meant by the terms, '**descent**' and '**alliance**'? For a short answer to the question see Box 12.1 and for a detailed answer see Unit in Block 3 of ESO 11 of IGNOU's B A programme.

Box 12.1: Meaning of the Terms 'Descent' and 'Alliance'

Descent refers to "membership of a group, and to this only" (see Rivers 1924: 85-88) You can use the term 'descent' with reference to groups of individuals with shared interests or property. According to Needham (1971: 10), there are six possible ways of transmitting group membership from parents to children. They are i) patrilineal (from father to offspring), ii) matrilineal (from mother to offspring), iii) duolineal or bilineal (transmission of one set of attributes from father to offspring and transmission of another set of attributes from mother to offspring), iv) cognatic (transmission of attributes equally from father and mother to offspring), v) parallel (a rare form of transmission in which descent lines are sex-specific, that is men transmit to male offspring and women transmit to female offspring), vi) cross or alternating (another rare form of transmission, in which men transmit to female offspring and women transmit to male offspring).

In simple words, alliance refers to positive and negative rules governing the marriage bond. Kinship comprises both descent relationships and relationships arising out of marriage alliance. Levi-Strauss (1949) gave importance to the marriage bond and analysed elementary structures, which prescribe (positive rules) and proscribe (negative rules) marriage with certain category of relatives. Looking at marriage alliance in this manner has provided a rich set of anthropological/ sociological findings, which have helped us to understand kinship systems in a comprehensive manner.

Let us now discuss the descent and alliance approaches to the study of kinship

Descent approach

Kin relationships give concrete shape to establishing clear-cut corporate social units. You and I, in fact each one of us, belongs to a cooperating and closely bound group of people. As a member of the group, you can depend upon the help and support of such people. You would observe that 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, we call them descent groups.

In India, we generally find the patrilineal and matrilineal descent systems and 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 (see Box 12.2).

Box 12.2: Examples of the Studies of Descent Groups

Gough (1956) studied Brahmin kinship in a Tamil village and discussed the unity of the lineage with corporate rights on land. She focused on roles and inter-personal relationships in the wider kinship.

Madan (1965) analysed the role of kinship as an organising principle in the Kashmiri Brahmin society. He brought out the strong patrilineal ideology, a characteristic of kinship system of the Kashmiri Pandits.

The study of descent groups helped our understanding of patrilineal kinship system in North India. Sociologists/ anthropologists like, A.C. Mayer, T.N. Madan, Oscar Lewis in their studies of kinship organisation in North India, followed the descent approach. They described in detail various levels of kin groups and their activities.

In sociological studies, sociologists have used in the past such terms as 'line', 'lineal', 'lineage' etc. with or without the prefix 'patri' or 'matri' in the following four different ways.

a) To denote corporate descent groups, i.e. lineage proper.

b) To denote the chosen line of inheritance, succession etc. in a given society.

c) In the study of relationship terminologies, we use the expression "two line prescription" to refer to terminological structures, which are consistent with "bilateral cross-cousin marriage".

d) Regardless of which lines (matriline or patriline or both) we choose for the above three purposes, lineal relatives refer to one's ascendants or descendants. Lineal relatives are those who belong to the same ancestral stock in a direct line of descent. Opposed to lineal relatives are collaterals; they belong to the same ancestral stock but not in a direct line of descent.

The first three usages are context specific, that is, they refer to particular situations. Here, we emphasise social relations and groups and sociologists study them in terms of interaction, norms and values of a particular society. For example, following the lineage or descent approaches, scholars like Radcliffe-Brown (1924), have discussed the relation between mother's brother and sister's son in patrilineal societies. They use the idea of 'complementary filiation', i.e. the relationship an ego has with the relatives on the mother's side in a patrilineal society. In a matrilineal society it refers to the relationship an ego has with the relatives on the father's side. In a patrilineal society a person's maternal group is the affinal group of that person's father. This is the group, from which the person's father has taken a wife. For this reason some sociologists like to consider the question of affinity in its own right, rather than as a complementary set of relationships. You may say that in the descent approach, the emphasis is on social organisation of descent groups. Consequently, there is very little focus on the 'affinity' aspect of relationships.

Let us now look at the approach, which focuses on relationships arising out of marriage alliance.

Alliance approach

Kin relationships entail also the patterns and rules of marriage. When you find a sociologist paying special attention to these aspects of kinship, you can say that he/she is following 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, you can safely say that these studies follow the alliance approach.

The main exponent of this approach was Louis Dumont (1950, 1953, 1957 a and b, 1959, 1962 and 1966). He focused on the role played by marriage in the field of kinship in South India. Dumont focused on the opposition between consanguines and affines as reflected in the Dravidian kinship terminology, and made an important contribution to our understanding of kinship system in India in general and of South India in particular. Following the implications of Levi-Strauss's theory, Dumont (1971: 89-120) applied to South India a structural theory of kinship that brought out the repetition of intermarriage through the course of generations. This pattern highlighted the classification of kinspersons 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 (i.e. the bride-takers are always superior to bride-givers), practice of dowry in relation to hypergamy and ideas of exchange in marriage.

Sociologists and anthropologists followed the descent approach to explain the kinship system in North India. This they did in the context of the four aspects of kin relationships. For the sake of consistency in our delineation of both the approaches, we will continue to use the same four aspects for discussing also the alliance approach in the context of kinship system in South India. You will find the four aspects briefly discussed below.

i) **Kinship groups**: Kin relationships provide both a method of passing on status and property from one generation to the next and effective social groups for purposes of cooperation and conflict. You need to identify the form of descent or of tracing one's relationships. In other words, you find out the social groups within which relatives cooperate and conflict. These social groups constitute kinship groups.

ii) **Kinship terminology**: The list of terms used by the people to refer to their kin relationships expresses the nature of kinship system. This is why by describing kinship terminology you are able to throw light on the kinship system. Most features of the kinship system of any society are usually reflected in the way kinship terms are used in that society. Generally a person would apply the same term to those relatives who belong to the same category of kin relationships. In this case, these relatives would also occupy similar kinship roles.

A comparison and analysis of the various kinship terms helps us to understand the kinship structure, its make-up and the behaviour associated with each term. You can say that kinship terms provide the context and the idiom for

our social relationships. In this sense, kinship terms do not just tell us about biological and social relationships. They help us to look at the whole way of social life. Only by studying the language, values and behaviour of the particular people can we fully appreciate the significance of their kinship terms. Often the same kinship term is used to denote different meanings in different contexts. This is the reason why the study of kinship terms is closely associated with the study of language and culture.

In describing a kinship terminology, it is usual to denote the speaker by the name of ego. The word 'ego' means I in Latin and refers to the first person singular pronoun. The speaker or ego can be either the male or the female. Secondly kinship terms can be divided into two types. One type covers the terms of address. This means that certain kinship terms are used when people address each other. Then there are those terms, which are used for referring to a particular relationship. These are known as terms of reference. Sometimes, the two types may be expressed by one term only. Thirdly, you would also like to learn how to write long kinship terms in short. For example, if you wish to write mother's brother's daughter, you may do so by writing 'mbd'. Take another example, father's sister's daughter's son can be stated as 'fzds'. Here, 'z' stands for sister and 's' for son. In the same way you can write in short ffbd for father's father's brother's daughter. This method of writing kinship terms is useful when one is describing various sets of kinship terms. At this point you need to complete 'Reflection and Action' exercise in order to practise writing kinship terms in shorthand.

Reflection and Action 12.3

Write in short form the following kinship terms. Father's father, Father's mother, Father's brother, Father's brother's wife, Father's brother's son, Father's brother's daughter, Mother's brother, Mother's brother's wife, Mother's brother's son, Mother's brother's daughter, Mother's sister, Mother's sister's husband, Mother's sister's son, Mother's sister's daughter. Check your short forms with those of other students in your Study Centre.

---

iii) **Marriage rules**: Just as kinship groups describe the form of kinship system found in a society, so also rules for marriage, categories of people who may/may not marry each other, relationships between bride-takers and bride-givers provide the context within which kin relationships operate. Talking about these issues gives us an understanding of the content of kin relationships. It is therefore necessary to speak of marriage rules for understanding any kinship system.

iv) **Exchange of gifts**: Sociologists like to describe social relationships between various categories of relatives. As there are always two terms to any relationship, kinship behaviour is described in terms of pairs. For example, the parent-child relationship would describe kinship behaviour between two generations. This sort of description is possible only when you make a study of the kinship system of a particular social group. In the context of our discussion in Unit 12, we would focus on the chain of gift giving and taking among the relatives for understanding the behavioural aspects of kinship system. This discussion gives us an idea of how kinship groups interact and how particular persons play their kinship roles.

You will find that by describing the above four dimensions of the kinship system in relation to North and South India, you will be able to obtain a

fairly general picture of the patterns of kinship in the two regions. Before proceeding to the next section, it is important to mention one more feature of your study of kinship systems. You need to learn about kinship diagrams, which are graphic representations of fairly complicated kinship structures.

Kinship diagrams: The depiction of kinship diagrams makes it not only much easier to grasp the nature of different types of kinship groups, marriage rules and their implications but also presents the possibilities of visually comparing them with other kinship systems. Sociologists and anthropologists invariably use them for explaining various kinship structures. For following those in your books and constructing your own kinship diagrams you need to simply remember the following rules.

a) The symbol ¦ refers to a male and the symbol **O** refers to a female. When these symbols are shown in black, i.e., ▲ and ●, it means that the particular male or female is dead.

b) The symbol **[** refers to sibling relationship. It expresses brother/brother, sister/sister or brother/sister relationships. The symbol **]**, on the other hand, expresses the husband-wife or the marriage relationship.

c) A horizontal line connecting the symbols **[** and **]**, denotes filiation or the relationship between the parent/s and child/children.

Thus, with the use of above symbols, kin relationships are expressed to denote genealogical connections and to depict the structure of kinship groups. Let us take an example and see what the following diagram shows.
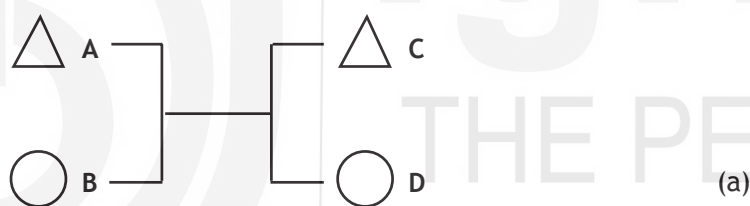

(a)

Fig. 12.8: Basic Kinship Diagram

This diagram shows that A is married to B, and C and D are the children of A and B. This simple diagram can be extened endlessly with the help of the same symbols. In this example you can further show that both C and D have their spouses and children. We can show that C is married to E, and G, H and I are the children of C and E. Similarly, D is married to F, and J, K and L are the children of D and F. This diagram will also show that GHI are the cross-cousins of JKL and that A and B are grandparents of G, H, I, J, K and L. Similarly, you can also locate mother's brother of J, K and L and father's sister of G, H and I. This diagram is drawn in the following manner:

Thus, with the use of above symbols, kin relationships are expressed to denote genealogical connections and to depict the structure of kinship groups. Let us take an example and see what the following diagram shows.

The diagram shows that A is married to B, and C and D are the children of A and B. This simple diagram can be extended endlessly with the help of the same symbols. In this example you can further show that both C and D have their spouses and children. We can show that C is married to E, and G, H and I are the children of C and E. Similarly, D is married to F, and J, K and L are the children of D and F. This diagram will also show that GHI are cross-cousins of JKL and that A and B are grandparents of G, H, I, J, K and L. Similarly, you
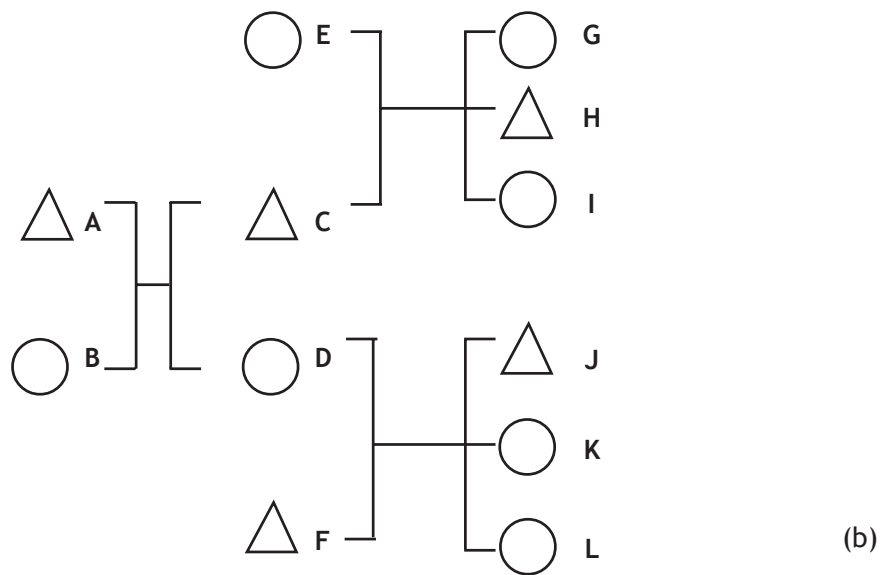
Fig. 12.2: Elaboration of Basic Kinship Diagram

can also locate mother's brother of J, K and L and father's sister of G, H and I. The elaborated diagram would look like the one given in Figure 12.2.

We shall be using some simple kinship diagrams to explain the implications of marriage rules in both North and South India. Having established our frame of reference, we can now begin to look at the application of the descent approach to the study of kinship system in North India.