
UNIT 3: KINSHIP*

Structure

- 3.0 Objective
- 3.1 Introduction
- 3.2 Key Terms and Concepts
 - 3.2.1 Moiety, Phratry, Clan,
 - 3.2.2 Lineage and Descent
 - 3.2.3 Abbreviation and Diagrams
- 3.3 Types of Kin Relations
 - 3.3.1 Consanguine and Affine
 - 3.3.2 Agnatic and Cognatic
 - 3.3.3 Lineal and collateral
 - 3.3.4 Social or Cultural
- 3.4 Kinship Terminologies
 - 3.4.1 Mode of use
 - 3.4.2 Range of application
- 3.5 Kinship Usages and Behaviour
 - 3.5.1 Avoidance and Joking Relations
 - 3.5.2 Avunculate and Amitate
 - 3.5.3 Couvade
 - 3.5.4 Teknonymy
- 3.6 Functions of Kinship
 - 3.6.1 Group formation
 - 3.6.2 Regulation of Social structure
 - 3.6.3 Kinship and Rituals
- 3.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 3.8 References
- 3.9 Specimen Answers to check your progress

3.0. OBJECTIVE

After reading this unit you would be able to:

- Explain about kinship terminologies;
- Discuss the kinship usage and behaviour;
- Note the functions of kinship in society.

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Kinship is the universal feature of human culture that served as the major organising principle in human societies. It can be defined as a principle by which individuals or groups of individuals are organised into social groups, roles, categories and genealogy by means of kinship terminologies. In Anthropology the study of kinship has existed ever since the mid-to-late 1800s, when LH.

Morgan and others invented the study of kinship. According to Robin Fox kinship is to anthropology what logic is to philosophy or the nude is to art; it is the basic discipline of the subject. The method central to the anthropological study of kinship is the comparative method - comparing similarities and differences of two cultures/societies.

Kinship has been defined by a number of anthropologist highlighting the role of biology and alliance in the formation of kin relation. Let us look at the some of the key definitions:

- *Claude Levi Strauss*- “Kinship and its related notions are at the same time prior and exterior to biological relations to which we tend to reduce them”.
- *L.H. Morgan* defines kin terms are, “reflected the forms of marriage and the related makeup of the family (system of consanguinity and affinity of woman family 1871).
- *A.R. Radcliffe- Brown* (1952) agreed that “Kinship terms are like signposts to interpersonal conducts or etiquette, with the implication of appropriate reciprocal right, duties privileges and obligations.
- *MacLennan* Writes that kinship terms are merely forms of solution and was not related to actual blood ties at all.
- *J. Beattie*, “Kinship is not set of genealogical relationships; it is set of social relationships”.

3.2.1 Moiety, Phratry, and Clan

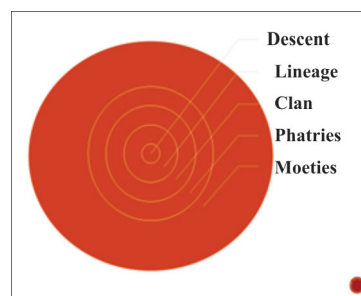
The largest unilineal social group is the moiety, which results from the division of a society into two halves based on descent. The word moiety is derived from a French word that means "half." The society is divided into two large unilineal descent groups that have reciprocal responsibilities.

When phratries breaks it up and separates it into clans. A clan is a social group made up of several houses whose heads claim genealogy from the same ancestor (Murdock). Clans are larger unilineal kinship groups than lineages. The members of this group are thought to be descended from a common ancestor, however the genealogical connections aren't specified. Clans are naturally exogamous. Clans can be divided into various categories: Clans can be patrilineal, matrilineal, ancestral, totemic, territorial, and so on.

3.2.2 Lineage and Descent

A lineage is a unilineal kin group descended from a common ancestor or founder who lived four to six generation ago and in which relationships among members can be exactly stated in genealogical terms. A lineage can also be a corporate group if it has the attributes

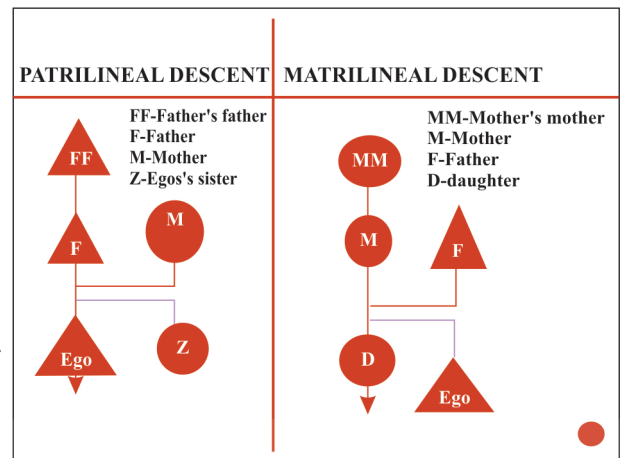
- It has a chief/council
- The group possess collective property
- Is a land owning group
- Groups as a whole is responsible for war indemnity and punishment



When a lineage becomes big in size it sub divides into descent group, though

in anthropology lineage and descent are used synonymously. Descent refers to a relationship defined by connection to an ancestor (or ancestress) through a culturally recognised sequence of parent-child links. It enables to trace of relationships inter-generationally through real, putative, or fictive parent-child links. Descent enables a person to connect to offspring and parentage, thus trace one's ancestry.

Descent can be unilineal, that is either through male line or patri-lineal or through female line or matrilineal. Descent can be traced through both male and female line and this is referred as double descent as found among the Yako of Africa (studied by Daryl Forde). Here, inheritance of immovable materials, such as land, is the domain of the patri-clan while the matri-clan controls the inheritance of moveable objects such as livestock. In certain societies it either line which is recognised for descent and this is known as cognatic descent. The Iban of Borneo (studied by Freeman) is an anthropological illustration of cognatic descent. It is also referred as bilateral or bilineal descent system.



Check Your Progress 1

1. Define kinship.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Discuss the two types of unilineal descent with a suitable diagram.

.....

.....

.....

.....

3.3 TYPES OF KINSHIP

Kinship as a concept has been used to refer to a variety of things, and has numerous meanings.

In western societies, a man's kin and affine are confined to a few close relatives for practical purposes. Whereas in non-western society kinship relations is broad and inclusive of geographical and other factors. But despite the variance, some familial and affinity links are culturally recognised in every civilization. Therefore it is important to comprehend the different types of relations reckoned as kinship.

3.3.1 Consanguineous and Affine

Consanguineous kinship refers to a blood relationship. The consanguineous kin are blood relatives, those between parents and their children, as well as between siblings. It refers to kinship ties established at the time of birth and hence considered as universal form of kinship. Consanguineous kin are primary kinship son, brother, sister, uncle ('chacha'), elder uncle ('taoo'), nephew, and cousin. In this regard, it should be noted that blood relationships can be both real and imagined. Affinal relations, on the other hand, refer to relations formed from marriage alliance. The word 'alliance' is derives from the French, where it can be used to describe marriage, or the fact of being in an 'in-law' relation. Kinship is thus based on marriage, like the relationship between husband and wife. Not only husband-wife but relatives of both families are also affinal relatives, like father, mother, sisters and brothers-in-laws, etc. Marriage is the basis of these relations and not blood.

3.3.2 Agnatic and Cognatic

The term agnatic means the reckoning of relationship by male link(s) exclusively, regardless of sex of ego (starting point for referring to the kinship diagram). Therefor an agnates are person related by patrilineal descent, that is, kin who trace their relationship by descent through males only from a common ancestor. Agnates are under the authority of a single pater and resided together. Grandfather, father, son, father's brother and grandson are all agnates. Cognatic refers to bilateral or consanguineal kinsman or kinswoman. The closest of all cognatic relationships is that between children of the same father and mother.

3.3.3 Lineal and Collateral

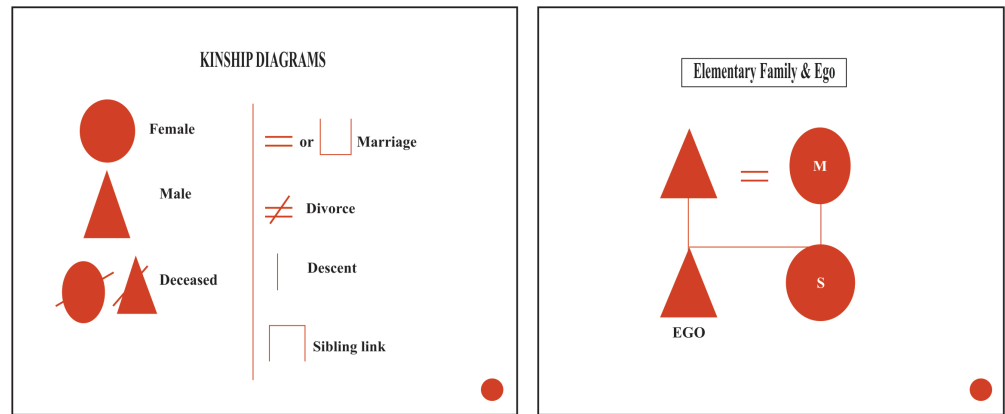
A lineal kin is a person who is related by a direct line of descent such as father, father's father, son and son's son etc. A collateral kin is a person who is related indirectly through the mediation of another relative such as father's brother, mother's sister, that is, uncle, aunts, cousins etc. Descendants of lineal kin are called collateral kin, FB (father's brother) is lineal and FBS (father's brother's son) is collateral

3.3.4 Social or Cultural

In the 20th century social anthropologist started questioning the biological understanding of kinship. According to Schneider, not all kinship is based on blood (consanguine) or marriage (affine). In his study of American family, he argued that kinship was abstract and a cultural construct. By this he meant that other than biological relation kinship involved social or cultural kin relations as well. Social kinships refers to relations in which are not necessarily related by blood or marriage and yet share a sense of kinship. In contemporary society examples of social kinship would be homosexual families, families formed due to new reproductive technologies and also relations developed due religious affiliation or social group membership.

3.3.3 Kinship Diagrams and Genealogical Abbreviation

Kinship diagrams are used by anthropologists to depict relationships. During the interview process, cultural anthropologists might use kinship diagrams to swiftly sketch out relationships between people. It also allows people to remain anonymous while visually presenting a culture's kinship pattern without resorting to names, which can be confusing. The box below gives detailed explanation of symbols used to draw for kinship diagrams.



Besides using symbols, anthropologist also make use of genealogical abbreviation in kinship diagrams. Below is list of some of the abbreviation commonly used:-

Activity 1

With help of your parent and grandparent make a genealogical chart of your family up to four generation (starting from great grandfather). Mark out relations from father's side with red ink. Can you identify what is the type of decent followed?

Genealogical Abbreviations

F = Father	M = Mother	S = Son
D = Daughter	FZ=Father's sister	MB=Mother's Brother
MBD=mother's brother daughter	B = Brother	Z = Sister
FZD=Father's sister daughter		
W = Wife	H = Husband	SP = Spouse
LA = In-law	SI = Sibling GP = Grandparent(s)	GC = Grandchild(ren)

3.4 KINSHIP TERMINOLOGIES

The American cultural anthropologist's unlike the British Anthropologist, stress on the need to locate those features in the social structure for the origins of humanity. These structuralists argued in favour social categories that regulated human behaviour. Lewis Henry Morgan initiated the understanding of kinship system with reference to social categories. Every society use different terms to refer for distinguishing roles and responsibilities of the members. Kinship terminology thus classifies members as per the rules of group formation. According to Morgan, kinship terms enables to construct a typology of relationship in society and due to variance in the use of kinship terminology a comparative study was possible.

3.4.1 Mode of Use

According to Murdock (1949), the interrelation between kinship terminology and kinship behaviour, is reflected in the mode of use, he classifies kinship terms into two category:

- 1) *Terms of address* – kinship terms used to address some, that is, what you call someone when talking to them, e.g., "Nanna"

- 2) *Terms of reference* – means terms used to refer to a particular kin relation that is what you call someone when talking about them, e.g., "my grandmother", my mother's sister and so on.

3.4.2 Range of Application

Kinship terms are those terms which are used in designating kin of various types. According to Morgan (1870) there are two types of kinship terminology on the basis of the range of application:

1. **Classificatory**-a single term used for two or more kinds of relatives who included in a single terminology. In this system, terms that are used for lineal are also used for collateral. Thus in English terminology, a single term 'uncle' is used for both father's brother and mother's brother. Classificatory terms binds two relations, there is no difference between parental and marital relatives. The principal of classification may be applied to a wide range of relationship thereby establishing wide range of kinship. Radcliffe-Brown has identified three principles of classificatory terminology that inform kinship behaviour-
 - i) *Unity of the Sibling Group*- sister and brother belong to same descent therefore clubbed together. The elementary family is the social unit and is seen as unitary.
 - ii) *Unity of Lineage*- In patrilineal society, a man belongs to patrilineal lineage, thus his relations with father's lineage is primary and that with mother's lineage is secondary. All relatives from mothers' side- in the first ascending generation is clubbed in one group, thus all female member upto three generation are referred as mother and all male members referred as MB (mother's brother).
 - iii) *Unity of generations-same and alternate generations*-In the same generation principle there is no distinction on the basis of sex, generation is the basis of classification. In the alternate generation, that is the relation between grandparent and grandson is a relations of equality, friendlier, passing of knowledge and tradition. On the other the relation with first ascending generation is formal, between parent+ children there is a relation of superiority and subordination
2. **Descriptive** –few specific terms for relatives of 1st and 2nd order and other relatives refereed by compound of these terms, specific terms used to show exact relations, eg- FB, MZ, FBS etc.

Lineal and collateral kin are separated; for example, mother and mother's sister, although of the same generation and sex, are distinguished. The advantage of descriptive is that there is less ambiguity, distant relatives identified easily, for e.g till 5th order-MMBDD

Check Your Progress 2

1. What do you understand by kinship terminology? Discuss the functions of kinship terminology.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Discuss the two types of kinship terminology as suggested by Morgan in the study of kinship.

.....
.....
.....
.....

3.5 KINSHIP USAGES AND BEHAVIOUR

Kinship usage refers to the pattern of behavior between kins in society. It establishes what constitutes proper and acceptable role relationships. As a result, it regulates social life. Some examples of kinship usages are relations of avoidance and joking, teknonymy, avunculate, amitate, couvades.

3.5.1 Avoidance and Joking Relationship

In North India, patrilineal society, there is a cultural norm whereby kins have to remain away from each other and maintain restrictions in their behavioural pattern while interaction with each other. For example a father-in-law avoids having face-to face contact with his daughter-in-law and thus the practice of veiling or purdah system.

Joking relationship is the exact opposite form of "avoidance," In contrast to avoiding face-to-face interaction, the daughter-in-laws have the privilege to be at ease with younger kins of husband, especially brother-in-law. They share all types of jokes, including obscene sexual jokes. Typical examples are a man and his wife's younger sisters or a woman and her husband's younger brothers, cross cousins, and grandparents and grandchildren. Joking partnerships can be seen in both tribal and Hindu cultures.

According to Radcliffe-Brown relations of avoidance and joking relations balanced out relations within the household. While avoidance ensured a high level of respect to relations with restricted contact was maintained else there were chances of confrontation and conflict. Joking relations therefore eased out the seriousness of such relation. It allowed kin to freely share jokes and even show some amount of disrespect. Thus for Radcliffe-Brown, joking and avoidance interactions reduce conflict and improve social solidarity.

3.5.2 Avunculate and Amitate

Kinship usage observed between the children of a mother's brother and his sister in many matrilineal society. In these societies, the maternal uncle takes on many of the responsibilities of the father. His nephew and niece are still under his command as they are the inheritors of his possessions. Avunculate is a practice found among the Trobriand islanders of Melanesia, the Fijians, African tribes, and the Nayars of south India.

Another form of kinship usage related to the avunculate and is more common among patrilineal people is amitate. Here, the sister of the father is treated with great respect and given top priority. She is more than a mother to her nephew, and she wields influence over him in a variety of situations. In actuality, it is a social mechanism that prevents the father's sisters from being neglected, particularly when they are ejected from their in-laws' home. This form of kinship usage is seen in Polynesian Tonga, Toda of South India, and other communities.

3.5.3 Couvade

Another unusual application of kinship between a husband and his wife is found among the Toda and Khasi communities. In these communities, when a man's wife gives birth to a child, the husband is forced to live a life of austerity. Along with his wife, he must adhere to a stringent diet and obey a variety of taboos. Couvades are regarded by anthropologists as a symbolic depiction of establishing paternity on a child. This particular usage was common among the Nayars of South India, the Ainus of Japan, and a few Chinese villages a few years ago.

3.5.4. Teknonymy

The Anthropologist Edward Tylor coined the term 'teknonymy,' which was derived from a Greek word and first used in anthropology. In this type of kinship usage, a kin is not directly referred but is referred to through another kin. A kin serves as a point of contact between two kins. For example in a traditional Hindu family, a wife does not mention her husband's name. She communicates with him via her son or daughter. He is referred to by her as Guddu's or Tunnu's father.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Discuss how avoidance and joking relations are opposed to each other.

.....

.....

.....

.....

2. Explain any two kinship usages with suitable examples.

.....

.....

.....

.....

3.6 FUNCTIONS OF KINSHIP

The significance of kinship system lies in the function performed in group formation, regulation of social structure and in ritual ceremony. With social, economic and political changes though kinship no longer remains central for economic and political roles, it does retain its primary functions.

3.6.1 Group Formation

The foremost and primary function of kinship in primitive society was group formation. As a result of marriage, each woman is assigned a husband and her children become his children, forming a unique group of father, mother, and children that we refer to as "family. The groups formed on basis of kinship ties become relevant for determining rules of inheritance, for instance in a patrilineal society the agnatic members have the rights of inheritance and succession. Kin groups also regulate marriage behavior by defining marriage rules like exogamy and endogamy.

3.6.2 Regulation of Social structure

Kinship usage regulates kinship role relationships, such as how one kinsman should act in the presence of another or what one kinsman owes to another. It establishes appropriate and acceptable role relationships between father and daughter, brother and sister, son-in-law and mother-in-law, and fellow lineage members and clansmen. As a result, kinship functions as a regulariser of social life and maintains the social system's unity.

3.6.3 Kinship and Rituals

Kinship relations determines the participation of kin in life cycle rituals, especially the cradle ceremony, marriage, and death. In many societies, life cycle rituals indicate the importance of certain kin. For example, in patrilineal society, during a naming ceremony, the newborn's name must be given by the father's sister. During the marriages of daughters, specific rites and rituals must be conducted by the mother's brother. Close relatives are obligated to give gifts to newlywed couples, and they in return are equally rewarded from both the bride's and groom's family. During funeral rituals, it is customary for close kinsmen to practice mourning for specified period.

Besides role in rituals, in simple societies, kinship also regulated political life, the position of chief was hereditary. Segmentary lineage functioned to maintain law and order in stateless society as found in the Nuer society (Evans - Pritchard). With the formation of nation state the political function of kinship became institutionalised. Caste-class identity becoming flexible, the adherence to marriage rules has been affected. Despite these changes kinship system does remains an integral and universal in all societies.

3.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit, we have been able to learn about kinship system and definition of kinship as given by a number of anthropologist. In every society there are the different kinds of kin relations, two most important are consanguine and affine. Kinship does not only refer to biological relation but to social relations which are constructed in every day interactions. We have also learnt about the relevance of kinship usage and kinship terminology. Kinship system helps in group formation and regulates social life

3.9 REFERENCES

Dumont, L., 1968, 'Marriage Alliance', in D. Shills (ed.), *International Encyclopedia of the Social Sciences*, U.S.A.: Macmillan and Free Press, Pp. 19- 23

Evans-Pritchard, E.E., 2004 (1940), 'The Nuer of Southern Sudan', in R. Parkin and L. Stone (eds.), *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, U.S.A.: Blackwell, Pp. 64-78

Fox, R (1983). *Kinship and Marriage: an Anthropological Perspective*. Cambridge studies in social anthropology. Cambridge University Press. p. 273

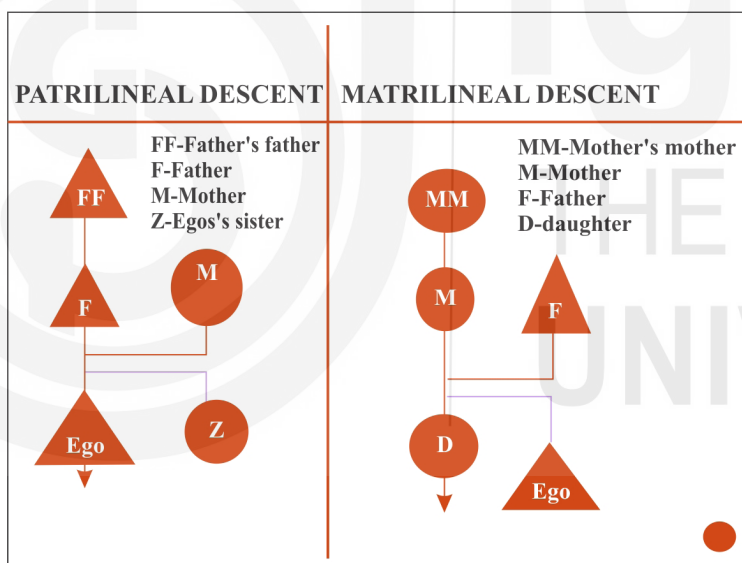
Freeman, J. D., 1958, 'The Family Systems of the Iban of Borneo', in J. Goody (ed.), *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, Pp. 15-52

Schneider, D., 2004, 'What is Kinship All About?' in R. Parkin and L. Stone (eds.) *Kinship and Family: An Anthropological Reader*, U.S.A.: Blackwell, Pp. 257-274

3.10 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Kinship can be defined as a web of relationship established through blood (consanguine) or marriage (affine). Besides blood and affinal relations, there are also social kinship that constructed in everyday interactions.
2. The two types of unilineal descent are
 - a) Patrilineal descent – the male line is used for tracing decent, all male members in the male line are members of the group known as patri-clan. Example, North Indian Kinship
 - b) Matrilineal descent- system in which descent is traced through female, line of inheritance and succession is from mother to daughter. Example- Khasis and Nayars in South India



Check Your Progress 2

1. Kinship terminologies refers terms that are used to refer to relations between persons. These terms have been assumed to identify categories of genealogical differences of sex, lineage and generation. Kinship terms help in identification and distinction of various kin on the basis of roles and responsibilities.
2. According to Morgan, kinship terminology can be classified into two categories:-
 - a) Descriptive- Distinct and separate terms are used to refer and address different kin. It enables to recognise the exact relation between individuals. Example are the terms like 'mama' and 'maasi' as used in North India.

- b) **Classificatory**-In this a number of kin, lineal, collateral and affine may be clubbed together and referred by the same term. The term 'uncle' and 'aunt' as used in English terminology refers to classificatory terminology.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Relations of avoidance and joking relations balanced out relations within the household. While avoidance ensured a high level of respect to relations with restricted contact was maintained else there were chances of confrontation and conflict. Joking relations therefore eased out the seriousness of such relation. It allowed kin to freely share jokes and even show some amount of disrespect. For example, in her in-laws house a girl maintains formal relations with father-in-law but can be at ease and openly share her view with her husband's younger brother. The relation between 'bhabhi-dewar' is the best example of joking relations.
2.
 - i) **Avunculate** : It is a practice found among Trobriand islanders of Melanesia, the Fijians, some frican tribes and the Nayars of Kerala in India. In these societies the maternal uncle takes on many of the responsibilities of the father.
 - ii) **Avoidance Relationship** : In North Indian, patrilineal society, there is a cultural norm whereby kin have to remain away from each other and maintain restrictions in their behavioural pattern while interacting with each other. For example a father-in-law avoids having face-to face contact with his daughter-in-law and thus the practice of veiling or purdah system.