

UNIT 9 RELATEDNESS AND FICTIVE KINSHIP*

Structure

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9.0 OBJECTIVES

- Explain the concept of relatedness and fictive kinship as a new direction in kinship studies
- Examine how these concepts challenge theories of kinship based on biology and marriage
- Illustrate the application of cultural understanding of relatedness with ethnographic case studies.
- Acknowledge the importance of indigenous understanding of kinship as seen through fictive kinship.

9.1 INTRODUCTION

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In this unit we look at some of the major shifts in kinship studies to see the precedence to the concept of kinship studies, starting with cultural approach, the pioneer of which is David Schneider. Then we examine some of the ways in which Janet Carston carries this cultural approach further in her study of Malay Peninsula. The unit also takes a look at how new reproductive technologies or assisted reproduction is altering the way kinship is thought of .

Kinship studies in the early 1980s witnessed the emergence of the concept of relatedness as an approach to study kinship system. The idea of relatedness was preceded by shifts in the focus of kinship studies from traditional reliance of descent and alliance as determinants of kinship to recognition of cultural specificity in understanding the basis of kinship ties. In the former, theorists like Morgan, W.H.R Rivers, Levi-Strauss, Malinowski, A.R. Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes made valuable contributions to the North American, European and British Schools through their writings on kinship. They operated within the purview of the descent and alliance models of kinship, that is, kinship through either blood or marriage.

The latter view of kinship, the cultural approach, emerged in the 1970s. Instead of forcibly trying to fit theoretical approaches of descent and alliance that had originated in western kinship theories to understand kinship cross-culturally and essentially in the non-west, the cultural approach turned focus on the need to understand how kinship was lived in everyday experience. Rather than explanations of the structure of kinship, a shift was made to practice of kinship. A pioneer of this view of kinship was David Schneider. For Schneider norms, values and symbols were important and thus kinship is cultural. He pointed out that accepting the descent and alliance theories of kinship as the *only* explanations of how kinship operates resulted in a restricted view of kinship. He emphasised on cultural distinctiveness of kinship and relatedness, in place of relying of western anthropological studies on kinship.

Schneider's cultural approach to kinship led to resurgence of anthropological studies that focuses more on culture. These studies have been referred as 'New Kinship Studies' as they explore the non-biologically rooted relatedness with focus on how kinship emerge over time through caregiving relationships and in response to affirmative 'choices' to create kinship ties (Weston 2013). These studies have highlight the new and emerging forms of kinship in the West. Some of the issues brought into the body of kinship studies are instability and divorce in heterosexual marriage, the advent of same-sex marriage, gender equality, gay rights, falling fertility rates, increasing numbers of people living on their own and so on. The

concept of ‘relatedness’ became relevant in understanding a wide range of relations that was constructed in non-biological manner. This led to a greater awareness among scholars and social scientists that kinship does not simply mirror physical relations but is socially created in specific cultural contexts.

Check Your Progress 1

1. How does the cultural approach help in understanding kinship?

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2. Name the theorist know for the cultural approach.

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9.2 UNDERSTANDING RELATEDNESS IN KINSHIP STUDIES

Recognising the diverse ways in which cultures interpret and observe relatedness, recasting of kinship is necessary in order to go beyond traditional kinship theories. The focus in recent years has been on broadening the definition of kinship to accommodate relationships that are not based on blood or marriage, but nevertheless enjoy importance, status and recognition as kin because they fulfilled the functions that such kinship roles were expected to perform, such as is the case with fictive kinship. Introducing openness to kinship may be attributed to the developments in anthropology within the cultural perspective on kinship that stress the need to understand kinship from the viewpoint of the indigenous who experience it as part of their everyday existence. How do people we study define and construct their notions of relatedness and what value do they give them?

Relatedness emerged in the context of kinship studies in the 1990s to challenge definitions that restricted criteria for claiming kinship to either consanguinity (blood ties) or affinity (marriage ties). The term was used for the first time by Janet Carsten in her work, ‘*Culture of Relatedness*’ in which she argued that kinship could not be understood only with reference to biology and reproduction. Relatedness implied that kinship is more social in the sense that relations are constructed through caring and sharing non-biological substances as well. It reflected the shift from a more formal or restrictive definitions of kinship based on blood ties and alliance to informal relation formed by being related. Relatedness can be established

through construction of kinship relationships among strangers. It includes relations constructed outside biological and marital ties. It is fluid and susceptible to change. Such relationships that dislocate kinship from blood, marriage and property by realigning it with invented family bonds and traditions are called fictive kinship (V.Geetha, 2007:86). According to Janet Carsten, it would be better to characterise the relatedness that people act and feel. This enables to arrive at a new and more flexible study of kinship in anthropology (Carsten, 1995: 236).

For Carsten culture of relatedness provides a ‘processual view of personhood and kinship’, where people become complete social beings in society through the process of becoming kin. Therefore kinship was not to be regarded as fixed or given entity or as a process to be discovered in terms of blood relation nor negotiated by affinal network. Kinship is rather a process which is constructed and assigned meaning in everyday interaction through sharing of food, residence and friendship bond. Kinship is really about people’s everyday lives and the way they think about the relations that matter most of them.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Define relatedness.

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2. How does relatedness critique earlier theories of kinship?

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9.2.1 Janet Carsten: The ‘Code’ and the ‘Substance’ of Kinship

Inspired by Schneider’s ideas, Janet Carsten pursued the idea that relatedness carried a different meaning in each specific cultural context and explored the relevance of previously unrecognised elements such as gender, the body and personhood in the understanding of kinship in cross-cultural contexts. Carsten studied the Malay kinship system, among whom the belief exists that substance in the form of food and residence, when exchanged and

transferred among people, became the basis of relationality and kinship between them. Commitment to shared commensality is a way of emphasising their relatedness.

Janet Carsten carried out her study while residing for 18 months with a Malay family in Langkawi and subsequently for four months more at a later visit. During her stay, Carsten shared food with them and participated in household activities, which led to her being recognised as kin. In her ethnographic study among the Malays in Pulau Langkawi, Carsten found that relatedness in terms of becoming a person and participating in social relations is based on feeding, that is, giving and receiving nourishment and residing in a common space. It challenges the clear boundaries drawn between the biological and the social.

In western society co-residence would be regarded as social, while in other societies such as the people of Pulau Langkawi in Malay studied by Janet Carsten, indigenous understandings would not make a clear distinction between biological and social. Malays become complete persons, that is, kin, though living and consuming together in houses. Identity and substance are mutable and fluid. These perceptions suggest a processual view of kinship and personhood. They challenge anthropological definitions of kinship, which focus on procreation and which assume a universal division between the “biological” and the “social” (Carsten, 1995:223). Personhood, relatedness and feeding are intimately connected through the theme of substance---blood through which people relate to each other. The fluidity of kinship between biological and social is well brought out in Carsten’s work among the Malay. She finds that, among the people of Pulau Langkawi kinship ties are also “made by living together in houses and sharing meals. Over time, accumulation of shared meals and cohabitation can establish ‘natural’ links between those who may have been originally unrelated but were brought together by in-migration, fostering or marriage. Thus, opposition between biological and social is not always followed---both are accommodated in the same society (Carsten, 2000:687).

To be meaningful as a concept, kinship has to be understood as culturally specific notion of relatedness deriving from shared bodily substance. In the West and several non-West societies, this is explained as resulting from sexual reproduction, in other cultures, it may result from sharing food, living together in the same house.

9.2.2. The 'Code' and the 'Substance' of Malay Kinship

Among the Malay people residing in the region of Pulau Langkawi, sharing meals and residing in the same house are as fundamental to kinship as procreation. Kinship cannot be defined solely in terms of biological procreation but is also social because commensality is recognised as establishing kinship. Birth defines only the beginning of the process of being, of existing as a person. Becoming related is an ongoing process which continues throughout one's life, as long as people consume food together in houses. Since the people one eats with change several times during one's lifetime, kinship is thus mutable and fluid, rather than fixed. Kinship then clearly involves sharing of substance. This substance can be in the form of the seed at the time of conception from the father which is nourished by blood from the mother during gestation in the womb. But this manner of biological procreation is only one form of establishing relatedness. Bodily substance is not something that one is born into. Notions about substance are acquired through feeding. Therefore, relatedness in Malay is also based on eating together, which implies common blood.

Kinship is recognised through blood and since food nourishes blood, among the Malay, feeding is an essential basis of designating kinship. Sharing of nourishment is a means of acceptance into the family group. Shared substances relate to establishment of a blood tie, but not necessarily in the biological sense. Blood ties may be shared in the form of food cooked on the common hearth and mother's milk. Shared blood is shared female substance, it is never paternal blood. There exists a continuum between food, blood and milk. Food in the form of rice is consumed by the mother and enriches her blood. Mother's healthy body produces milk for the child. The manner in which food constructs relatedness:

1. Food in the form of rice cooked in the same house hearth and shared on a daily basis contributes to strengthening blood in the body. Blood is created from food. Thus, those with whom food is shared in the house are considered equivalent to blood relatives.
2. Mother's milk is believed to be made from the mother's blood. Blood, milk and rice meals are derived from the mother. Relatedness operates through women. Feeding is not just a means of gaining physical strength but also a way of forming a strong mother-child bond. When a woman feeds a child who is not her biological offspring, that child becomes part of her family and a sibling to her biological children, making them milk siblings or foster siblings. They are thus, prohibited from marrying each other later in life because such a decision is considered incestuous.

Becoming milk siblings is found in several cases among Malays, as it is quite common to spend childhood in houses other than one's maternal one. Formal and informal fostering arrangements are quite common. Infants may have been fed casually by women other than the birthmother, such as neighbours or distant kinswoman. Transfer of substances means that kinship was not fixed. Rather, it could flow and have a transformative effect on the person's relations with others (Carsten, 2011:25). There is constant anxiety about the chance that this woman child could later become a spouse in adulthood, which would count as incest. Due to the principle of avoidance of incest, in recent times, the practice of feeding a child other than one's own is not done anymore.

9.2.3 Key Principles of Malay Kinship- Houses, hearths, feeding, women and sibling sets are all bounded intimately with each other.

i. *The House* -The house has a central feature of social organisation among South Asian societies, including Malay to the extent that Levi-Strauss described them as 'house-based' societies (Carsten, 1991: 426). According to the Malay, living together is an essential criterion in being considered kin. The principle of unity of the family is emphasised in their living patterns:

- Spatial arrangements show minimum divisions.
- Existence of one common hearth or dapur as unifying factor

A number of couples reside together in the same house, but they have only one hearth (dapur), where they all cook and eat meals together. Eating outside the house in the homes of others is disapproved of for fear of it disrupting the unity of the house and kinship bond. Children are taught from an early age to return home for full rice meals. This commensality is a prime focus of what it means to be of one household. If the mother dies, the next best thing the child can be given is water boiled in the hearth of house. This is the closest possible connection the child may have to relate to its mother.

ii. *The Role of Women* - Women are central to Malay houses because they spend most of their time there. Women are associated with the hearth--- the focal point of the house where women cook, carry out their main activities during the day and spend leisure time. The presence of women is important, as seen in the Malay belief that a widow can stay alone, but not a widower because without a woman the house is missing the 'mother of the house'. Women play a central ritual role during the establishment and construction of a new house.

The senior woman who is to live there is made to hold the central post (tiang seri) as the house is erected. The post is believed to be the abode of the house spirit (sumangat rumah), also a female. Houses are decorated and adorned, just as women are.

Relatedness operates through women. It is from women that the main kinship link emerges because consumption and feeding of shared substances --- blood (through mother's womb and milk) and rice cooked by women. Feeding begins in the womb where the child is nourished by the mother's blood and after birth, by the mother's milk. Breastfeeding by the mother helps in the physical and emotional development of the child as well as in establishment of a strong mother-child bond. It enables the child to recognise the mother, that is, helps establish kinship.

The process of becoming, that is, acquiring substance happens through women's bodies and actions. The woman's blood makes the child, the mother's milk nourishes the child and the food cooked by the woman on the hearth sustains the family and those with whom they share their meal every day, thereby incorporating them into the family fold as close kin.

iii. *Importance of Children* -Houses are closely associated with children. The new house cannot be constructed when the couple gets married but only when their first child is born. Due to this, children are important in marriage. During delivery, semangat (soul) of the child comes into existence when the midwife cuts the umbilical cord. Once the child is physically detached from the mother, the midwife names the child. Thus, the child acquires personhood, with an independent identity. Rites are performed to protect the body from invasion of spirits that may enter from the extremities. This is the reason why the child is swaddled tightly during the first few weeks of life and an iron object is kept near it prevent attacks by spirits. Spirits are attracted by the 'dirt of childbirth', which is removed by shaving and bathing the child. These ideas suggest that the child is highly dependent on its mother.

Western kinship signals full relinquishing of parental rights in the child by its biological parents while in Malay fostering, connections with the birth parents are maintained alongside foster parents, thereby not causing identity crisis in the child the way adoptees in the West face (Carsten, 2007). Fostering is prominent component of raising children in Malay and is done in case of death of one or both parents, divorce or as an attempt to avoid divorce in case of infertility, balance the sex ratio by having roughly equal number of boys and girls or providing mother relief by caring for her children if she undergoes frequent and several

pregnancies (Carsten, 1991). When a child is fostered, he is said to have character traits and physical attributes of those who raised him despite not sharing biological links with them because he has eaten food cooked in the same hearth. This shared food establishes a kinship bond between the child and his foster family.

iv. Siblingship -The relationship between siblings is considered the most important among the Malay and siblingship takes priority over filiation. (Carsten 2011: 22). In Langkawi, when people are asked to explain how exactly they are related, they always do so in terms of the sibling bond between ancestors. Many spirits are mentioned in myths and legends as siblings. Siblings are expected to provide aid to each other and remain close all through their lives, especially if they are closer in age. To preserve the sibling bond and avoid conflict, co-residence is discouraged among siblings after marriage. Among sisters who are close, the in-marriage husband is considered a disruption to the natural order of affection, and must incur a ritual fine. This highlights the priority given to the sibling bond.

The notion of siblingship comes into play even before birth and continues to influence a person's fortunes throughout life. The placenta (*uri*) that surrounds the child in the womb is considered the child's sibling. The foetus and placenta together constitute a 'sibling set' or 'birth siblings'. That is why when the child is born, the *uri* (considered the 'younger sibling') is washed, put in a woven basket with other objects of ritual importance and buried by the father in the house compound in the way a funeral burial might be carried out to signify that the sibling set remains anchored to the house (Carsten, 1991: 428). The uterus is considered the sibling's first home and the placenta sibling is the child's first substance sharing relation through nourishment from the mother's blood, because they share food from the same mother's body in order to remain nourished. Thus, even an only child has a placenta sibling. Houses occupied after birth merely create a form of siblingship replicating the one created in the womb.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Give two reasons why in Malay relatedness is associated with women.

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2. Define 'sibling set'.

relationship develop between the parent and child irrespective of the absence of biological relatedness. Thus families are created in cultural context.

Besides aiding heterosexual couple, who due to medical condition depend on assisted reproduction, to become parents, eggs and sperm donation also provide the homosexual couples the choice of parenthood. Single parent and same-sex couple have used the service of donors to construct families of their choice. This has led to culture around parenthood becoming less prescriptive and more flexible. Men and homosexuals who were earlier excluded from becoming parents now have the possibility to create a family of choice. At the same time women who were destined to reproduce have been given the option of not doing so.

9.3.2 Experiencing relatedness through surrogacy

Surrogacy is the renting of woman's womb to incubate and give birth to a baby for another couple. It involves monetary transaction and hence social and ethical dilemmas. Like sperm, egg and embryo donation it adds to the network of individual who are related to the child beside the parent. The surrogate enters into a legal contract with the fertility clinic that after the delivery of the child, she will have no claim or relations. Surrogacy family functions as traditional family but the only difference is that the notion of maternity is complicated. Motherhood is not defined by the period of gestation but by the capacity to rent a womb. The absence of gestational link between mother and child does not affect their physical and emotional relationship. Surrogacy provides an opportunity to individuals who due to medical reasons cannot conceive, to same-sex partners and those who are want to bring up children without necessarily marrying.

9.4 MEANING AND RELEVANCE OF FICTIVE KINSHIP

Fictive kinship also referred as social, quasi or pseudo kinship is a common concept in anthropology and the social sciences. It refers to individuals unrelated by birth or marriage who label or treat one another as kin. It involves extension of kinship obligations and relations to individuals specifically not otherwise included in the kinship universe. In the beginning of the study of kinship only two forms of relation were recognised- first those related by blood and second relations through marriage. All other relations were considered outside the kinship map.

The term 'fictive' was used to describe all such relation which were treated not-real leading to a distinction between pure/real kinship (blood and marriage) and impure or fictive relations. The use of the term 'fictive' was limited till the mid-to late twentieth century when there was an attempt to deconstruct and revise anthropology. It was realised that kinship was not simply a mirror of physical links but also socially constructed in specific cultural context. Each culture has its exclusive ways of establishing fictive kinship. In many societies around the world, fictive kinship is established based on the notion of 'shared substances'. Substance could include organ transplant, blood transfusion, transfer of semen, mother's milk, genetic elements (as in the case of reproductive technologies), that is, anything that ensured survival. In this sense, sharing food also is considered substance, since it nourished the blood---the basis of survival.

9.5 FORMS OF FICTIVE KINSHIP

There are special forms of fictive kinship relations in different society, examples of some of them are explained below.

1. **Feast of Souls**-This refers to the use of ceremony to identify kinship ties between participants. Those participating in the rituals are defined as having relation because of the fact of sharing a ritual bond. This required that a ritual takes place in order for the creation of kinship ties to be acknowledged as a formal alliance.
2. **Miteri** -The term '*miteri*' literally means friendship and is a form of fictive kinship. Men who form fictive kin bonds are called *mit*; the female friend of another woman is called *mitimi*. The generic *miteri* is simply defined as an individualistic form of fictive or ritual kinship common among Hindu caste and ethnic group of Nepal. There are two rules for establishing a *miteri* membership, first that the bond is made with someone outside one's own clan or caste and second that it is only made between people of same sex.
3. **Compadrazgo**- This a form of fictive kinship found in Central Mexico for past many years. Literally meaning "co-parenthood", compadrazgo is a term to describe the set of relationships between a child, their parents, and their godparents. Beginning with the child's baptism, godfather and godmother agree to share child's spiritual and material welfare. This formalizes bonds between godparents, parent and children.
4. **Gurung Tradition of 'Rodi'**-A noted Gurung tradition in Nepal is the institution of "Rodi", where teenagers form fictive kinship bonds and become Rodi members to

socialize, perform communal tasks, and find marriage partners. This is an institution by teenagers formed in the aim of socialization, to undertake cultural responsibilities together and to look for marriage potentials.

5. **Sorority among American communities**-This is a club or organisation of women, usually young and commonly students, formed mainly for social purposes as well as for helping each other out in times of trouble or need. In this type of fictive relationships, usually the members refer to each other as ‘sisters’ in case of girl-groupings and ‘brothers’, in case of boy-groupings.

Activity 1

In this section we have discussed the different cultural manifestation of fictive kinship. Look around your neighbourhood and observe such relations. Discuss it in your study centre.

Check Your Progress 4

1. What do you understand by term fictive kinship?

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2. Discuss two forms of fictive kinship.

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9.6 LET US SUM UP

Kinship studies in post 1970s took a new direction with cultural approach. Schneider was correct in challenging the centrality of procreation as assumed by anthropologists. For him, the category of kinship has no cross cultural value because its definition is bound up by Western notions. The relationship between biological and social was central to the way kinship is defined in traditional theories of kinship which see these two spheres as separate. But Carsten shows through her study of Malay kinship that the separation of social from

biological is not always clear cut. Relatedness is derived from procreation and eating and living together. Taking into account the diverse ways in which kinship is understood across cultures is important as this would help to arrive at a new and more flexible approach to the study of kinship. The concept of relatedness further got elaborated with emergence of technologies that led assisted reproduction. Third party gametes through sperm and egg donation further challenged the construction of kinship through biology. Relatedness emphasised on the processual dimension of kinship.

9.7 REFERENCES

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9.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Instead of forcibly trying to fit theoretical approaches of descent and alliance that had originated in western kinship theories to understand kinship cross-culturally and essentially in the non-west, the cultural approach turned focus on the need to understand how kinship was lived in everyday experience. Rather than explanations of the structure of kinship, a shift was made to practice of kinship.
2. David Schneider

Check Your Progress 2

1. Relatedness refers to the indigenous ways of acting out and conceptualising relations between people, as distinct from notions proclaimed in anthropological theory. Relatedness can be established through construction of kinship relationships among strangers. It is fluid and susceptible to change.
2. According to theory of relatedness kinship is a “process of becoming kin where people get related to a network of relation beyond marriage and biology. Therefore kinship was not to be regarded as fixed or given entity or as a process to be discovered in terms of blood relation nor negotiated by affinal network. Kinship is rather a process which is constructed and assigned meaning in everyday interaction through sharing of food, residence and friendship bond.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Women are associated with the hearth and play a central ritual role during the establishment and construction of a new house.
2. The notion of siblingship comes into play even before birth and continues to influence a person’s fortunes throughout life. The placenta (*uri*) that surrounds the child in the womb is considered the child’s sibling. The foetus and placenta together constitute a ‘sibling set’

Check Your Progress 4

1. Fictive kinship refers to social, quasi or pseudo kinship is a common concept in anthropology and the social sciences. It refers to individuals unrelated by birth or

marriage who label or treat one another as kin. It involves extension of kinship obligations and relations to individuals specifically not otherwise included in the kinship universe.

2. Two forms of fictive kinship are-

- a. Feast of Souls- This refers to the use of ceremony to identify kinship ties between participants.
- b. Sorority among American communities-This is a club or organisation of women, usually young and commonly students, formed mainly for social purposes as well as for helping each other out in times of trouble or need.



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UNIT 10 KINSHIP AND GENDER*

Structure

10.0 Objectives

10.1. Introduction

10.2. Classical Anthropology and Question of Gender

10.2.1 Patriarchal Hold on Kinship Roles

10.2.2 Descent and Gender

10.2.3 Universality of the Private/Public Domains

10.2.4 Conflicting Identities of Women within Kinship

10.3. Re-examining Kinship from a Gender Lens

10.3.1 Challenges to Existing Knowledge

10.3.2 1970s onwards changes

10.4 Feminist Understanding in Early Anthropology

10.4.1 Friedrich Engels

10.4.2 Margaret Mead

10.5 Feminist Anthropologist (1980s onwards)

10.5.1 Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako

10.5.2 Marilyn Strathern

10.5.3 Leela Dube

10.5.4 Raheja and Gold

10.6 Contemporary Feminist Debates

10.7 Let Us Sum Up

10.8 References

10.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

10.0 OBJECTIVES

- Examine the nature of gender bias in classical anthropological studies
- Explain how analysis of gender leads to reformulation of prevailing assumptions in kinship studies.
- Include women's perspectives in how kinship plays out in everyday lived experience

- Refute stereotypes regarding women's gender roles and behaviour in light of the studies done by pre-feminist and feminist anthropologist
- Discuss the significance of feminist anthropologist for understanding kinship through gender lens.

10.1 INTRODUCTION

Anthropological studies on kinship have carried a gender bias through their reliance on primarily male informants as sources of information in their role as interpreters of their cultural tradition. For instance, in India where successful imposition of restrictions on women's mobility, visibility and voice is seen as a testimony of status and honour, the women's perspective is inaccessible to the researcher. Thus, although kinship plays out in the domestic realm, which is propagated as the domain of women, several kinship accounts remain one-sided because they only account for the male perspective. Since social codes do not allow easy access to women, the views of men are assumed to represent whole of society. Women's desires, roles and status are open to male interpretation and control. The women's own view on kinship ties remains largely unexplored in classical anthropological studies.

It was only with the coming of feminist anthropologist that gender and kinship came to be bound together due to the realisation among both anthropologists and feminists that theorising kinship by discounting women as a contributing category would make kinship accounts incomplete and biased in favour of men. In this unit, we will examine the gender, bias, feminist contribution that led to the re-examination of kinship.

10.2 CLASSICAL ANTHROPOLOGY AND QUESTION OF GENDER

Most of the early monographs in anthropology were grounded in perspectives determined by the interests of largely male ethnographers. There was an absence of any documentation on women's involvement in households and domestic arrangements, trade, exchange, labour, religion, and economic life. The difference between men and women was assumed as natural and difference determined economic and political structures.

In classical anthropology, the study of kinship was usually centred on males and this is evident in the following:

1. Evolutionary models explain the origin and development of human society by giving weight to the male role of hunting without much consideration of female gathering
2. Descent approach where the starting point of kinship relation is the male ego
3. Alliance theories where marriage system was analysed in terms of the exchanges men make using women to weave their networks.

Since most anthropologists were men themselves, access to ethnographic field sites largely occurred through male community members who would then serve as the experts of their social milieu? It was naively assumed that the male cultural perspective was equally representative of the female one. This oversight also stemmed from a surprising unwillingness to ask about matters of sexuality or investigate the gendered dimensions of power and prestige in traditional communities. There was an unwillingness to ask about matters of sexuality or investigate the gendered dimensions of power and prestige in traditional communities.

10.2.1 The Male-Centric View within Kinship and Patriarchal Hold on Kinship Roles

Gender inequality emerges from the fact that men exercise their domination and control within the domestic sphere through the practice of patriarchy. "Patriarchy rests on defined notions of masculine and feminine, is held in place by sexual and property arrangements that privilege men's choices, desires and interests over and above those of women in their lives and is sustained by social relationships and cultural practices that celebrate heterosexuality, female fertility and motherhood and valorise female subordination to masculine authority" (V. Geetha, 2007: 8)

Patriarchy, operating in both the public and private sphere of society, empowers men to make rules and use their access to the public arena to make norms that are disadvantageous to women while proving advantageous to men. Following this, kinship rules are based on the male perceptions of kinship roles and responsibilities. Ideal womanhood is represented by what men defined as acceptable and expected of women. Thus, women's position within the family is exalted through domestic roles of mother, sister, daughter and wife with emphasis on responsibilities towards care and nurture of the family and household.

Women's experience of being considered secondary to men is seen in numerous forms---disempowering childhood socialisation, limited mobility, lack of access to education, healthcare, nutrition, property and inheritance rights and representation in law, politics and

the workplace. According to Bina Agarwal, the household and family, far from its function as equaliser, supporter and insurer of justice, becomes the focal point of disturbingly unequal gender relations by placing men contribution in production over women's role in reproduction (V.Geetha, 2007:74). Even women who do contribute to production are seen as adding almost secondary, negligible value.

According to Rajni Palriwala (1999), who studied the role of patriliney in influencing women's access to property and residence in the Shekhawati region of Rajasthan, the reason behind women's compliance to unequal gender codes is their economic dependence on men, caused either by complete absence or minimalistic and unacknowledged income generating opportunities. It is thus expected that women would be submissive, unaware and unassertive in their social existence.

10.2.2 Descent and Gender

Descent groups form the entry point into accessing jural authority and geneology. These become the basis of political organisation. Where patrilineal descent is followed, men exercise authority within the household and over property because descent is traced in the male line. The position of women tends to be low.

Even in societies following matrilineal descent, where descent is traced through the female, her brother has control over property is vested in the hands of the eldest brother. So here too, women's position is lower to a man in terms of enjoying authority. However, variation can exist within different regions following matrilineal descent. In matrilineal societies, property is passed down the female line, household organisation and family rituals centre on female relatives, making women more autonomous. According to TiplutNongbri, among the Khasis in Meghalaya, lack of bias towards women in inheritance rights may not always be advantageous because resentful men may always contest this right. On the other hand, Leela Dube points out that in the Lakshadweep Islands, matriliney is welcomed by men as they feel their interests are also taken care of in this system (V.Geetha, 2007).

10.2.3 The Universality of the Public/Private Domains

In terms of the gendered dichotomy of the public/private domains, men's status depends upon their identification with the public sphere of production resulting in their exalted identification within the family as breadwinners. Women's accomplishments are weighed in

the private or domestic sphere of reproduction as mothers and nurturers and thus kept their access to work, politics minimum if not altogether absent.

The assumption that there exist two distinct domains where women and men operate according to their socially designated separate roles and responsibilities is problematic. It ignores the diversity of societies that refute these dichotomies in the face of female headed households, absentee fathers, stay-at-home fathers, poverty; making double incomes mandatory and thus not affording women the 'luxury' of the domestic domain alone.

10.2.4 Conflicting Identities of Women within Kinship

New studies in anthropology give women a chance to share the experiences of their lived reality and thus provide competing images to women's assumed subordinate nature. One such aspect of women's lives has to do with the assumed complex character of their fertility and sexuality brought together under the purview of societal norms.

Motherhood is associated with emphasis on women's fertility. However, acknowledgement of female sexuality remains rare due to its association with shame. The varied connotations that are subsumed in the image of the ideal woman in India covers a wide spectrum---from their association with procreation to their image as keepers of male honour. While the former carries the expectation of active sexual interest necessary for attainment of motherhood, the latter emphasises maintenance of chastity and purity, especially. This split image of women is considered conflicting and unreasonably demanding of women, believed to keep them in a constant state of flux with regard to fulfilment of kin role expectations. For instance, based on whether they are in the marital or natal home, women enjoy differing privileges and constraints as wives and sisters. Women's contrasting roles within the kinship system of status are based on the divergent natal and marital relationships, that is, daughters and sisters on the one hand and wives and son's wives on the other. This shows the idea of conflict between women's sexuality and fertility.

This is well explained in the case of many societies where women's kin roles prioritise fertility, since motherhood is the primary duty of a married woman. However, overt sexual desire must never be expressed by women. Thus, women's voices remain marginalised in addressing behaviour imposed by kinship norms. Kinship rules remain male oriented. The demand to remain ritually chaste only applies to women, not men.

Check Your Progress 1

1. Discuss how patrilineal system subordinates the status of women.

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2. What does public-private dichotomy mean? How does it help in understanding the relation between kinship and gender?

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10.3 RE-EXAMINING KINSHIP FROM GENDER LENS

Anthropologists keen on elaborating undermined realms of kinship found gender to be an unexplored dimension within kinship studies. This quest gained popularity in recent years with Schneider's efforts to draw attention to the specific ways in which variant cultures at a given point of time and the same culture at different points of time defines kinship. **Feminists** began their quest to understand the social construction of gender by examining ethnographies for information on the position of women. Most of what they found regarding women's lives was contained in chapters on kinship, marriage and family. Thus, it was understood that kinship was an ideal starting point for understanding women's place in society. The way to make kinship studies holistic in gender terms required placing women at the centre, as subjects of inquiry and as active agents in the gathering of knowledge (Strathern, 1987:277).

The resultant ethnographic work, undertaken on gender, recast and remodelled notions about both gender and kinship. The effort that had started with an attempt to simply ensure inclusion and representation of women in anthropological accounts opened up an entirely new realm of knowledge based on examination of women's perception of their own lives. Through increased attention to women within the purview of kinship, several stereotypes were broken and realities were made known.

10.3.1 Challenges to Existing Knowledge

Recent studies following on the cultural approach examined the link between kinship and gender. These studies have afforded valuable insights into the working of gender and its influence of kinship like descent, property rights, residence, expectation of assistance from kin during crisis situations etc. however, several notions about gender norms and roles have also been challenged. Clarifications were required to dispel misleading accounts of kinship.

Assumptions regarding uniformity of gender organisation in kinship systems around the world, universality of meanings of masculinity, femininity and the third gender, acceptance of western equation between biological sex and culturally constituted gender roles rather than indigenous insights of a particular culture, the prominence and extent of patriarchy---all need to be re-examined to incorporate indigenous interpretations from societies studied before drawing conclusions regarding relationship between gender and kinship. The meaning of 'power' needs to be clarified before making claims to gender asymmetry. Historical changes that depicted the lack of isolation and stagnation of the social structure of a society due to interaction with external forces could be an important source of additional knowledge on kinship and gender (Tsing and Yanagisako, 1983:511).

10.3.2 1970s Feminist on Kinship

It was only by 1970s that feminist anthropology was formally recognized as a sub-discipline of anthropology. Feminist questioned some of the core assumptions in anthropology:

- Universal subordination of women
- Domestic vs public domain
- Universal binaries of nature vs culture
- Kinship centred around heterosexual relations and reproduction
- Father-son relations as reference point for conceptualising kinship

Universal subordination of women is often cited as one of the true cross - cultural universals, a pan cultural fact. Engels called it the "world historical defeat of women" even so the particulars of women's roles, statuses, power, and value differ tremendously by culture. Gender differences and gender role assignment not universal but culturally specific. The dichotomy between the two spheres has been very durable in anthropology. It is present in the descent theory, alliance theory and studies of marriage transactions. It was through ethnographic information, as the domestic and politico-jural domains of Fortes', suggested

why women's association with the 'domestic' might make them and their activities seem universally less valued than the activities and attributes of 'public' men. At the heart of kinship theory lies an analytic dichotomy between 'domestic' and 'political-jural' domains. This dichotomy used by Morgan and Fortes remained influential in anthropology and related discipline.

At the base of kinship theories lay a dichotomy and a separation between the domestic domain and the public/politico-jural domain. It is assumed that the domestic domain is largely marked by the mother-child bond and the basic constitution of this domain is 'natural' as compared to the public domain which is constituted of politico-jural facts. Again, it is assumed that the domestic domain is largely involved in fulfilling sexual and child-bearing roles and the public domain is related with authority, power, legal rules etc.

The domestic domain is therefore primarily associated with women and the public domain with men. Feminist anthropologists have shown that it is no longer adequate to view the two domain as separate. They question the view which associates women as bringing to kinship primarily a capacity for bearing children, while men bring primarily a capacity for participation in public life. Difference between men and women socially constructed to assign unequal position and role in society.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Discuss two ways in which feminist anthropology re-defined kinship after 1970s.

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10.4 FEMINIST UNDERSTANDING IN EARLY ANTHROPOLOGY

The early feminist anthropologist produced a number of important works documenting the lives of women in areas which had previously been omitted from ethnographic accounts. Women's involvement in households and domestic arrangements, trade, exchange, labour, religion, and economic life was interpreted in detail, making the gaps in previous cross-cultural studies all too visible. In this, we will look at the contribution of four anthropologist whose works provide the foundation for understanding the relation between kinship and gender.

10.4.1 Fredrich Engels- *The Origin of Family, Private Property and the State* (1884)

Engels argued that the traditional monogamous household was in fact a recent construct, closely bound up with capitalist societies. In primitive communism- there was no private property of land or materials and this meant that human relationships were based on egalitarian principles. Engels shows how the state machinery develops as classes arise, with the needs of one group (the ruling class) to protect its interests and its wealth.

Engles provided a historical evolutionary perspective by women were seen as shifting from free and equal productive members of society to subordinate and dependent wife and ward. The two main factors responsible for this change were firstly the growth of private property and secondly the emergence of family as institution for appropriation and exploitation. For Engels economic need is principal for defining the institution of family. Engels concluded that the absence of private property made men's productive work and women's household work of equal significance.

Karan Sack questions the way in which women are worse off in non-class societies. Also the argument that women became subordinate as a result of male private property (women are not the complete equals of men in non-class societies lacking private property). Capitalism has further extended class based inequality in gender relation by relegating women to the bottom of a social hierarchy. Sacks suggestion for solution for social equality-private family work must become public work.

10.4.2 Margaret Mead

Margaret Mead was one of the earliest feminist anthropologists to have clearly differentiated between sex and gender as categories of anthropological thought. In her anthropological work, she separated the biological factors from the cultural factors that control human behavior and personality development. She analysed the pervasive sexual asymmetry that fit well with their reading of the ethnographic literature.

Her work. *'Sex and Temperament in Three Primitive Societies* (1935) & *Male and Female* (1949) was one of the first to critique a universal assumption of biologically determined male or female traits or roles. She argued that the relation between men and women were neither "natural" nor culturally universal rather femininity and masculinity were culturally specific. Temperamental differences between the sexes were culturally determined

rather than innate biological. Different patterns of male and female behaviour in each of the cultures she studied.

Box 1 Three societies studied by Margret Mead

- *Arapesh*- child-rearing responsibilities evenly divided among men and women
- *Mundugumor*-a natural hostility exists between all members of the same sex”.
- *Tchambuli*-While men were preoccupied with art the women had the real power, controlling fishing and manufacturing.

10.5 FEMINIST ANTHROPOLOGIST (1980S ONWARDS)

Throughout the 20th century and the rise of sociocultural anthropology, the meaning and significance of gender to the discipline has shifted. In early ethnographic studies, gender was often synonymous with kinship or family, and a monograph might include just a single chapter on women or family issues. Feminist challenged the simple “add women and stir” model of ethnography and sought to bring attention to structural inequalities, the role of economic disparities, global dimensions to gender politics, the role of language, sexuality and masculinity studies, and health and human rights.

Feminist anthropologists turned to kinship studies for tools to understand women’s place in society and possibilities of change. Feminist anthropologists challenged the classical interpretations of gender and culture by situating women’s work at the centre of anthropological study. Feminist anthropology emerged in response to the recognition that across the sub-disciplines, anthropology operated within androcentric paradigms. Early questions ranged from identifying women in the anthropological record to explaining universal female subordination.

10.5.1 Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Yanagisako

In 1987 Jane Fishburne Collier and Sylvia Junko Yanagisako described their goal as putting gender "at the theoretical core of anthropology" by "calling into question the boundary between [the] two fields" of gender and kinship. Collier and Yanagisako questioned the degree to which discussions of women's lives were relegated to considerations of the domestic sphere and to reproductive function. They repudiated assumptions (explicit or

implicit) that the maternal-child relation is invariant across time and space, and they cast suspicion on the tendency to see historical change as a factor relevant only to political and economic systems in the public domain, while familial life was presumed to be constant and unchanging. Finally, they discerned in structural-functionalist writings an erroneous presumption that all societies have institutional functions that are comparable, even when the forms of their institutions differ.

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10.5.2 Marilyn Strathern

She explores kinship relations after the coming of the new age reproductive technologies. This work is based on the late-twentieth century English culture, the consumer and their choice of procreation using new technologies. Herein, Strathern argues that the new technologies have brought a new meaning 'nature' which was earlier taken for granted. Technological developments have opened up avenues which were earlier not available to the consumer resulting in destabilisation of earlier notion of nature. She explores kinship relations after the coming of the new age reproductive technologies. This work is based on the late-twentieth century English culture, the consumer and their choice of procreation using new technologies. Herein, Strathern argues that the new technologies have brought a new meaning 'nature' which was earlier taken for granted. Technological developments have opened up avenues which were earlier not available to the consumer resulting in destabilisation of earlier notion of nature.

Marilyn Strathern's, *'After Nature'*, (1992) is one such work which had taken Schneider's work forward. *After Nature* explores kinship relations after the coming of the new age reproductive technologies. This work is based on the late-twentieth century English culture, the consumer and their choice of procreation using new technologies. Herein, Strathern argues that the new technologies have brought a new meaning 'nature' which was earlier taken for granted. Technological developments have opened up avenues which were earlier not available to the

consumer resulting in destabilisation of earlier notion of nature. The effects of new technologies such as sperm banks, in vitro fertilisation (IVF) and surrogate motherhood which allow one to choose rather than nature take its course leads to question in kinship relations. Strathern reflects upon the new age technological developments in the reproduction system as significant shift and states that what has been taken as natural has now become a matter of choice, nature has been 'enterprised-up'. The more nature is assisted by technology, the more social recognition of parenthood circumscribed by legislation, the more difficult it becomes to think of nature as independent of social intervention (1992b:30).

10.5.3 Leela Dube

Leela Dube's was Indian anthropologist who examined the gendered dimension of kinship system in India. Her book, *Women and Kinship: Comparative Perspectives on Gender in South and South-East Asia* (1997), is one of the pioneering works in this field. Her work is based on the comparative study of Hindus, Muslims and Christians in India, high caste Parbatiya Hindus and Newars of Nepal, Muslims of Bangladesh and Pakistan, bilateral Malaya Muslims of Peninsular Malaysia, the bilateral Javanese and matrilineal Minangkabau of western Sumatra and their offshoot in Negri Semblian, the Buddhist Thai, and the lowland Christian Filipinos (1997: 2). Dube's main concern was to find out how gender roles were conceived and enacted, how men and women are viewed and the implications thereof in the maintenance and reproduction of a social system. The major aim was to understand the differences in kinship systems and family structures that account for the variations in gender roles in different societies.

Dube's work takes into account the various aspects of kinship i.e., marriage, conjugal relations, implications of residence, rights over space and children, family structures and kin networks, work, female sexuality, and limits set by bodily processes in a comparative study. The study depicted a striking difference in the two regions. South-East Asian women showed extraordinary level of independence in economic and social life and social equality between the sexes was also seen due to the exposure of education. This contrasted majorly with the situation in South Asia, characterised by strong patrilineal, patrilocal family structure, women lacks knowledge in terms of their rights, and concerns about female sexuality. Catholic influences have reflected in constraints on the womenfolk in Filipino, though in legal matters in Philippines and Thailand, women enjoyed equal rights in terms of inheritance and

other resources. The law allow equitable division of conjugal property and in terms of custody of children; another's status is always strong.

Dube draws upon Schneider and Gough's work of 1961 to reflect upon the universal argument that in all societies 'males' exercise authority, while in a patrilineal society line of descent and authority converge. It is basically a conflict among men to wield authority, be it matrilineal or patrilineal society. Yet again there are instances which state otherwise, like in Lakshadweep island of Kalpeni it was seen that concentration of authority was on an elderly woman of the village respected by kinship statuses that have considerable influence (L. Dube 1991a, b, 1993, 1994).

Thus, Dube's work portrayed critical differences in South Asia and South-East Asia and also within each region. Dube has stated that close scrutiny makes one realise that in both types of unilineal descent system it is necessary to underplay the role of one parent- that of the father in matrilineality and that of the mother in patrilineality. Herein, she cites examples of other works done in this regard of Postel Coster (1987), Prindiville (1981) who have stated that in matrilineal and patrilineal kinship there is less flexibility in formation of groups and in the exercise of interpersonal relationships than there is in bilateral kinship. Natural differences between males and females are believed to affect social organisation and rights and obligations (Women and Kinship: 154).

10.5.4 Raheja and Gold

Raheja and Gold explore women's oral tradition in North India as a form of agency and resistance. Focusing on marriage and birth songs, stories and narratives, the authors demonstrate how the women in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, through multiply positioned voices, recreate their identities through sexualised lyrics. The authors highlight the women's critical perspectives on gender subordinating kinship systems. There is a series of chapters analysing women's songs and stories which are performed at various life-cycle rituals and other festivals in Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh.

This fundamental theme is encapsulated in the symbolism of the heron of the book's title. In predominantly male performance genres, the heron symbolises predatory hypocrisy and the dichotomous split between purity and corruption. In women's texts, however, 'Hérons act as narrators, inviting listeners to consider tales of illicit encounters, resistance to dominating

power, or both' (p. xi). The heron thus introduces us to alternative views of gender, sexuality and kinship, which are 'shaped by women but are sometimes shared by men'.

Through her study, Ann Gold poses important insights into women's views on fertility and sexuality that cast kinship in a new light. Taking on over 21 months of fieldwork on oral traditions, Gold analysed the meanings of lyrics of songs sung by women in Ghatiyali, a Rajasthan village. After studying the themes that the songs covered, from adultery, to desire to explicit references to sexual relations to attainment of motherhood, Gold admits that she no longer believes in the absolute compliance of women to uphold the pious, chaste cultural image of Hindu women. This image is a stereotype about Hindu women in rural North India. Since most kinship norms are a depiction of men's expectations of women's ideal behaviour, women did not outright forfeit these norms, but neither do they remain mute, compliant, passive participants in carrying out society's expectations. According to Gold, for the women she interacted with, the lyrics of the songs became ways to portray their displeasure, anger and frustration at the often confining rules they are forced to comply with.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Discuss the contribution of Leela Dube in understanding the gendered dimension of kinship in India.

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10.6 CONTEMPORARY FEMINIST DEBATES

Many of the concerns that fuelled the emergence of feminist anthropology has changed yet the underlying questions related to power continues to influence them. Gradually the most recent works in gender and anthropology came to encompass a wide range of perspectives that challenge Western or monolithic assumptions about women and the experience of gender. For example, non-Western writing on gender illustrates how varied the experience of feminism can be in contemporary contexts where religious beliefs, development experiences, and the very role of language can influence understandings of gender. The study of women,

men, and the intersections of gender across cultures has become a key aspect of any holistic study or methodological approach in anthropology today.

Contemporary feminists are no longer interested in the issue of gender asymmetry because it does not provide a holistic understanding of society. Now they are more focused in finding answer to question of intersectionality, that is the inter relation between gender, kinship, race and, ethnicity. Rather than being restricted to the difference between men and women, the concern is with the differences existing among women themselves from different race, religion and having multiple identities. Power remains the core concern of feminist anthropology analysis, since it constructs and is constructed by identity. Studies now include areas of production and work, reproduction and sexuality, and gender and the state.

10.7 LET US SUM UP

Examination of gender portrayed through folk songs gives alternative portrait of south Asian womanhood. Contrary to the western stereotypical notions of Asian women being invisible, undervalued and voiceless, the songs depict the easy balance that women maintain within their kinship role in the domestic sphere. Their contribution is valued rather than ignored, as is seen in the celebration of women's sexuality and procreative abilities. Women have found ways to subvert their oppression and assert their rights and desires within the patriarchal set-up, although in a subtle form through mockery in songs in place of direct confrontation. Folklore gives images of female nature as sexuality understood as not rampantly destructive but rather seeking mutuality with males. Women's songs portray desire as procreative, stressing communal fertility i.e., sexual and maternal aspects seem fused rather than split, generative rather than destructive. The songs construct female sexuality as unified, auspicious and creative rather than destructive. They combine the sexual and maternal aspects of female nature. Exploration of women's views about the kinship structure they are part of, the ways in which they manage their existence within these kinship boundaries and the extent to which they can break out of these pre-given norms that define kinship depicts how essential gender is in recasting understanding of kinship.

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10.9SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. The patrilineal line of descent recognises the male blood for sharing of residence and succession. It is also based on patri-local residence whereby women have to leave their house and stay in the house of their husband. Because of the shift in residence on marriage, women

are considered as transferable property. Further in patrilineal society, women have no ownership of property and no rights in inherited property.

2. At the heart of kinship theory lies an analytic dichotomy between 'domestic' and 'political-jural' domains also referred as private-public dichotomy. This dichotomy used by Morgan and Fortes remained influential in anthropology and related discipline. It was through ethnographic information, as the domestic and politico-jural domains of Fortes', suggested why women's association with the 'domestic' might make them and their activities seem universally less valued than the activities and attributes of 'public' men.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Feminist questioned some of the core assumptions in anthropology:

- Universal subordination of women
- Domestic vs public domain
- Universal binaries of nature vs culture
- Kinship centred around heterosexual relations and reproduction
- Father-son relations as reference point for conceptualizing kinship

Check Your Progress 3

Dube's main concern was to find out how gender roles were conceived and enacted, how men and women are viewed and the implications thereof in the maintenance and reproduction of a social system. The major aim was to understand the differences in kinship systems and family structures that accounts for the variations in gender roles in different societies. Thus, Dube's work portrayed critical differences in South Asia and South-East Asia and also within each region. Dube has stated that close scrutiny makes one realise that in both types of unilineal descent system it is necessary to underplay the role of one parent- that of the father in matriliney and that of the mother in patriliney.

UNIT 11 NEW REPRODUCTIVE TECHNOLOGY (NRT) AND KINSHIP*

Structure

11.0 Objectives

11.1 Introduction

11.2 Understanding NRT in Kinship Studies

11.2.1 What is New Reproductive Technology?

11.2.2 Shift in the Focus of Kinship Studies

11.2.3 Redefining meaning of Motherhood and Maternity

11.3 Understanding Kinship through NRT: The Case of Israel

11.3.1 Making mothers through technology

11.3.2 Maternity, Identity and Nation

11.3.2 Concerns Resulting from Use of NRT in Israel

11.4 Sociological Relevance of NRT

11.4.1 Technology and Patriarchy

11.4.2 Enhance Women's access to and Control Over Technology

11.4.3 Allows for Formation of 'Families by Choice'

11.5 Negative Impacts of NRT on Family and Kinship

11.6 Let Us Sum Up

11.7 References

11.8 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

11.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Discuss new reproductive technologies or NRT
- Examine how NRT is transforming prior definitions in kinship
- Explain how NRT is changing the meaning of maternity/paternity
- Examine the application of NRT with reference to fertility clinics
- Note the reception of NRT in Society

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11.1 INTRODUCTION

The innovations in reproductive technology are changing the meaning of concepts central to kinship such as motherhood, personhood and parenthood. As a consequence of reproductive technologies, the boundaries between the biological and social basis of kinship have become blurred. No doubt it has revolutionised the act of birthing. Birth is no longer only a biological event but has is now a social event as it creates relationships. Reproductive technologies challenge previously held cultural constructions of kinship and bring about new kinds of social relations in that kinship boundaries are redefined. In this unit, we will explore the new reproductive technology and how it has transformed the act of procreation thereby allowing for the recasting the understanding the meaning of reproduction, motherhood, maternity and son on.

In our first section we will try and understand what are New Reproductive Technologies (NTR). The development of NRT paved ways for formation of family and increased the possibility to reproduce beyond biology. It has led to a cultural understanding of family and kinship. So in our subsequent sections we shall examine how some of the received notions of kinship which tend to be based on biological base have been debunked. In the sections following this we shall look at the nature of fertility clinics and their acceptance or rejections and the disadvantages and advantages of NTRs.

11.2. UNDERSTANDING NRT IN KINSHIP STUDIES

Reproductive technologies are a ray of hope for those unable to bear children by the process of natural conception or choose means other than biological conception to establish a family. Examples of the former include married infertile couples, while the latter includes queer community and those aiming at single parenthood. Thus, technology is changing notions of family, parenthood, gender roles and marriage within kinship studies under the influence of reproductive technologies. NRT have made it clear that descent and alliance are not the only basis of forging kinship.

While NRT demarcate the possibility of furthering biological kinship, despite procreative challenges, whether these are recognised as kin relations is a much more complex question.

Their acceptance has not been uniform in societies where they are practiced. This is because in different cultures the strict codes for inclusion of the progeny as a legitimate member of society based on the manner of conception varies. While some societies lay emphasis on procreation concerning only biological parents, others incorporate technological innovation more readily, thereby accepting involvement of larger number of people in the process of conception and childbirth. Other than the biological parents, medical practitioners and the state become part of the system of reproduction.

Societal norms that restrict interaction between certain groups due to their perceived inequality in terms of class, ethnicity, race, caste, religion etc., do not take kindly to medical procedures that overlook these very considerations in regards to patients and donors. Those societies that allow use of NRT ensure strict checks and controls to avoid breakage of ethical and religious codes.

Reproductive technologies are not a new phenomenon—the world's first test tube baby, Louisa Brown, was born in the U.K. in 1978. But the development of these procedures as a specialised branch within biogenetics to correct or circumvent infertility is recent. Reproductive technologies are a result of developments in biotechnology. It marked a shift from nature to choice by opening up possibilities of parenthood to those otherwise hampered by biology. For example, infertility, same sex couples or singles, divorcees, widows/widowers, that is, those without a sexual partner. The development of NRT paved ways for formation of family and increased the possibility to reproduce beyond biology. It has led to a cultural understanding of family and kinship.

11.2.1 What is New Reproductive Technology (NRT)?

New Reproductive Technology refers to technologies that intervene in the biological act of procreation. It can facilitate, prevent or intervene in the process of reproduction including birthing, contraception, abortion and antenatal testing. NRT is also referred as assisted reproduction.

NRT has been classified into three main categories: (Jary, David and Julia Jary, 2000:515)

- a) **Managerial technologies**, which includes the management of pre-pregnancy, pregnancy and birth

- b) **Contraceptive technologies**, which can be non-interventionist like diaphragm or condom, or involves use of hormone suppressants, intra-uterine devices and sterilization
- c) **Conceptive technologies**, including artificial insemination, surrogacy, fertility drugs, embryo donation and in-vitro fertilisation.

The most prominent reference for understanding NRT is In-vitro Fertilisation (IVF). In this procedure eggs are surgically removed from one woman's ovaries and transferred into another woman's womb in order to create reproductive possibilities. NRT is not only a medical device, but also an institution that allows the "creation of parenthood, thus giving way to new forms of procreation (Heritier 1985). NRT requires the intervention of human, machine and medical professional to make reproductive choices available to individuals. The inherent requirement of third party in reproduction has impacted the understanding of kinship.

11.2.3 Redefining Meaning of Motherhood and Maternity

Reproductive technologies have changed the way we think about motherhood. Earlier, motherhood was seen as culturally and legally established through genetic kinship claims based on a nuclear family structure. Today reproductive technologies have allowed for a new legitimization of motherhood and thereby widening the scope of motherhood to include a wide range of possibilities that no longer rest on simple biological claims and the traditional nuclear family model.

This challenges the normative family model and destabilises societal understandings of motherhood because the "mother" may involve an egg donor or a surrogate, or be two fathers or a grandmother, or involve more participants than the intended parent. It is evident; therefore, that motherhood may no longer be defined solely by having birthing rights over the child.

The origin of maternity as a biological phenomenon is often challenged with the development of ovum-related technologies. By dividing biological roles of motherhood into genetic (eggs) and gestation (wombs), these new technologies force conceptual fragmentations of maternity as well. As soon as eggs are surgically removed from one woman's ovaries and transferred into another woman's womb, reproductive possibilities are created.

Check Your Progress 1

1. What are new reproductive technologies?

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2. What is In Vitro Fertilisation or IVF?

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11.2.2 Shift in the Focus of Kinship Studies

The cultural approach that emerged in the 1970s stressed on the fluid and ever-changing nature of kinship relations. In recent years, these changes have been furthered by developments in biotechnology based reproductive procedures. These are adding new dimensions of how kinship is understood differently in different cultures. Family no longer remains only biological, but rather is also defined by genetics and technology. Marriage is now an option rather than a compulsion in order to experience becoming a parent.

NRT show how the meanings of the terms motherhood and fatherhood depends on the way these are conceptualised in different societies. They are both social constructions, especially with reference to new reproductive technologies. Before these technologies became available, the facts of nature could not be denied. Fertilization, gestation and parturition could not be separated. NRT has separated conception from birth. It has brought to question not only who the child's father is but also who the child's mother is (earlier maternity was obvious although paternity could be suspect). If the egg belongs to one mother and womb to the other then the question arises as to who is the genetrix.

One of the key scholars leading the way in challenging the is David Schneider, who incorporate narratives from varied societies . He has been instrumental in shifting the focus of kinship from fixed and static assumptions of kinship; as defined by function, social structure

and rules, to consideration of the diversity based on cultural variations in meanings from the perspective of people as they experienced kin relationships in their everyday lives.

In studying American kinship, Schneider's views reflect the fluidity in kinship he himself advocated. He stated that kinship was based on ideas about 'shared biogenetic substance' and 'enduring diffused solidarity'. According to him, American references to biology in discussions on family had no necessary relation to biology as a natural process but rather to cultural constructs and were essentially symbolic. 'In American cultural conception, kinship is defined as biogenetic. This definition says that kinship is whatever the biogenetic relationship is. If science discovers new facts about biogenetic relationship, then that is what kinship is and was all along, although it may not have been known at the time' (Schneider 1980: 23).

Schneider makes room for innovations in biogenetics technology as having a place in redefining kinship. The manner in which relations are recognised as kin and accordingly nurtured over time need not be only based on biological links. Parenthood is not restricted to biological procreation. Options like adoption, foster care have always existed in various societies across time and place. But the biogenetic link missing from these options makes them seem like a compromise in the eyes of society emphasising on relationship of blood within social parameters of caste, race, ethnicity and religion. Certain procedures in technological reproduction result in biogenetic links with those other than the socially recognised parents, but parenthood is denied to the person contributing the biological factor in such cases.

According to Marilyn Strathern, instead of technology leading to less attention being given to societal considerations, the increased use of technology means increased social intervention through legislation on parenthood (Carsten, 2000: 10). Reproduction no longer remains within the personal realm. It is controlled and sanctioned with permission from the state, medical authorities and legislative mechanisms.

11.2.3 Redefining Meaning of Motherhood and Maternity

In traditional theories, motherhood was the outcome of union between a man and women for purpose of procreation and formation of biological family. The creation of children through laboratories has led to rethinking of the biological mode of understanding motherhood and

maternity. New Reproductive Technologies have challenged the traditional understanding of the relationship between women and reproduction. It has given more reproductive choice to women individuals, giving more space for women to exercise her rights outside biology and nuclear family. Motherhood is no longer conflated with family. There were several other motivations for women to experience motherhood other than forming biological family.

The definition of motherhood and maternity has shifted away from simple genetic ties to more varied and complex structures. The scope of motherhood has widened to include infertile women, women beyond child-bearing age, same-sex couples and single mother (unmarried). Reproduction and experience of motherhood is no longer only a natural process but something that is constructed in fertility clinics. Reproductive technology has challenged the societal norms associated with motherhood. Society placed values in defining motherhood and women were burdened by the culturally embedded expectations. The origin of maternity as a biological phenomenon has also been challenged with the development of ovum-related technologies. By dividing biological roles of motherhood into genetic (eggs) and gestation (wombs), these new technologies force conceptual fragmentations of maternity. As soon as eggs are surgically removed from one woman's ovaries and transferred into another woman's womb, reproductive possibilities are created. It raises the most fundamental question—"who the actual mother is?" The answer is a choice between either the woman who donates the eggs (genetic) or the woman who carries the child pregnancy (gestation), following the traditional dictum that paternity is established at conception and maternity at birth. There is also the possibility of having two mothers – one who donated egg and one who takes care. And the third option could be an extreme situation where a child born of IVF, egg donation might be motherless as a result of confusion regarding who should be the mother. This with NRT, motherhood and maternity may no longer be defined solely by the biological process of procreation.

11.3 UNDERSTANDING KINSHIP THROUGH NRT: THE CASE OF ISRAEL

Susan Martha Kahn in her work, 'Eggs and Wombs: The Origins of Jewishness' brings out the issue of NRT and how it has led to re-imaging of kinship. The work based on ethnographic study of fertility clinics in Israel. Israel has more fertility clinics than in other part of the world and has the world's highest per capita rate of in-vitro fertilization procedures. These

phenomena are not the result of unusually high rates of infertility in Israel but reflect the centrality of reproduction in Judaism and Jewish culture.

The study was carried out in a small religious Jewish hospital comprising of ultraorthodox Jews, Muslims, and Christians, where every procedure was carried out carefully under the purview of the Jewish law, thus making this 'hospital' religious. Unlike the other hospitals here one can see bookcases of prayer books rather than cafeteria, patient lounge. The procedures in the hospital were performed with the consideration of the Halakha (Jewish law and jurisprudence, based on the Talmud). Kahn's study of NRT in Israel depicts how local attitudes, efforts of the medical community, supportive government policies and rabbinic beliefs have affected the way this technology is received and used to incorporate new meanings of kinship.

11.3.1 Making Mothers Through Technology

The doctor told Kahn "isn't it amazing? We're making her a mother!" With this comment Dr. Benjamin made the connection between the medical realm of the operating room and the symbolic realm of kinship. She made explicit what was implicit, that this technology created a new way to make mothers, a new origin myth, as it were, for the beginning of motherhood. Mothers are now something that doctors make women into...the technological creation of motherhood (Kahn, 2004: 369).

Kinship is recast through technological advancement, which is helping people reconstruct their Jewish identity and ensure continuity of the group. The balance between technology, health and society has to be carefully maintained, keeping within the religious tenets of the Jewish community in Israel. With the use of new reproductive technology, Israeli culture has embraced use of technology in the biological conception without disregarding the hold of religious laws. Medical procedures are carried out while upholding all religious beliefs associated with conception, that is, a carefully balanced coexistence between science and religion in the conferring of motherhood. If the religious code is overlooked, the procedures may be stopped. This would be detrimental for the prospective mother, for the child to gain acceptance as a citizen, for the doctor's reputation and thus for development of the community as a whole.

11.3.2 Maternity, Identity and Nation

In Israel, maternity remains within the purview of religious laws because it not only defines belonging in terms of kinship, but also one's membership within the religious group and right to citizenship. Jewishness determines belongingness to a nation and acquirement of citizenship. Kinship identity is defined matrilineally, making the identity of the mother crucial if legitimacy is to be accorded to the child.

Since citizenship and identity is closely tied to maternity, procreation is closely managed under the rules given under religious codes, including in the use of NRT. The use of NRT is not imbibed smoothly. There are criticisms that such technologies challenge traditional beliefs about the origin of motherhood. Rabbis are confused whether to locate maternity in genetic substance of the egg, gestation environment of the womb or in both. These debates determine appropriate rules for conception of new Jewish citizens because Halakhic law regarding women's bodies has an impact on clinical protocol.

All procedures of assorted reproduction, extracting eggs from body, fertilising eggs and sperms and injecting embryo into women's womb, observed 'Jewishness'. The fertility clinic has a religious colour and helps in construction of Jewish identity. The clinic is regarded as religious because:

1. All treatments and procedures are performed under careful consideration of Jewish law.
2. The setting is not ostentatious with a bookcase full of prayer books in the waiting area.
3. The laboratory workers working at the clinic are closely observed, monitored and supervised by Maschgichot---Halakhic inspectors, to ensure that no mixing of sperm and egg due to use of same syringe, pipette or catheter from a previous procedure, which may carry traces of someone else's genetic material. These inspectors consider their work to be "holy work".
4. According to Halakha religious law, only married couples with fertility problems can avail of the treatment. It is not an option for unmarried women.
5. Flowcharts along with medical details of the patient. They contain reports of hormonal treatments, blood tests, temperature, ultrasound results and the date of immersion in Mikveh--- the ritual bath undertaken to ensure a state of purity and avoid impurity or a state of "niddah" prior to the woman undergoing the procedure engaging in sexual relation with her husband. This is also crucial to Halakhic concerns regarding conception.

The different allowances for determining maternity pose a problem in determining kinship especially in Israel, where religious identity is determined matrilineally and automatically confers citizenship.

11.3.2 Concerns Resulting from use of NRT in Israel

There is an emerging contradiction in Israeli society, which, on one hand, prioritises motherhood as the defining factor for women's standing in society and on the other hand puts conditions of legitimising the offspring by imposing expectations of conception within the purview of Halakhic laws.

The use of NRT is monitored and permitted under close scrutiny by upholders of religious laws. Those who opt for the use of NRT requires permission for undergoing the procedure. There are limitations on who can perform the procedure. Questions of motherhood with regard to whose egg and whose womb and thus who is the 'real' mother of the child born are challenges that remain unresolved and are contributing to the negative image of NRT. The religious parameters that may be required to be strictly observed during the procedure ---all depict the over-bearance of society over the couple opting for this procedure.

Manipulation of boundaries: keeping within the broad framework of religious codes under the traditional Halakhic ideas about purity- impurity overlooked in surgical protocol, there is considerable room for playing with the boundaries. For instance, the doctor may be under pressure to increase the number of IVF pregnancies in her unit in order to ensure getting clients to keep the business running. The doctor may be less forthcoming about the source of the bleeding during the IVF procedure. A patient undergoing treatment will not want to volunteer information to her Rabbi that may negatively impact her treatment. A rabbi may choose to give permission to a woman suffering from childlessness. It is also possible that Rabbis devise their own interpretation of who should be recognised as a mother. Determination of maternity has clearly been destabilised by ovum-related technology. But this technology is not looked at in the negative sense as posing a challenge to traditional orthodox beliefs. It is clear that the desire to attain motherhood plays a significant part in helping to overcome inhibitions regarding modern technology that may have emerged from Orthodox Jewish religious beliefs.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Discuss how citizenship and identity is closely tied to maternity in Israel.

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2. Mention any two challenges faced by fertility clinics in Israel.
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11.4 SOCIOLOGICAL RELEVANCE OF NRT

With advances in reproductive technologies, the aspiration to establish a biological family does not have to be compromised due to problems of infertility and sterility. The sphere of reproduction as characteristic to the personal or domestic sphere of the home was challenged by feminist thought. Feminists have called attention to the wrongful but accepted binary between male/female, mind/body, culture/ nature, production/reproduction.

11.4.1 Technology and Patriarchy

The option of NRT is especially useful in the context of patriarchy, which defines women primarily in terms of her reproductive capacity with emphasis on a genetic and blood link with the child. Reproduction is seen as a natural process over which men exert control through technological intervention. They have been blamed for promoting patriarchy and equating motherhood with womanhood, thus enforcing linear progression from marriage to childbirth by playing on the stigma of childlessness. ‘Women’s bodies are anesthetized, surgically invaded and intruded upon in the name of conceiving children’ (Kahn, 2004:363)

NRT is regarded by feminist critics as gender-fragmentation of women’s bodies into eggs and wombs, which dehumanises and objectifies women by promoting a view of their bodies as detachable parts that can be combined and recombined to create motherhood. Women desperate to become mothers are given a chance to become “complete” by using reproductive technological procedures.

11.4.2 Enhance women’s access to and control over technology

A positive viewpoint is that reproductive technology is liberating for women by helping them overcome their relegation to the domestic sphere by handing them control over their reproductive abilities—whether to conceive, when to conceive and how to conceive.

Those opting for NRT have to fend off social stigma as some individuals or social groups may consider NRT to violate certain conditions they feel are necessary for acceptance of the child as a member of their community. They may find uncertainty of traceable relatedness and social credentials of the donor parents involved and lack of commonality of religion, race and ethnicity unacceptable to carry out reproduction using technology that involves such persons.

There are mixed opinions about the appropriateness of using such technology. While some agree that technology is helpful to those facing problems in childbearing, others feel that reproductive technologies result in defamiliarising' of the natural basis of human procreation and reproduction (Carsten, 2000:11) and are evidence of oversights of social norms surrounding cultural and religious beliefs, as seen in the case of Israel in dilemmas facing rabbis and the face of NRT.

11.4.3 Allows for formation of 'families by choice'

Reproductive technologies have allowed formation of “families of choice” – same-sex, single parenthood and so on. The family by choice is an illustration of the fact that biology is not the only defining feature of kinship. People can be kin without sharing blood and marital relation. Kinship is based on love and enduring solidarity expected to characterise these familial relationship. Further it also negates the ides of procreation based on heterosexual identities.

Family is no longer seen only as unit for reproduction rather it can be a non-procreative unit. Such family ties are based on ideology of choice and love, and stand in opposition to biological model of kinship. The families of choice therefore, emerge as an important basis to question biologically modelled heterosexual domain of kinship, which has failed to provide support and care to lesbian women and men.

11.5 NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF NRT ON FAMILY AND KINSHIP

Due to debates about the appropriateness of NRT, it is not guaranteed that they will be well received and accepted in positive terms by all members of the society that adopts them. NRT

are sparking legislative debates about the ethical, social and legal consequences of its uses (Levine 2008: 381).

The unregulated proliferation of reproductive technologies brings in serious questions that force a rethinking of the idealness of reproductive technology. This technology is considered to promote capitalism by treating human bodies as commodities for sale-worthy economic capital and resorting to medical tourism. It results in an unethical but thriving ‘fertility industry’ where human reproductive parts like eggs, sperm, uteri and embryos can be ‘bought’, ‘sold’ or ‘hired’ (Marwah, 2011). It overrules health rights and concerns of gender by exploiting donors through low economic reward scales and health risks from unregulated frequency of procedures. It results in medicalisation of their reproductive bodies as both clients for treatment of their own infertility and also as donors facilitating others to have babies (Patel, 2013:69).NRT have received a mixed response because of problems bordering on their lack of affordability, accessibility in different countries and low success rates.

NRT is changing the existing understanding of how motherhood and identity is conferred upon the mother and child respectively at the cost of becoming a threat to religious beliefs regarding pollution, conception and determination of maternity. Older, unchanged, norms which make no provision for new innovations and procedures must be upgraded at the earliest. The contest between tradition and modernity is brought to the fore and is currently unresolved in the case of reproduction in Israel.

Begetting children through reproductive technology have raised new questions:

- Is there a universal meanings of reproduction?
- What constitutes relatedness
- Are existing kinship theories are adequate to theorise about practices of kinship cross-culturally?

Check Your Progress 3

1. State any two relevance of NRT for society

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2. Do you think use of technology for human reproduction has any negative consequence? Illustrate your answer with examples.

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11.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have comprehended the meaning of new reproductive technology and how it has redefined the understanding of parenthood. The use of technology for reproduction has challenged the traditional understanding of motherhood and maternity. We have learnt that NRT has led to de-naturalization of reproduction, implying that birthing is no longer only a biological process but something that we constructed in medical laboratories. We have also seen that NRT has not only expanded the scope of kinship studies but has contributed significantly to enhance the status of women. It has given more reproductive choices to women and allowed them to come out of the trap of biology. Despite the advances made, there are some repercussion of the use of technology and it has generated questions of identity of children born through assisted reproduction

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11.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your progress 1

1. Reproductive technologies are a result of developments in biotechnology. They refer to technologies aimed at facilitating, preventing or intervening in the process of reproduction such as contraception, abortion, antenatal testing, birth technologies and contraceptive technologies.
2. NRT change the notion of motherhood in Israel by designating as separate genetic and gestation mother---one providing the egg to be fertilised and the other the womb for gestation.

Check Your Progress 2

1. In Israel, maternity remains within the purview of religious laws because it not only defines belonging in terms of kinship, but also one's membership within the religious group and right to citizenship. Jewishness determines belongingness to a nation and acquirement of citizenship. Kinship identity is defined matrilineally, making the identity of the mother crucial if legitimacy is to be accorded to the child.
2. Two challenges faced by fertility clinics in Israel are:
 - i. Motherhood bound to religious conditions: There is an emerging contradiction in Israeli society, which, on one hand, prioritises motherhood as the defining factor for women's standing in society and on the other hand puts conditions of legitimising the offspring by imposing expectations of conception within the purview of Halakhic laws.
 - ii. Outdated religious codes and differences in opinion of Rabbis: Traditional rabbinic imagination does not mention any reference to ova. Thus, for rabbis, determining motherhood involves making an interpretation of something which according to the religious texts does not even exist. Rabbis devise their own interpretation of who should be recognised as a mother

Check Your Progress 3

1. The two relevance of NRT for society are:

- a) Reject technology as patriarchal
- b) Gives freedom and agency to women

2. The use of technology for human reproduction can have negative consequences. It has added a monetary value to the biological process and this has created a divide between the rich and the poor. The women from economically weaker section have become victim of the commercialisation of surrogacy.



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UNIT 12 POPULAR CULTURE AND REIMAGINING KINSHIP¹

Structure

12.0 Objectives

12.1 Introduction

12.2 What is Popular Culture?

12.3 Re-imagining Kinship

1.3.1 Family

12.4 Popular Culture and Re-imagining Kinship

12.5 Let Us Sum Up

12.6 References

12.7 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

12.0 OBJECTIVES

After going through this unit you would be able to:

- Discuss aspects of culture and popular culture.
 - Examine changes in kinship.
 - Discuss family as an institution, its historical trajectory and family in the present times.
 - Explain depiction of changes in kinship in popular culture.
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12.1 INTRODUCTION

Popular culture became a widely used term in social sciences in the mid-19th century as referring to the culture of the masses as opposed to the culture of elite or high class. The study of popular culture in anthropology was associated with art, folklore, music etc. With the interrogation of the influence of popular culture on family and marriage has led to the redefining the boundaries of kinship studies. It has led to the understanding of new family forms and the possibility of choice rather than looking at kinship as natural and give.

¹ Written by Dr. Uzma

In the earlier unit on Re-casting Kinship, we have discussed the changes kinship has gone through. In the course on Sociology of Kinship, this unit is on Popular Culture and Reimagining Kinship. The objective of this unit is to comprehend the changes the institution of kinship has gone through, especially the redefinition of family and relationships and how popular culture has been depicting these changes in the society. Let us first look at what is popular culture and how it has depicted re-imagining of kinship.

12.2 WHAT IS POPULAR CULTURE?

In order to understand what popular culture is, it is important to comprehend the meaning of culture. Culture refers to the beliefs, values, language, communication and practices that individuals may share and learn as members of the society. It is what one learns through the process of socialisation as one is born in a particular society, its language, customs, rituals, practices, belief systems and so on. Culture can have many sub-cultures, for example, Indian culture is an umbrella term, and has many ethnically diverse subcultures or smaller groups or ethnicities with their own local language, customs, traditions, etc. like Tamil culture, Manipuri, Kashmiri, Maharashtrian sub-cultures, etc.

Popular culture can be seen as those set of beliefs, practices that are shared most broadly by majority members of the group or community. It can include depiction of dominant ideas (culture) of the society on diverse mediums like film media, television, fashion, entertainment, literature, sports and linguistic conventions, among other things. Popular culture is often related with either mass culture or folk culture, identifiable with the working classes and is different from high culture and various institutional cultures (legal culture, political culture, educational culture, etc.). It can cut across different categories of age, gender, region, religion, class, etc. For example, popular culture manifests in the popularity of Hindi movies of actress Madhuri Dixit which appeal to large segment of population as compared to art/ serious movies' actress Konkana Sen whose movies usually appeal to a niche audience.

Popular culture has particular historical and social context and often represents the dominant ideology of the period. For example, post-independence movies like *Naya Daur* (1957), *Jis Desh Mein Ganga Behti Hai* (1961) reflected the optimism and emphasis on nation building of the

Nehruvian politics in the post-independence India. Post- industrialisation and urbanisation period and in the modern times, popular culture can also refer to the fiction (television, films, books, tabloids), newspapers/ magazines, music, with changes in technology in the post-modern era, internet based social media (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, blogs, WhatsApp, etc.).

Mass culture or popular culture, according to the theory of structuralism ‘reproduces the dominant ideology. Marxist theorist Antonio Gramsci uses the term ‘hegemony’ to refer to the way in which dominant groups in society through a process of intellectual and moral leadership seek to win consent of the sub-ordinate groups in society...’ (Storey, 2001:10). We have seen that mainstream Hindi movies usually portray upper castes, male-centric, urban stories and we have very few popular movies on the marginalised (working class, farmers, Dalits, Tribals, women, minorities, etc.) and their stories in the popular majority driven dominant culture.

Check Your Progress 1

1) What is culture?

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2) Explain what you understand by popular culture

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In this next section, we will examine how kinship is being re-imagined focusing on the idea of ‘family’.

12.3 RE-IMAGINING KINSHIP

As we know, kinship system refers to a set of relationships of an individual with others, either by virtue of a blood relationship (consanguinity) or by virtue of a marriage relationship (affinity). For example, consanguineal relationships are between mother and son/daughter, sister and brother/sister, father and son/daughter, while affinal relationships can be seen as the relations between father/mother-in-law and daughter-/son-in-law.

Family system in India is remarkably unique and distinct in terms of antiquity and complexity, also as diverse as country's culture, demography, region and religion. In India, in different measures family (one or more parent and their children living together as a socio-economic unit), household (a house and its inhabitants regarded as one unit), elementary families (nuclear family or a unit of adults with their children), extended families (nuclear family with grandparents and other relatives), and other forms can be commonly observed. In India, in terms of lineage, patrilineal families (descent through the male line) are common while matrilineal (descent through the female line) ones are generally seen in certain communities such as Nayars of Kerala, and Garos and Khasis in the North-Eastern states. The patrilineal system is more common among the Indians.

Institution of marriage determines the form and type of families in several ways. For marriage, caste continues to be a social factor in India. Inter-caste marriages have become common as endogamous marriages between castes are no longer the norm in India today. In the Indian family, arranged marriages are still a practice although they are not purely arranged marriages. Often such marriages take place after the respective bride/groom have found their partners on their own and then seek families' approval leading to 'arrangement' of marriages. The freedom to choose one's own life partner has become important especially in the post-liberalisation era. But, there are still some parts of India where partners are chosen by the parents or other elders in the family. Giddens (2006) thinks that there is now more freedom with regard to selection of spouses, arranged marriages have become less common, and that the rights of women and children are being recognised more than ever before. Rights of children, especially of the girl child are now more protected than ever before.

Patriarchal family system which is based on the domination of male authority is in crisis, according to Castells (1997). Two powerful trends of delayed marriage and the formation of partnerships without marriage amongst sexes have changed structure of family as it is generally understood. Castells (1997) refers to a combination of four elements that affected weakening of the male-dominated patriarchal family, characterised by institutionalised male authority over females and children in the family. Firstly, the transformation of both the economy and the labor market that work in close association with the new educational opportunities made available to

women. Secondly, the technological transformation in the fields of biology, pharmacology and medicine, that resulted in providing a handle on child bearing and human reproduction. Thirdly, against the backdrop of the first two elements, is the development of feminism that undermined patriarchalism. Fourthly, the rapid dissemination of ideas in a globalised culture and interrelated world that facilitated the voices of women being heard more clearly and loudly than ever. (Sooryamoorthy, 2012, pg. 5)

In the recent past, position of women in contemporary India has improved. Similarly, there have been improvements in their lives within the family and in society in general with more visibility and recognition in public spheres of activity. They contribute to family income and have role in decision-making in family affairs. Their horizons have expanded due to access to education and job opportunities and as a consequence has led to consolidation of their roles, functions, and position in the family. Sexuality is not just about heterosexuality (between man and woman) defined severely in relation to marriage has given space to acceptance of homosexuality. Same-sex relationships have become common. Recent judgments of Indian courts have been landmark in recognising and normalising homosexuality, but in India, same sex couples cannot still register themselves as “married”. “In response to three petitions seeking legalisation of same-sex marriages, the government said there exists a “legitimate State interest” in limiting the recognition of marriage to persons of opposite sex. The considerations of “societal morality” are relevant in considering the validity of a law and it is for the Legislature to enforce such societal morality and public acceptance based upon Indian ethos, a reply by the Ministry of Law and Justice says... “The fundamental right under Article 21 is subject to the procedure established by law and the same cannot be expanded to... include the fundamental right for same sex marriage to be recognised under the laws... which in fact mandate the contrary,” the Centre’s reply says” (Indian Express, 26th Feb 2021)

Changes have been resisted largely by the orthodox traditional Indian society and in this case also by the Indian government. Gays, says Giddens (2009:30) rather than heterosexuals, have actually been pioneers in discovering the new world of relationships and exploring its possibilities. They have had to be, because when homosexuality came out of the closet, gays weren’t able to depend upon the normal supports of traditional marriage. They have had to be innovators, often in a hostile environment.

An important element of kinship and of any society is family. Let us discuss how the institution of family has changed.

12.3.1 Family

When the worlds outside change in important ways families change as well, due to the social and economic circumstances which have a profound impact on families. Families vary in many ways—in who is included as a family member, living arrangements, ideologies, emotional environments, social and kinship networks, and economic and other functions. For example, child abuse was only “discovered” as a social problem by the west in the 1960s. Recently, family researchers have been studying family violence such as child or spousal abuse to understand better the stresses of family life. Studies of family violence reveal that it is much more widespread than had been assumed, cannot easily be attributed to mental illness, and is not confined to the lower classes. Family violence seems to be a product of psychological tensions and external stresses that can affect all families at all social levels.

There are mother-only families, father-only families, grandparents raising grandchildren, and gay and lesbian families. Individuals comprise the family it is also a social unit, and part of a larger society. It still fulfills the basic role of family dealing with reproduction and care and support for children and adults

As mentioned above, family as a unit is not insulated from the changes that are happening around it, some features of family can be identified as: (1) Minimum two adult individuals reside together. (2) There is some degree of division of labor; that is, they do not both perform same tasks. (3) There is economic and social exchange among members; that is, they do things for one another. (4) Members share things in common, like food, residence, apart from goods and social activities. (5) Adult members have parental relations with their children, as their children have family relations with them; parents exercise some authority over their children along with protection nurturance and cooperation. (6) Among the children, there is sibling relationship sharing feelings like love, intimacy and helping one another.

Presence of above-mentioned conditions can be used to term the unit as ‘a family’. As we have been witnessing changes in households, changes which are the outcome of what is taking place in the society at large.

In the pre-industrial era, in mostly agrarian families father was the head of family and headed the business as well. Wife/mother, children, employed labour worked under him in an upper/middle caste/class family. Changes of industrialisation and urbanisation leading to migration led to changes in joint family to nuclear family and separation of work and family came into place. Nineteenth-century middle-class urban family typically had a stay-at-home mother and working father. Lower class families had more economic contributions from women of the family-wives, mothers and daughters.

Early twentieth century saw many changes: transformation towards a postindustrial service and information economy; medical science advancements brought reductions in mortality and fertility; and rise in levels of education. These shifts put focus on women, made them pacesetters of change. Decline in mortality rates meant women living longer and having fewer children. Institution of marriage changed from a union between parents raising a brood of children and more as a personal relationship between two individuals. Also, companionship and sexual intimacy were now defined as being central to marriage.

Processes of urbanisation, migration and industrialisation have had an effect on Indian family as well. Also, apart from these processes, there are some region-specific factors that affect family life. For example, regional conflicts surrounding family impact cohesiveness and bonding within family, especially in parts like Jammu and Kashmir, Naxalism affected areas, etc. Urban Indian nuclear families face many issues such as marital conflicts, separation, divorce, intergenerational differences, etc. Rural families in India show inequality in the gender roles played by male and female as husband and wife.

“In the traditional family, children were an economic benefit. Today in Western countries a child, on the contrary, puts a large financial burden on the parents. Having a child is more of a distinct and specific decision than it used to be, and it is a decision guided by psychological and emotional needs. The worries we have about the effects of divorce upon children, and the existence of many fatherless families, have to be understood against the background of our much higher expectations about how children should be cared for and protected. There are three areas in which emotional communication, and therefore intimacy, are replacing the old ties that used to

bind together people's personal lives—in sexual and love relations, parent-child relations and in friendship.” (Giddens, 2009, pg. 29)

Now, we come to our last section where we are going to discuss popular culture and it led to re-imagining of Kinship.

Check Your Progress 2

1) Define Kinship.

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2) Mention any two elements that led to weakening of patriarchal system in India.

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12.4 POPULAR CULTURE AND REIMAGINING KINSHIP

"Art is the best possible introduction to the culture of the world. I love it for the buried hopes, the garnered memories, the tender feelings it can summon at a touch. It washes away from the soul the dust of everyday life." Pablo Picasso (*LIFE*, 11 September 1964). Picasso is talking about art in the above quote, but it is not just art but popular culture which reflects larger society and is an introduction to the culture of different societies and we can contextualise the stories in the time periods of their making. The traditional families as they were depicted in popular culture from Nehruvian era film *Bhabhi* (1957) (Sister-in-law) where a large family of four brothers an aunt live in a single household, headed by a widower and father of a child, Balraj Sahni who marries a more educated Shanta who comes to take care of his family and the efforts she makes to keep the family together.

Most films of 1950s and 1960s portrayed large Indian family where conflicts between brothers was resolved in the end and family lived happily. In the love stories, families of boy and girl

opposed marriage mostly on class criteria (rich boy poor girl and vice versa) and eventually came around for marriage. Family's wishes were important in most of films of this era.

The tumultuous 1970s showed more violence in Hindi movies, change of society and its angst and frustration was reflective in films like *Deewar* (1975), through a story of two brothers one cop and another an outlaw, where mother chooses her righteous son and criminal son has to die in the end, similar to the mother-son story of *Mother India* (1957). *Sholay* (1975) had character of a widow played by Jaya Bachchan, the romance between Amitabh and Jaya remains quite subtle as compared to the romance between the other pair of Dharmendra and Hema Malini. As per traditional norms, widow re-marriage in Hinduism was not common and this traditional notion remained untouched as Amitabh dies in the end saving audience any kind of challenge to the prevalent societal norms. *Aandhi* (1975) film by Gulzar showed Suchitra Sen as a powerful politician having separated from her husband who objected to her neglecting her child due to her political work. They meet later and reconcile, marriage remains intact.

Silsila (1981) was based on an extra-marital affair between two ex-lovers Amitabh and Rekha but in the end both return back to their spouses. Marriage is a bond that is impossible to break was the message most of the Hindi films conveyed, come what may. Another story on extra-marital affair, *Arth* (1982) by Mahesh Bhatt focuses on the journey of a woman, played by Shabana Azmi post-her marriage breaking apart due to her husband's affair with another woman, Smita Patil. The relationship suffers due to the guilt husband and his psychologically disturbed partner carry for hurting Shabana, who emerges as a strong, confident woman living life on her own.

In the 1980s, many more women centric films showing women challenging patriarchy came. *Mirch Masala* (1987) was set in the 1940s India where women fight back against a subedar (tax collector) and some of the males in the village. In the 1990s, post-liberalization era society saw changes and popular culture underwent massive changes. Deepa Mehta's film *Fire* (1996) was the first Hindi full-fledged film on homosexuality based on a lesbian relationship between two sisters-in-law (Shabana Azmi and Nandita Das). It marked a major step in showing changes the

society was going through. In the 1990s Shekhar Kapur made *Bandit Queen* (1994) on Phoolan Devi the bandit of UP who was quite a terror in her heydays.

1990s also saw romanticization of joint family amidst a fast-changing society in series of hit family-oriented films by Rajshri Productions, like *Hum Aapke Hain Kaun- HAHK* (1994) to *Hum Saath Saath Hain* (1999) emphasizing on family values and family solidarity. Yash Chopra's *Dilwale Dulhania Le Jayenge – DDLJ* (1995) also focused on family values by showing the consent of family being paramount over emotions of love.

Box 1 Patricia Uberoi on Love and Marriage in Hindi Cinema

Patricia Uberoi, an anthropologist who has researched and written extensively on kinship, family and marriage, takes up two very popular Hindi films; *Diwale Dulhaniye Le Jayenge – DDLJ* and *Pardes* (1997) for analyses. She believes that “contemporary popular cinema has emerged as an important site for engagement with the problems resulting from Indian middle-class diaspora, and for the articulation of Indian identity in a globalised world” (Uberoi, 1998: 310). Both the films analysed revolve around Indians settled abroad who define “Indianness with reference to specificities of family life, the institutions of courtship and marriage in particular” (Ibid:305). The films are love stories that “elaborate certain dilemmas of moral choice that resonate profoundly in contemporary Indian society. These dilemmas are of two kinds, interwoven in and through the cinematic narrative. The first is the conflict between individual desire and social norms and expectations in respect of marriage choice. Its felicitous solution in both these films is the contemporary ideal of ‘arranged love marriage’, that is, a style of matchmaking whereby a romantic choice already made is endorsed, post facto, by parental approval and treated thereafter like an ‘arranged marriage’” (ibid:306). Uberoi writes that many “sociologists had expected that the modernisation of Indian society would undermine the practice of ‘arranged marriage’, both by encouraging an individualistic ethos and by subverting the rules of endogamy” (ibid:308). She finds that this far from the truth, modernization might have played its role but not to the extent that was expected, if anything the institution of family marriage and patriarchal system are reproduced in the transnational setting among the middleclass families. She writes that the transnational Indian family is modeled as a patriarchal institution, where the head of the family—the father has the authority and responsibility arrange marriages for his children. She writes that these films endorse the “idealisation and naturalisation of the institution of the patrilineal joint

family. Thus, for instance, both films assume that the pattern of recruitment to household membership will automatically follow the principle of patrilocal residence. That is how the senior Malhotra in DDLJ and Kishori Lal in *Pardes* both return to India to 'fetch' their sons' wives" (ibid:332). The principle of marriage as alliance is another aspect of kinship that is reproduced in the transnational setting. She writes that rather than just an arrangement between a young couple in love, the marriage is an alliance between families. She further adds: "For those unfamiliar with the wider Indian culture of Indian kinship, *Pardes* would seem to have a rather curious ending-for a love story. Here we do not find the young couple embracing each other, or even uniting with each other with parental blessings. On the contrary, the final scene shows father and (foster-) son on the one hand, and father and daughter on the other, embracing. The happy young couple merely eye each other over the respective shoulders of their fathers" (Ibid:333). Uberoi concludes that "in both DDLJ and *Pardes*, all three elementary principles of the Indian culture of kinship (i.e., the institution of the joint family; the patriarchal authority to dispose; and marriage as interfamily alliance) are challenged in the context of diaspora-and finally reaffirmed" (ibid:333)

(Uberoi, P. (1998). The diaspora comes home: Disciplining desire in DDLJ. *Contributions to Indian sociology*, 32(2), 305-336).

Aligarh (2015) film showed how a college Professor was harassed on his sexual choices that he had to commit suicide. Ismat Chughtai's short story *Lihaaf* (1942) created uproar where she had to face legal cases with charges of obscenity for writing on lesbianism.

The society is still not ready to accept homosexual relationships unlike the western media where these themes had been quite popular and portrayed in the popular culture through various mediums like art, cinema (*Brokeback Mountain*, 2006 film on gay relationship), magazines, etc. For example, influential lesbian photographer Joan E. Biren (better known as JEB) had to self-publish her groundbreaking 1979 portrait book *Eye to Eye: Portraits of Lesbians* to the people who needed to see them most. Despite the lack of mainstream support, JEB published a collection of black-and-white portraits of lesbian/queer women of all ages and backgrounds, doing everyday tasks like fixing cars, relaxing with their lovers, embracing their children, protesting for political action, along with short interviews with the subjects. This book

transformed the way that lesbians could be symbolised in images, with their grace, humanity, beauty and brilliance on full display.



Pic. 1. Gloria and Chermaine, Baltimore, Maryland, 1979 (Joan E. Biren) from 'Eye to Eye', Portraits of Lesbians', published by Anthology Editions

TV soap operas show their portrayal of the “functional, patriarchal family” as nuclear (Jassi Jaisi Koi Nahin) or joint family (most of Balaji Productions’ soap operas). American shows like *Leave it to Beaver*, to *The Simpsons* to *Modern Family*, from promoting the ideal to now increasingly promoting the acceptance of *no* ideal. *Modern Family* TV shows the daily struggles of a 21st century family where show highlights stereotypes surrounding motherhood, blended families, adolescence, Latina women and homosexuality.

Modern Family also has stepfamily theme on reflecting broken marriages trend in America. In the show, Jay divorces his wife Dede, then marries Gloria. Jay had two children with Dede, Claire (her family is nuclear, typical American family) and Mitchell (gay character married to a man named Cam and together they adopt an Asian little girl, Lily), and Gloria had one child, Manny, before marrying Jay. Another popular show, *Orange is the New Black*, running since 2013 helped the LGBTQ movement by introducing many regularly appearing homosexual, bisexual, and transgender characters. Portrayals of different stories and characters on various mediums of popular culture point towards changes kinship and society goes through.

ACTIVITY

At your Study Center with other students make a list of popular Hindi films of different eras from 1960s to 2020 and discuss the transition they portray of ‘Indian family’ in Hindi films.

12.5 LET US SUM UP

In this unit on popular culture and reimagining kinship, we started with a discussion on culture and popular culture. Then we examined changes in the institutions of kinship and family. And lastly, through various examples from popular culture like films, literature, TV serials, we debated the depiction of changes in kinship in popular culture. While there are some broad changes in the family compositions over a period, it is also true that the traditional notions surrounding the institutions of family, marriage and kinship are reproduced. Patricia Uberoi’s analysis of the two films, that we discussed in the box sections, tells us how the transnational setting notwithstanding the patriarchal family structure is reproduced in the diasporic context. This unit tries to capture the portrayals of different stories and characters on various mediums of popular culture point towards changes kinship and society goes through

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12.7 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Culture refers to the beliefs, values, language, communication and practices that individuals may share and learn as members of the society. It is what one learns through the process of socialization as one is born in a particular society, its language, customs, rituals, practices, belief systems and so on.
2. Popular culture's depiction on diverse mediums like film media, television, fashion, entertainment, literature, sports and linguistic conventions, among other things is a reflection of dominant ideas at a certain time. Popular culture's relationship with the working class makes it even more reflective of the character of society and of majority of the population which might be different from high culture (art house cinema/ art) and various institutional cultures (legal culture, political culture, educational culture, etc.). It can cut across different categories of age, gender, region, religion, class, etc.

Check Your Progress 2

1. Kinship system refers to a set of relationships of an individual with others, either by virtue of a blood relationship (consanguinity) or by virtue of a marriage relationship (affinity).
2. Firstly, the transformation of both the economy and the labour market that work in close association with the new educational opportunities made available to women. Secondly, the technological transformation in the fields of biology, pharmacology and medicine, that resulted in providing a handle on child bearing and human reproduction.

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GLOSSARY

Affinal relationships: Relationships through marriage can be seen as the relations between father/mother-in-law and daughter-/son-in-law, etc.

Agnates: are kin who traced their relationship by descent through males only from a common ancestor, who were under the authority of a single paterfamilias, and who resided together.

Agnatic: A mode of descent where the descendant is born of an unbroken line of men

Alliance: In kinship theory, this refers to a view of society which emphasises marital interactions (usually repetitive) between descent groups as a basis for social integration and group definition.

Ambilineal descent: The principle whereby descent is reckoned through male or female links without set order

Classificatory Kinship System: A mode of kinship classification in which collateral kin are terminologically equated with lineal kin (e.g. father's brother's children are called by the same terms as siblings, as in brother or sister)

Cognates: A bilateral (consanguineal) kinsman or kinswoman.

Cognatic: The relationship between a person and a lineal ancestor, through the male or female line.

Commensality: the act of eating together; the social sharing of food. Both domestic and social relations are reflected in pattern of commensality.

Conjugal: ties or relationship based on marriage i.e. relationship between husband and wife.

Consanguinal relationships: Blood relationships between mother and son/daughter, sister and brother/sister, father and son/daughter.

Consanguine : is a relative by birth (i.e., a "blood" relative), as distinguished from in-laws ("affines") and step relatives.

Culture: Culture refers to the beliefs, values, language, communication and practices that individuals may share and learn as members of the society.

Descent : A relationship defined by connection to an ancestor (or ancestress) through a culturally recognized sequence of parent-child links -from father to son to son's son (patrilineal) and descent from mother to daughter to daughter's daughter (matrilineal)

Descriptive Kinship System: Descriptive systems separate lineal from collateral relatives. Thus, "cousin" is a term in a descriptive system. However, the term "cousin" may be called a classificatory term because it includes several different types of relatives.

Endogamy: marrying within the tribe/clan.

Exogamy; marrying outside tribe/clan

Extended Family: Nuclear family with grandparents and other relatives

Filiation- refers to the relation an individual develops as a fact of being the child of a specified parent. It denotes the relationship created by the fact of being a legitimate child of one's parent.

Filiation: An anthropological term to recognise the relationships between parents and offspring.

Foster: Bringing up children not related by blood

Fraternal family

Gali : is a Hindi word for insult

Gay: is a homosexual man, who is sexually attracted to other men.

Generalized Exchange: A system of marriage exchange in which women are viewed as circulating within groups. Wife-givers cannot be wife-takers.

Genetrix: biological mother

Hearth: Floor of fireplace

Heterosexual: are people who are attracted to opposite sex.

HIV: Human Immunodeficiency Syndrome.

Indirect Exchange: A system of alliance whereby kin groups exchange wives indirectly, so that a man must marry his actual or classificatory mother's brother's daughter (MBZ-matrilineal alliance) or Father's sister's daughter (FZD patrilineal alliance).

Joint family : family consisting of parents, grandparents, siblings and children

Lesbian: is a homosexual woman, who is sexually attracted to other women.

Levirate: Rule whereby a man is entitled to marry/inherit the widow of his deceased brother

Matrilineal: descent is traced through the female line

Non-agnatic: those descendants born through at least one female link.

Nuclear family : Family consisting of parents and their children only.

Orhni: clothing item that is used as a wrap by women in North India

Patrilineal: descent is traced through the male line

Patrilocal : The practice whereby a married couple, settles in the home of the husband's family. Matrilocal: Living with /near wife's family after marriage

Polyandry: A woman marrying more than one man at a given time

Polygyny: A man marrying more than one woman at a given time

Popular culture: Popular culture can be seen as those set of beliefs, practices that are shared most broadly by majority members of the of group or community. It can include depiction of dominant ideas (culture) of the society on diverse mediums like film, media, television, fashion, entertainment, literature, sports and linguistic conventions, among other things.

Purdah: is a Hindi word for veil

Sororate : Rule whereby a man is entitled to marry the sister of his deceased wife

Transgender: are people whose gender identity is different from the sex they assigned at birth.

Unilineal descent : The principle whereby descent is traced either through the male line ("patrilineal") or the female line ("matrilineal"), but not both.

Uxorilocal: residence in woman's house

Virilocal: residence in man's house



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