
BLOCK 2
STUDYING KINSHIP

THE PEOPLE'S
UNIVERSITY

UNIT 4: DESCENT APPROACH*

STRUCTURE

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4.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Explain the meaning of the concept of descent in kinship studies;
- Trace the historical development of descent;
- Explain how different anthropologists used descent approach to understand kinship systems;
- Explore the application of the kinship systems in India;
- Offer a critique of descent approach.

4.1 INTRODUCTION

Kinship is generally a system of recognising relationship by marriage, blood and social relationship. The relationships can be based on blood—known as consanguineal or through marriage termed—as affinal. If the relationship between one person and another involves descent, the two are consanguine (“blood”) relatives. For example, relationship between father and son. If the relationship has been established through marriage, it is affinal, a classical example of this is the relationship of husband and wife.

Kinship relations can be studied and can be understood through three approaches:

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- (i) Descent approach – emphasis on blood/consanguine relations
- (ii) Alliance approach – emphasis on marriage
- (iii) Cultural approach – focus on kinship as cultural

The first approach also known as lineage theory focused on study of kinship system by tracing the biological connection between individual (referred as ego in anthropology) and his ancestor, living and dead. The theory made a distinction between the relatives from the line of descent and those formed by marriage. The blood relation was considered as primary to the affinal relations that was secondary. In the alliance approach, the focus shifted from blood tied to relations formed as result of marriage. The core of the theory was the exchange of women for formation of groups. The alliance theory was criticised for focusing on women as object and treating the opposition between affine and consanguine as universal. Due to the limitation of both descent and alliance theory there was a cardinal change in the way kinship was studied and 1970's saw the "undoing" of kinship. The cultural approach argued that kinship could not be understood only with reference to biology. The reference to biology was seen as nothing more than ethnocentric view of kinship, derived from European culture. Kinship was to be understood with reference to cultural practices of every society.

In this unit, we are going to learn about the descent approach to the study of kinship system. According to this view, a person's place in society was largely determined by his or her position within the kinship system. Crucial was the determination of an individual's position within the line of filiation privileged by a given society (descent). Proponents of descent theory presented non-Western societies as based on their kinship organisation. Non-Western societies were seen as emphasising one particular line of descent whose analysis was believed to unpack their social mechanisms and account for the maintenance/reproduction of the social order. The emphasis is on tracing the genealogical origin by blood relations or in terms of descent.

4.2 DESCENT IN KINSHIP STUDIES

In anthropology, kinship has been used to refer to the network of genealogical relationship and social ties. Every society has developed means of categorising individuals as either kin or non-kin. One of the method of doing this is to trace relation with the ancestors and decent refers to the line of connection between individual and his/her ancestor both living and dead. Descent group includes those individual who are descended from an ancestor in a particular way. Thus two individual who are regarded as kin may be related to each other in one or other of the two ways: one is descended from the other or both are descended from a common ancestor (Dumont 2006).

4.2.1 Meaning of the concept of descent

Descent can be defined as a relationship defined by connection to an ancestor (or ancestress) through a culturally recognised sequence of parent-child links. In anthropology various terms 'line', 'lineal', 'lineage' are used synonymously with the term 'descent'. These terms have been used in kinship studies in four different ways:

Functions of descent

- (i) It enables to trace of relationships inter-generationally through real, putative, or fictive parent-child links.
- (ii) It refers to person's offspring or his parentage.
- (iii) It is used to trace one's ancestry.

- i) To denote corporate descent groups, i.e., a group united for economic and political purpose
- ii) To denote the chosen line of inheritance and succession
- iii) To refer to the type of kinship terminology
- iv) Regardless of which lines (matrilineal or patrilineal or both) are chosen for the above three purposes, lineal relatives refer to one's ascendants or descendants. Lineal relatives are those who belong to the same ancestral stock in a direct line of descent. Opposed to lineal relatives are collaterals who belong to the same ancestral stock but not in a direct line of descent.

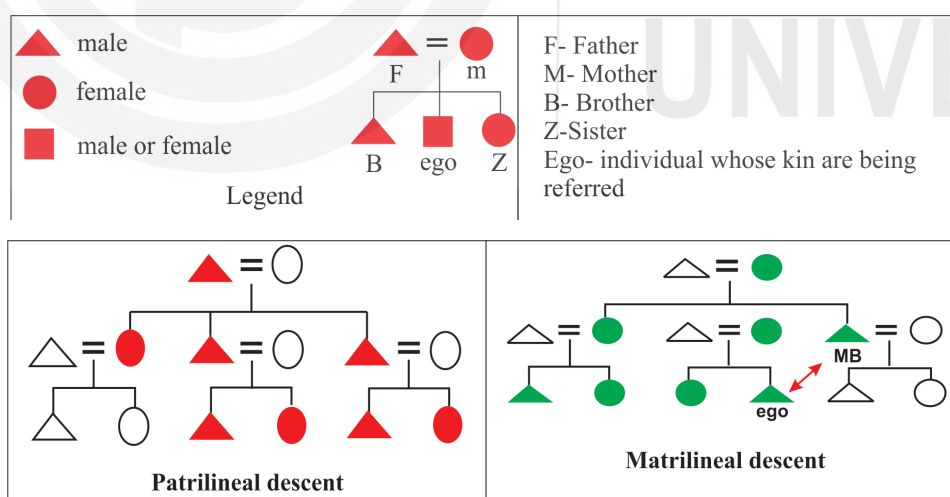
Morgan defined descent as a cultural rule which affiliates an individual with a particular selected group of kinsmen for certain social purpose such as mutual assistance or the regulation of marriage (1949:15-16). The structural-functionalist define descent as a process regulating the recruitment of members into a social group, either through the father or mother (River 1924). As per this definition, the term descent denotes the process of automatic recruitment into a social group on birth but the membership is exclusive and does not overlap. Thus Leach (1962) defined descent as a principle of recruitment into a unilineal descent group.

4.2.2 Types of Descent

1. *Unilineal*—This traces descent only through a single line of ancestors, male or female. Both males and females are members of a unilineal family, but descent links are only recognised through relatives of one gender.

The two basic forms of unilineal descent are referred to as:

- Patrilineal – tracing decent through the male(father) line



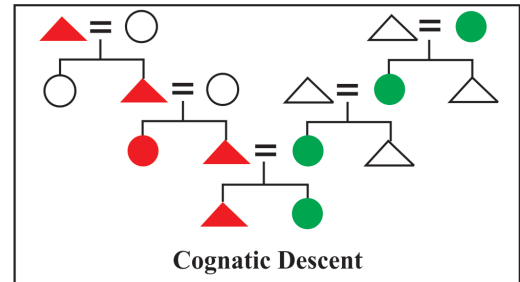
- Matrilineal- tracing of decent through female(mother) line

The depiction of societies as neatly ordered by unilineal descent into clearly bounded, nested units of different scale was quite far from everyday political reality. Personal experiences of kinship could vary considerably from the normative models.

2. *Double Descent*—descent is traced through both the patrilineal and the

matrilineal group with attendant rights and obligations but assigns to each a different set of expectations. For example, the inheritance of immovable materials, such as land, may be the domain of the patrilineage, while the matrilineage controls the inheritance of moveable objects such as livestock. The Yako of Africa have the system of double descent. Among the Yako, patrilineal descent has economic rights to farmland, house sites, and cooperative labour. Further it practices joint residence for all members, that is, men of the same patrilineal clan live together and cooperate in farming activities. They also recognise matrilineal descent, which governs the inheritance of transferable wealth, such as livestock and currency.

3. *Cognatic*—The system of descent in which a child is recognised as a descendant equally of both the father and the mother. It is also referred as bilateral or bilineal descent system. Here no unilineal groups can be formed but group structure can be cognatic, that is, the group of kin-persons on the father's and mother's side. Membership can be acquired through either the father or the mother.



4. *Ambilineal*—patrilineal and matrilineal principles both operate at the societal level, but at the level of the individual various rules or choices define a person as belonging to either the mother's or the father's group.

Among the four types of descent group, emphasis has been on first type. The unilineal descent has been described by anthropologist as exogamous groups. They also acted as corporations: their members held land in common, acted as a single unit with regard to substantive property, and behaved as one "person" in relation to other similarly constituted groups in legal and political matters such as warfare, feuds, and litigation. That is, the members of a lineage did not act as individuals in the politico-jural domain, instead conceiving themselves to a considerable extent as undifferentiated and continuous with each other. This corporateness was the basis of the stability and structure of a society formed out of unilineal descent groups" (Source: <https://www.britannica.com/topic/kinship/Descent-theory>).

Check Your Progress 1

1. Define descent.

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2. What is the difference between unilineal descent and double descent?

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4.2.3 Other related terms

Clan: A lineage is an exogamous unit. This means that a boy and a girl of the same lineage cannot marry. A larger exogamous category is called the clan. Among the Hindus, this category is known as *gotra*. Each person of a higher caste among the Hindus belongs to the clan of his/her father and cannot marry within the clan or gotra. One usually knows about the common ancestor of lineage members as an actual person. But the common ancestor of a clan is generally a mythical figure. In rural areas, often the members of a lineage live in close proximity and therefore have greater occasions for cooperation or conflict. Common interests or actions do not characterise the relationships among clan members because they are usually scattered over a larger territory and their relationships are often quite remote. You would observe that it is common to find these relationships assuming significance only in the context of marriage. That is why we will now discuss caste/ sub-castes as the third characteristic feature of kinship groups in North India. Castes/ subcastes are the endogamous units within which marriage takes place.

Lineage is a descent group traced through only one of the parents, either the father (patrilineage) or the mother (matrilineage). All members of a lineage trace their common ancestry to a single person. Notionally, lineages are exclusive in their membership. In practice, however, many cultures have methods for bestowing lineage membership on individuals who are not genetically related to the lineage progenitor. The most common of these is adoption, although other forms of fictive kinship are also used. Lineages are normally corporate, meaning that their members exercise rights in common and are subject to obligations collectively.

Phratry and Moiety Notes- When due to any reason many Lineages get joined as a bigger group then such group is called Phratry. All the lineage of a tribe when divided into two Phratries, then the social structure so formed is called dual organisation and every phratries among this is called Moiety. Phratry may be exogamous or may not be. Two Toda Phratries i.e. Tarathral and Teyevaliole are endogamous, though these are divided in many exogamous lineages. It is said that Moiety of Nagas were endogamous in the past but later on became exogamous. Social organisation of Bondo tribe from Odisha is divided in two Moieties—Ontal (Cobra) and Killo (Tiger). These became region exogamous and lineage exogamous by coming in contact of their neighbour's culture. Due to this endogamy also developed in their Moiety. One phratry has many lineages.

Gotra refers to the lineage segment within an Indian caste that prohibits intermarriage by virtue of the members' descent from a common mythical ancestor, an important factor in determining possible Hindu marriage alliances. Gotra originally referred to the seven lineage segments of the Brahmins (priests), who trace their derivation from seven ancient seers: Atri, Bharadvaja, Bhrigu, Gotama, Kashyapa, Vasishtha, and Vishvamitra. An eighth gotra was added early on, the Agastya, named after the seer intimately linked up with the spread of Vedic Hinduism in southern India.

Anthropologists studied simple societies as part of the colonial enterprise of trying to understand societies that were colonised or were explored. These anthropologists were guided by evolutionary theories that looked at some of these simple societies as part of the earlier phases of evolution and hence primitive in their organisation. Influenced by theories developed by Maine and

Morgan in which societies transited from status to contract forms of organisation and from corporate to individual forms of property ownership. Of the many questions that vexed these anthropologists were; how are some of the stateless societies organised? how are rights, properties, inheritances etc. transferred and maintained? They found the answers in the study of genealogies where they found kinship systems were great organisational principles in many of these so called “primitive societies”. In our next section we will look at some of these anthropologists who looked at descent and the groups formed thereof as way to understand kinship systems and larger societies.

4.3 DESCENT APPROACH IN KINSHIP STUDIES

Kinship is important to a person and a community's well-being. Because different societies define kinship differently, they also set the rules governing kinship, which are sometimes legally defined and sometimes implied. Anthropologist in the 19th century in an attempt to understand the constitution of society gave the theory of descent as the principal of organising the social structure. In this section, let us examine the evolution of descent approach and some of the key features put forward by descent theorists.

4.3.1 Evolution of Descent Approach

The functionalist anthropologist in the early stages of the emergence of the discipline of anthropology were in search of an answer to the question, what integrates society. As the primitive societies, studied by anthropologists, were seen as kinship based, integration of the social structure was located in kinship system. As groups were seen as segments of society, they would be integrated only if the principal of kinship organisation were unilineal. For Radcliffe-Brown, only group formed on the basis of unilineal descent did not overlap. Thus the understanding of unilineal decent group as essential for the formation and continuity of social structure. Most anthropological literature during this period were concerned with societies whose social structure rested on unilineal descent and thus creating an impression that descent was the organising principal.

The descent approach was the transformation of the theoretical problems raised by 19th century anthropologists, mainly Maine and Morgan. These early anthropologists were concerned in finding the relationship between kinship and territory and also find the differentiation between family as a bilateral group (tracing relation through both parent) and clan as unilateral group. The main concern was to investigate the constitution of primitive society and their political institution. The unilineal descent group was taken as the criteria for regulating political relations and providing stability to the group. According to Maine (1861), the earliest history of primitive society reveals that the political structure was based on extended ties of territorial relations. Morgan similarly believed that all forms of government can be classified into two categories – society or 'societas' (clan as unit of organisation) and state (formed on basis of territory and property).

The British anthropologist, unlike their predecessor, were not interested in the evolution of the society. They were more concerned with the constitution of the structure and the inter relations between different parts. Therefore society was viewed as having a systematic order resulting due to the inter relation and dependence of different parts. On the basis of the ethnographic study these anthropologist arrived at the understanding that residence/territory and descent

coexisted in the same society. This formed the base of the descent theory that supports the idea of all agnates (male member from same line of descent) have common residence and hence forming the patrilineal descent group. Similarly all uterine (female member from same line of descent) formed the matrilineal group. In both cases, descent provided the basis of group integration.

4.3.2 Features of Descent Principal

The key features of descent principal as found in the theories of anthropologist using descent approach are

1. Descent principles have parallel rules of post-marital residence:
 - Patrilocality: married couples and children live in husband's community usually found with patrilineal descent.
 - Matrilocality: married couples and their children live in wife's community, associated with matrilineal descent
2. Descent rules are used to determine parenthood, identify ancestry and assign people to social categories, groups, and roles on basis of inherited status.
 - The descent approach emphasis on the formation of social groups or descent group and have described these groups as exhibiting certain features:
 - a) Descent groups are permanent social units, whose members claim common ancestry. The membership of the group is determined at birth and is a life-long membership. The descent group endures over time even though membership changes.
 - b) Descent groups function successfully as long-term joint property owners and economic production teams.
 - c) Descent groups assume important corporate functions such as land ownership, political representation and mutual aid and support.
 - d) Descent groups were the mechanisms for maintaining political order in stateless societies. The principle was used to trace lines of inheritance and succession as chieftain.
3. In the development of theory of family and kinship, the descent theories made reference to genealogical charts that helped trace connections between kin.
4. The descent principle helped in the allocation of roles and responsibility among the members of a particular group, kinship terminology were relevant in indicating the allocation.

Check Your Progress 2

1. How did the British Anthropologist differ from their predecessor in the understanding of the nature of integration in society?

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2. Mention any four feature of descent approach to the study of kinship.

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4.4 USAGE OF DESCENT APPROACH BY ANTHROPOLOGISTS

Prominent British social anthropologists of this period, such as Malinowski, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard, and Meyer Fortes, generally advocated a functionalist approach. The major premises of functionalism were that every aspect of a culture, no matter how seemingly disparate (e.g., kinship terms, technology, food, mythology, artistic motifs), had a substantive purpose and that within a given culture these diverse structures worked together to maintain the group's viability. For instance, these scholars saw the family as a universal social institution that functioned primarily to rear children. From their perspective this function was to a large degree self-evident and cross-culturally constant. The wider groupings recruited through kinship, which were the basis of political and economic organisation, were much more culturally variable and hence of greater interest.

4.4.1 Henry Morgan: Descriptive and Classificatory Terminology

Henry Lewis Morgan (1818-1881), as we mentioned earlier, is one of the foremost cultural anthropologists whose theories had substantial influence in sociology and anthropology. Morgan carried out fieldwork among the Native American peoples. In *Ancient Society* (1877) he attempted to link the evolution of kinship institutions to technological changes and the evolution of property forms. His pioneering work on kinship resulted in a book: *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, was published in 1871. He provided an evolutionary thinking according to which kinship was defined as a social institution identifying the earlier steps of societal organisation. Kinship was presented as the epi - centre of so - called primitive societies' social organisation. Kinship was seen as a principle for differentiated simple society from complex modern societies. Kinship gave explanation of the problem of the maintenance of social order in the absence of state based organisations.

An important element in Morgan's formulation was the distinction between classificatory and descriptive systems of kinship. In a classificatory system, relatives not in ego's direct line of descent or ancestry—called the collateral kin are placed in the same terminological grouping as lineal kin—relatives in ego's direct line of descent. Classificatory system, such as that of the Dravidian kinship for example, designate the father and his brother, and conversely the mother and her sister, by the same term or indicating a relationship of similarity. In many societies with unilineal descent—that is, systems that emphasise descent through one of the parents' line, but not both—ego uses one set of terms to refer to brothers, sisters, and parallel cousins (those whose genealogical ties are traced through a related parent of the same sex, as in a father's brother or a mother's sister), while another set of terms is employed for cross-cousins (the offspring of a father's sister or a mother's brother). This arrangement emphasises

the fact that cross-cousins do not belong to the lineage with ego, ego's siblings, and ego's parallel cousins, thus designating marriage between cross-cousins as exogamous group.

Descriptive terminology, in contrast to classificatory terminology, maintains a separation between lineal and collateral kin; for example, mother and mother's sister, although of the same generation and sex, are distinguished.

4.4.2 Radcliffe-Brown: African System of Kinship and Marriage

He insisted on the study of a kinship system as a field of rights and obligations and saw it as part of the social structure. Kinship system should be regarded as a special social relations that form part of a broader general network of social relations called social structure. For Radcliffe-Brown descent is both social and biological and hence the distinction between pater (social) and genitor (biological) father. He differentiated between two types of rights; 'Rights in personam' refers to certain rights that a husband has to his wife. By virtue of these rights, he may require the execution of her respective duties. If in relation to his wife, someone commits a violent action, the mechanism will take effect right in rem, and the offense will be treated as a crime against her husband. If in relation to his wife, someone commits a violent action, the mechanism will take effect right in rem, and the offense will be treated as a crime against her husband.

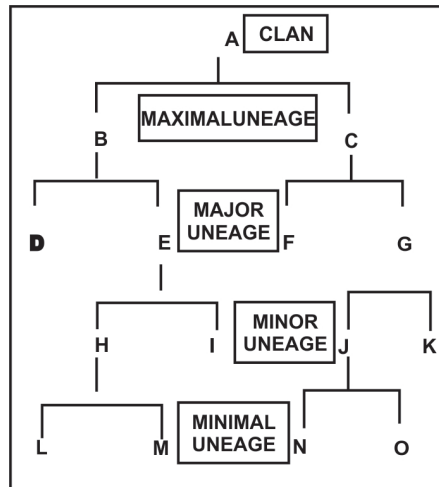
In the study of kinship system, Radcliffe Brown also focuses on kinship and kinship terminology. According to him, kinship terminology enables to understand the social structure. In simple societies kinship is the basis of social organisation, and is associated with a particular kinship term. Thus, by studying the kinship system and terminology of a society its social structure can be understood. He also emphasised upon the study of kinship functionally.

4.4.3 Evans-Pritchard: The Study of Nuer of Africa

Evans-Pritchard's study of the Nuer of the southern Sudan (1951) focused on kinship groups, particularly groups based on descent in the male line from known ancestor. He showed how clans functioned as political groups in Nuer society. He emphasised on the recruitment, perpetuation and functioning of such groups in Africa. Evans-Pritchard asserted that their social idiom is a bovine idiom and calls the relationship between cow and Nuer "symbiotic," because "cattle and men sustain life by their reciprocal services to one another". Nuer's life is of necessity migratory and transhumance, and is not governed by an evolved governing institution. Evans-Pritchard described the Nuer social system as 'ordered anarchy' because in their social life was actually strongly regulated on the basis of kinship.

Evans-Pritchard, in his study of the Nuer, developed the concept of 'segmentary lineage. Among the Nuer, a patrilineal society, lineage is a kinship group that traces descent in male line. Evans-Pritchard has described the Nuer clan as being highly segmented. The segments are genealogical structures, and we therefore refer to them as lineages. Though the clan is divided into segments, its lineages are distinct groups in relation to each other. Thus, in the diagram below, A is a clan which is segmented into maximal lineages B and C and these again bifurcate into major lineages D, E, F, and G. In the same manner, minor lineages H, I, J, and K are segments of major lineages E and G; and L, M, N,

and O are minimal lineages which are segments of minor lineages H and J. The whole clan is a genealogical structure, i.e. the letters represent persons to whom the clan and its segments trace their descent, and from whom they often take their names.



In tribal society, the segmentary lineage systems has an important place, especially in those tribal societies where lineage groups are based on descent through the male line. These agnatic groups are responsible for economic and political functioning of society. The patrilineage has collective ownership of, or particular claims on, important resources such as land and water sources. Segmentary lineage is found in society where there is the absence of organised political institution. And even without a stabilised government, lineage segmentation helps in maintaining formidable relation among the members of clan.

4.4.4 Meyer Fortes: The Study of Tallensi and Ashanti Kinship System

In Fortes "The Structure of Unilineal Descent Groups" (American Anthropologist, 1953) Fortes gave the theory of segmentary lineage. He suggested that the structure of unilineal descent group could be generalised and its position in the complete social system can be viewed. The social structure exhibited how territory and descent would connect with each other. Fortes portrayed Tallensi society in Northern Ghana as entirely built around the "lineage system. Whether he is worshipping ancestors, arranging marriages, allocating work, or exerting judicial authority, a Tallensi man's rights and responsibilities are determined by his position in his patrilineage. Although lineage membership is determined by kinship criteria, its functions are economic and political.

Descent and Filiation-Filiation stemmed from being the legitimate child of one's parents and was normally "bilateral, i.e. children were filiated to both parents. Descent as jural status was determined by pedigree — descent from a particular ancestor. In patrilineal cases, a man had descent and filiation links on his father's side, but only filiation on his mother's side. Filiation was relevant only in domestic contexts and descent was a politico-jural matter. Decent is unilateral whereas filiation is always bilateral.

Complementary filiation
Matrifiliation- The filiation with mother's side in patrilineal society.
Patrification- the filiation with father's side in matrilineal society.
Quazi filiation- the purchase of filiation by father in matrilineal society

1. Describe the Segmentary Lineage used by Evans-Pritchard in the study of Nuer Society.

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2. Discuss the difference between descent and filiation.

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4.5 CRITIQUES OF DESCENT THEORY

The descent approach was the dominant mode of studying family, marriage and kinship in the early 20th century. The theory helped to comprehend the social structure of society as neatly organised by the principal of unilineal descent (tracing descent in one line, either male or female). Descent was the basis for the political structure and the key to understanding these societies. Much of the features of descent theory were derived from the study done by British anthropologist in Africa. However, when anthropologist from United States and other parts of the world started doing research outside Africa, they realised that unilineal descent was not the only mode of group formation. The depiction of societies as neatly ordered by unilineal descent into clearly bounded, nested units of different scale was quite far from everyday political reality. Further these anthropologists also pointed out that descent theory only recognised sharing of blood whereas the importance of marriage in the formation of groups was negated. Descent theory therefore led to the differentiation between agnatic and affinal kin. The model given by the descent theorist was more or less normative and personal experiences of kinship could vary considerably from the normative models.

The inherent contradictions and limitations in the descent approach to the study of kinship propelled thinker like Levi-Strauss to construct a new theory based on exchange of women or alliance. Like the contemporaries, Levi-Strauss considered unilineal descent group as the core structure of kinship, however he advocated the formation of alliance due to the exchange of women. His theory was termed as alliance theory and was regarded as an advance to the descent

theory. The alliance theory also critiqued Radcliffe-Brown's understanding of the relation between family and clan. Radcliffe-Brown regarded elementary family universal as it created sentiments which took solidarity among siblings to a larger grouping. Levi-Strauss on the contrary argued that the siblings can be linked through the exchange of sisters in marriage. Another advance argument was made by Edmund Leach who critiqued the concept of complementary filiation given by Meyer Fortes. Complementary filiation, according Fortes was the result of the opposition of relation between affinal and consanguineal relations. For Leach, it was the system of preferential unilateral marriage alliances linked to the local group that helped to reckon segmentary lineage systems. Despite the critiques offering an alternative to the study of kinship system, the importance of descent approach cannot be negated. The theory contributes to the evolutionary understanding of society were formed. It also helps in moulding itself into other broader model of society.

4.6 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt about the descent approach to the study of kinship. According to the descent approach a person's place in society was largely determined by his or her position within the kinship system. The descent theorist emphasised on tracing the genealogical origin by blood relations or in terms of descent. Some of the key anthropologist who used the descent approach were Henry Maine, Radcliffe-Brown, Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes. The descent principle has been practiced differently in North and South India. The descent approach has been critiqued and led to the evolution of alliance approach to study of kinship.

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Unit 2 –Descent and Alliance Theories–E-gyankosh, available online at <http://egyankosh.ac.in/bitstream/123456789/41275/1/Unit-2.pdf> Online lecture, video available at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mPMz847Cy94>

4.8 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

1. Descent can be defined as a relationship defined by connection to an ancestor (or ancestress) through a culturally recognised sequence of parent-child links.
2. In unilineal descent a single line is used to trace genealogical connections, it is either through male or female line. It is known as patrilineal descent when the male line is used and when female line is used it is called matrilineal descent. In double descent both male and female lines are used for tracing descent. In such society there is the formation of both patrilineal and matrilineal.

Check Your progress 2

1. The British anthropologist, unlike their predecessor, were not interested in the evolution of the society. They were more concerned with the constitution of the structure and the inter relations between different parts. Therefore society was viewed as having a systematic order resulting due to the inter relation and dependence of different parts.
2. The features of social groups formed on basis of descent are:
 - i. Descent groups are permanent social units, whose members claim common ancestry.
 - ii. Descent groups assume important corporate functions such as land ownership, political representation & mutual aid and support.
 - iii. Descent groups were the mechanisms for maintaining political order in stateless societies.
 - iv. Membership of the group is determined at birth and is a life-long membership. The descent group endures over time even though membership changes.

Check Your Progress 3

1. Segmentary lineage is a model of social organisation based on a branching system of kinship descent. Lineage is a kinship group that traces descent in male line. Evans-Pritchard has described the Nuer clan as being highly segmented. The segments are genealogical structures, and we therefore refer to them as lineages. Though the clan is divided into segments, its lineages are distinct groups in relation to each other. In tribal society, the segmentary lineage systems has an important place, especially in those tribal societies where lineage groups are based on descent through the male line. These agnatic groups are responsible for economic and political functioning of society. The patrilineage has collective ownership of, or particular claims on, important resources such as land and water sources.

Segmentary lineage is found in society where there is the absence of organised political institution. And even without a stabilised government, lineage segmentation helps in maintaining formidable relation among the members of clan.

2. Meyer Fortes made the distinction between descent and filiation. Descent refers to the genealogical connection recognised between a person and any of his/her ancestor/ancestress. 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. Descent may be unilineal but filiation is always bilateral, having attachment to both the parent.



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UNIT 5: ALLIANCE*

Structure

- 5.0 Objectives
- 5.1 Introduction
- 5.2 Marriage as a Form of Exchange
- 5.3. Rules of Alliance
 - 5.3.1 Incest Taboo
 - 5.3.2 Rule of Exogamy
- 5.4 Levi-Strauss- Elementary and Complex Structure
- 5.5 Louis Dumont- Dravidian Kinship
- 5.6 Rodney Needham- New Development to Alliance Approach
- 5.7 Let Us Sum Up
- 5.8 References
- 5.10 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

5.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading the unit, you will be able to:

- Explain alliance approach and its significance in kinship and the rules of marriage;
- Discuss the complex structure of kinship as developed by Levi-Strauss;
- Look at the Dravidian kinship of cross cousin marriage as explained by Louis Dumont;
- Narrate the revisions put forward by Rodney Needham;
- Discuss the salient feature of alliance approach in kinship.

5.1 INTRODUCTION

Kinship is a system of recognising relationship by marriage, blood and social relationship. Thus, kinship relations can be studied through three approaches-cultural approach, affinal, consanguineal/ biological approach. Descent approach dominated the British social anthropology from the 1940s to 1960s. It was developed out of earlier anthropological theories which had as their central concern the relationship between kinship and territory and between family and kin group. This school of thought interpreted the kinship behaviour in terms of the function of corporate groups, sibling solidarity and agnatic unity (relatives from the male/father's side), and drew attention to important issues such as the organization of local groups, kinship relations, regulations of marriage, residence, inheritance and succession.

The alliance approach is a development over the descent approach and criticises it on the ground that it lays too much emphasis on consanguineal relations, leaving behind relations formed by marriage. In this approach, the emphasis is to understand those kin members who are related by affinal relation and thereby understanding the kinship network. Kinship according to this approach consists of a number of components – descent, inheritance, marriage, affinity and residence. Levi-Strauss and Dumont in their ‘The Elementary Structures of Kinship’ and ‘Marriage Alliance’ respectively talk of the alliance approach. The basic features of alliance approach to the study of kinship are:

- It holds that the basic principle of kinship is the incest taboo: i.e. the near-universal rule that one marries outside of a close category of relatives.
- In tribal societies, this is expressed at the level of the lineage or clan in the rule of exogamy.
- The function of this rule is to establish marriage ties between lineages and so knit the society together.
- Most basic form is symmetrical alliance, in which two lineages, groups of lineages or moieties exchange women between them. Levi-Strauss also referred to this as restricted exchange and saw it as disharmonious because only two groups were united in marriage alliances. Basic monad was two kinship groups exchanging women.
- A different form was asymmetrical alliances, in which wife-giving lineages, wife-taking lineages and others are distinguished and marriages are arranged such that theoretically all lineages can be related to each other in a kind of chain. This Levi-Strauss also termed harmonious exchange. It is found in highland south and Southeast Asia.

5.2 MARRIAGE AS A FORM OF EXCHANGE

According to Louis Dumont ‘alliance’ refers to the repetition of intermarriage between larger or smaller groups. The concept of marriage alliance was developed by Levi-Strauss to deal specifically with societies which practice cross-cousin marriage. According to Levi-Strauss such forms of marriage are but specific aspects of system of the exchange of women between groups which creates perpetual marriage alliance between them. He considered the exchange of women as a primary form of exchange which preceded symbolic exchange of gifts. Exchange of gift was a medium for the transition from the animal world of nature to the human one of culture. The exchange of women was considered as supreme because of their ability to reproduce the gift and hence he regarded women as supreme gift. This gift had to be exchanged because of incest taboo which prohibited women from entering into sexual relation with men of their close group. Thus, women had to be exchanged reciprocally among groups to ensure continuity of the society. Thus, the twin principle of reciprocity and incest taboo led to marriage alliance through exchange of women. Marriage as a form of exchange helps us differentiate between two groups i.e. the wife-takers and wife-givers as placed in a structure of hierarchy in the social system. The status of the two group depends on the system of descent. In patrilineal society the status of the wife-taker is higher than the status of the wife-giver and it is the reverse in matrilineal society.

5.3 RULES OF MARRIAGE

Marriage is not only about sexual relationship and reproduction but also as a mechanism for reinforcing alliance between networks of groups of people. As such the creation of the alliance goes along with certain rules or guidelines that specify who should marry whom, as either is a matter of preference or prohibition. Incest taboo and exogamy is the foremost rule regulating the formation of alliance.

5.3.1 Incest Taboo

The rule of incest which prohibits sexual relation between certain categories of person is the most important rule which regulates mating. In the West incest is defined rather narrowly as the sexual relation between parent and children and between siblings. By contrast the Nuer concept of 'rual' which Evans-Pritchard used for incest prohibited sexual relation between members of same clan, between cognates up to six generations and between man and woman who married other men of his lineage. Whether defined narrowly or broadly, the basic principle of incest rule is that it implies that members who are prohibited from having sexual relation are automatically forbidden from getting married. The rule of incest prohibition has been expressed positively by Levi-Strauss in the sense that rather than prohibiting members from having sexual relation it forces men to seek spouse outside their own group. Because of the rule the men are not allowed to marry women of their group, hence should search for their spouse and they do so by giving their daughters and sisters in exchange of wives. The rule of incest thus not only enables in looking for marriage partners but also in establishing an alliance between two or more groups, thus creates solidarity between them. In his understanding of the incest prohibition as a positive rule, Levi-Strauss considered rules of marriage and rules of sexual relation as synonymous. However, it is not same in all societies and there is a need to differentiate between the two. In some societies, sexual relation between certain categories of kin are allowed but marriage between them strictly prohibited. One of the most important rules governing marriage is the rule of exogamy.

5.3.2 Rule of Exogamy

The rule of exogamy prohibits marriage within specific groups and thereby prescribes marriage partners outside one's own group. The function of the rule of exogamy is thus to establish exchange between families and to integrate them into a larger social structure. In many societies, the rule of exogamy prohibits marriage between social categories which includes near relatives but also to distant consanguineous or collateral relationships. The rule of incest and rule of exogamy can be explained in terms of prohibition and the prescription which helps in understanding the of alliance approach. In all societies it is seen that there is prohibition of marriage with certain relatives and prescription of marriage with others relatives. The prescribed rule is a positive rule of marriage whereas the prohibition rule is a negative rule of marriage. For instance, in the Dravidian kinship the prescription for marriage is cross- cousins and prohibition is for the parallel-cousins. According to Levi-Strauss societies with positive marriage rules have elementary structure of kinship and societies with negative marriage rule have complex structure. Thus, alliance theory is developed to deal with those types of kinship systems that embody positive marriage and helps in further understanding kinship network. It consists of the combination of the positive marriage rule with exogamy, or atleast a prohibition against marriage between parallel cousins.

5.4 LEVI-STRAUSS: ELEMENTARY AND COMPLEX STRUCTURE

In his book 'The Elementary Structures of Kinship', Levi Strauss asserted that 'the primitive and irreducible character of the kinship unit is a consequence of the incest taboo'. The taboo has no other object than to permit the circulation or women. Thus, kinship was based on alliance or exchange of women. Owing to the universal taboo on incest, no descent group and no family could perpetuate itself alone. All were compelled to contract alliance in order to reproduce themselves for regeneration of family and society. Thus, for Levi-Strauss, alliance takes precedence over descent as the core for the functioning of kinship and kinship is nothing but the exchange of women between two or more groups.

The exchange of women depended on the type of marriage rule, on the basis of which Levi-Strauss differentiated between two different structural "models" of exchange.

- 1) **Elementary structure-** societies that followed positive marriage rules that prescribes the category of person one could marry. The rule states that the cross-cousins are prescribed marriage partners. These structures are found among the Australian aborigines, certain parts of South-East Asia, Southern India and Aborigines of South America.

Two types of cousins

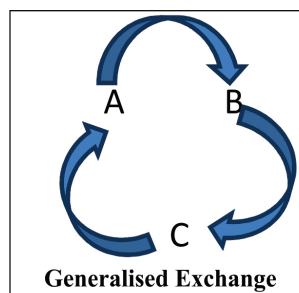
Parallel cousins are children of siblings of same sex (e.g.-Mothers' sister daughter/son and father brother's daughter/son)

Cross cousins are children of siblings of opposite sex (e.g. mother's brother's daughter/son or father's sister)

- 2) **Complex Structure-** the practice of negative marriage rule i.e., one is prohibited from marrying a person from a certain category. The negative rule does not allow one to marry one's parallel cousins, siblings and parents. This is found in Europe, Africa and among the Inuit/Eskimos.

In his discussion, Levi-Strauss focuses more on the elementary structure and treats marriage rules as the institution that binds society together. To demonstrate how this occurs, he distinguished between two types of elementary structures- **Generalised and Restricted exchange**.

Generalised exchange involves preferential marriage between groups, larger than the conjugal family. It involves three or more groups exchanging women in one direction. If we denote the groups as A, B and C then the direction of exchange is that group A gives woman to B, group B to C and group C gives woman to A thus forming a circle. Here exchange is delayed and indirect.

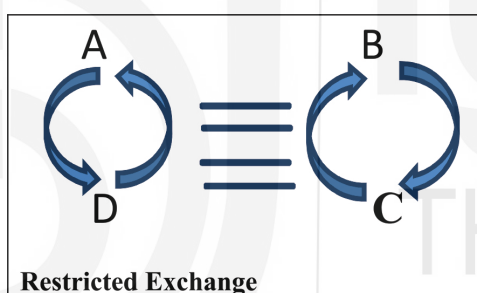


Generalised exchange is also referred to as asymmetrical or disharmonic because there is no relation of equality between wife-takers and wife-givers.

Box 1. An Example of Asymmetrical Exchange: The Purum of Assam

- The Purum have a ranked lineage system. The crucial rule in such systems is that a lineage that gives wives to a group cannot take wives from it.
- All lineages are therefore divided into:
 - Wife-giving lineages.
 - Wife-receiving or wife-taking lineages.
 - One's own lineage.
 - Other lineages with whom marriages have not been contracted.
- Marriages are with the classificatory mother's brother's daughter.
- Hence women characteristically move in one direction, goods and bride-service move in the opposite direction.

Restricted exchange—In this type of exchange, two kin groups, other than the family, supplies each other marriage partners. The men of one group marry women from other group and vice-versa. Such a system occurs in all parts of the world but is particularly popular among the aborigines in Australia. If we denote the society with the letters A, B, C & D, the marriage rule may be depicted by the following diagram:



In the diagram the double lines connote the pairs of sections that supplies each other with marriage partners (A & B, C & D). All four sections are connected with each other through the fact that children do not belong to the section of either of the parents. For example, if a man from section A marries a woman from section B, their children belong to section C. A woman of section A marries a man from section C, their children belong to section D. Similarly C & D intermarry and their children belong to A or B depending on the particular father-mother common. A or B never inter-marries directly with C or D. According to Radcliffe-Brown, these sections do not refer to local groups but are merely status groups whose members must marry members of some other group. Here the reciprocity is direct and immediate. It is also known as symmetrical, direct or harmonic exchange because there is a relation of reciprocity between two groups exchanging women.

Box 2. An Example of Symmetrical Exchange: The Kareira of Australia

- The Kareira of Australia are a patrilineal society who follow restricted exchange.
- They have four section system in which two sections are subdivided into two or more by generation.
- The four sections are Karimera and Burung and Palyeri and Banaka.

- Both exchange wives between themselves; i.e. Karimera and Palyeri will exchange women and so will the Burung and Banaka.
- Children of a Karimera man and Palyeri woman will be Burung; children of a Burung man and Banaka woman will be Karimera. Vice-versa if we consider women, since this is a patrilineal society.
- Entire universe is divided into 'us' and 'them', those who you cannot marry and those who you can and should.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Compare and contrast the two types of exchange in elementary structure of kinship.

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- 2) Explain the feature of symmetrical exchange as practiced among the Kareira of Australia.

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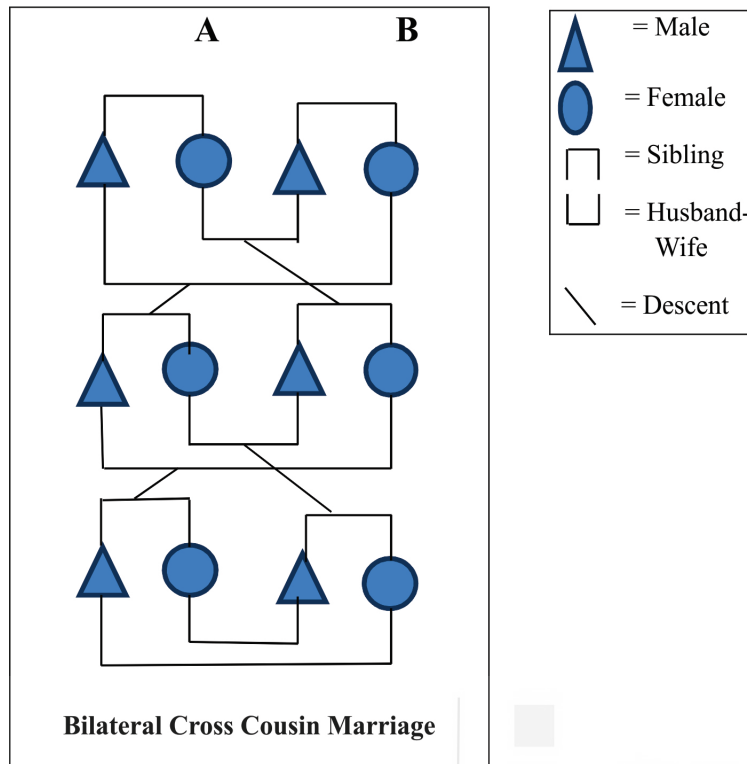
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5.5 LOUIS DUMONT: DRAVIDIAN KINSHIP

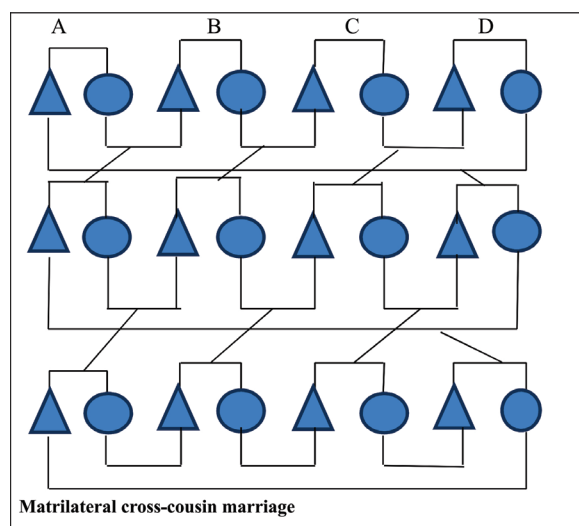
Louis Dumont studied the Dravidian kinship as an expression of marriage. He viewed affinity as an enduring system through which the continuity from one generation to next occurs. His main thesis was that kinship terminology is a reflection of alliance rather than descent. In his study of Tamil Kallar kinship system in South India, Dumont showed that there is a preferential marriage rule of cross-cousin, i.e. there exists an explicit rule that states that a man should marry a woman who is either a true cross-cousin or is placed in the same category as his true cross-cousins by kinship terminology. Thus, Dravidian kinship terminology is explicitly associated with cross-cousin marriage rules. The consequence of the cross-cousin marriage rule that affinity (kinship through marriage) is transmitted from one generation to the other. If all transmissions between generations takes place in one and the same direction, it is known as harmonic. If some features are transmitted patrilineally and some as matrilineally then it is a disharmonic system. Dumont argues that affinity thus acquires a diachronic dimension, which Western systems only attribute to consanguinity. He outlines three types of cross-cousin marriage:

1. Bilateral Cross-cousin marriage-The ego (individual) marries his MBD (Mother's Brother's Daughter) who is also his FZD (Father's Sister Daughter). In other words, two intermarrying groups exchange women as wives and thus constitute a self-sufficient unit. It is also known as sister exchange. Levi-Strauss called this type of exchange as closed or restricted exchange and correlates with disharmonic transmission.



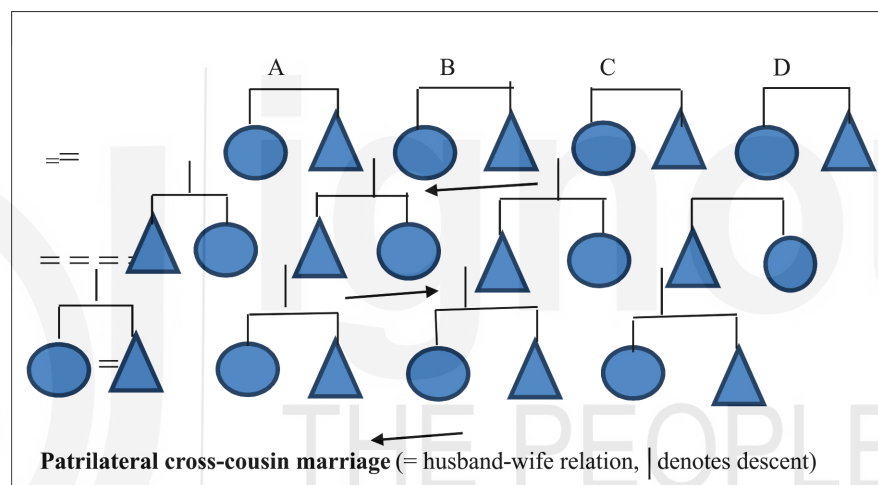
The regular application of the bilateral cross cousin marriage rule creates a permanent alliance between a pair of lineages (A and B) through the continuous intermarriage between the men of A and the women of B and vice versa. This arrangement is often further articulated into dual organizations or moiety systems, in which basic social units are composed of paired groups linked by marriage relationships. The Yanomamo of Amazonia provide an example. Their basic social unit is the village, composed of between 50 and 200 inhabitants. Each such settlement is composed of two localised patrilineages or, in effect, patrilineal moieties. The lineages are closely bound into a unified social order by intermarriage through the firm imposition of the bilateral cross cousin rule.

2. Matrilateral cross-cousin marriage- The ego marries his MBD who is his matrilateral cross cousin. If this rule is applied consistently to everyone, the pattern of lineage intermarriage established in the previous generation is duplicated exactly. Ego, a man from lineage B marries a woman from lineage A, a repetition of the marriage of Ego's father and mother. This pattern is repeated for all the other lineages in the same manner as depicted in the diagram below.



The application of the same cross-cousin rule in the next generation continues the circulation of women into the same lineages as in the previous two. Where a system of bilateral cross-cousin marriage results in exchange and alliances between paired lineages, matrilineal cross-cousin marriage can unite any given number of lineages in a continuous pattern of circular exchanges. Because of the cycling of marriages through the system of matrilineal exchanges, this system is sometimes termed **circulating connubium**.

3). Patrilineal Cross-Cousin Marriage-The ego must marry his father's sister's daughter, or his patrilineal cross-cousin. In the diagram below, the man from lineage A marries woman of lineage B, man of lineage B marries woman from lineage C and man from C marries woman from lineage A. The exchange of women creates a circulating connubium just like matrilineal cross-cousin marriage but the difference here is that the direction of transfer of women changes in every generation in such a manner that it is in same direction in alternating direction as indicated by the direction of arrow in the diagram (generation 1 & 3 and generation 2 & 4).



Matrilineal cross cousin marriage leads to a long cycle of generalised exchange while patrilineal cross cousin marriage leads to a short cycle only. The long cycle promotes more solidarity than the short cycle because it creates alliance involving more kinship groups. This is the reason, according to Levi-Strauss for the greater prevalence of matrilineal cross cousin marriage in ethnographic records.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) Briefly describe bilateral cross-cousin marriage.

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- 2) Give two differences between matrilineal cross-cousin marriage and patrilineal cross-cousin marriage.

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5.6 RODNEY NEEDHAM: NEW DEVELOPMENT TO ALLIANCE APPROACH

The theory of Levi Strauss has been criticized by Edmund Leach and Rodney Needham on the following grounds:

1. Levi-Strauss considers women as a commodity, 'something' to be exchanged'. This he does by looking at marriage exclusively from men's perspective and does not go in to details of residence and other aspects of kinship systems
2. He uses incest prohibition and exogamy as synonymous in understanding marriage exchange which is a circular argument.
3. His understanding of marriage as a system of exchange has been questioned on two counts: (a) It introduces an analogy between women and chattels whereby women are treated as property to be universally most prized 'valuables'. (b) There is neglect of women's agency and does not take into account women's feeling while discussing exchange.
4. There is a narrow understanding of the concept of exchange, limited to one-to-one relation. In reality exchange can be wide and abstract happening between many groups of people.
5. According to Levi-Strauss there is a cyclical relation between prohibition, exogamy and positive marriage. He uses the functionalist perspective to explain the relation between parts and whole. This is only one way of understanding social reality and need not necessary be true always.

Due to the above limitations Levi-Strauss' theory of alliance has undergone modifications and developments by Rodney Needham. Needham suggested the following improvement to the understanding of alliance:

1. A clear-cut distinction is made between prescriptive and preferential marriage rule. According to Levi-Strauss prescription and preference marriage rules are more or less the same. Needham criticized Levi-Strauss on the ground that alliance theory of Levi-Strauss deals only with prescription. Prescription is defined more as the characteristic of a system than as simply a marriage rule. It involves the combination of a rule prescribing some relatives and prohibiting others. It is seen that relations that are prescribed might not be preferred.
2. The main development has probably been a refinement of the concept of alliance and the substitution of it with more structural understanding for a more empirical notion. Needham tries to focus on alliance at the empirical level i.e. at smaller groups.
3. As opposed to Levi-Strauss' understanding of alliance as cyclical, Needham suggests that alliance is dualistic.
4. Further for Needham, the important opposition between the wife givers and wife takers is not necessarily a group activity because it can take place in smaller groups and not always in larger groups like lineage.

Thus, according to Needham, marriage is symbolic in nature. It thus does not deal only with sexual relations (prohibition and prescription) but also with caste purity, recruitment of caste and political significance. He explains this with reference the Nayars of South India, about whom you have read in unit

2. He also highlights how a child gets membership of higher caste and thereby political power due to hypergamous marriage (i.e. marrying a man of higher caste).

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) Discuss any three limitations in Levi-Strauss's alliance theory.

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- 2) What are the main contributions of Needham to alliance approach?

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5.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have understood the alliance approach in the study of kinship. It was developed by Levi-Strauss from structural perspective and was further developed by Louis Dumont and Rodney Needham. We have learnt that Levi-Strauss understood alliance with reference to groups or lineages exchanging women due to the cultural practice of incest taboo and exogamy. He further elaborated the exchange of women in terms of structural models- the elementary and complex. Louis Dumont in his study of the Dravidian kinship argued that affinity was as important as descent or consanguinity in understanding kinship system. The Dravidian marriage rules were based on cross-cousin marriage, that is, the prescribed marriage partner for the ego is either his MBD or FZD. Depending on the type of cross-cousin, Dumont classified three types of cross cousin marriage- bilateral, matrilineal and patrilineal cross cousin marriage. Needham further refined the alliance theory by differentiating between prescriptive and preferential marriage rules.

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5.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Two types of exchange in elementary structure of Kinship
Generalized/Indirect Exchange Restricted/Direct Exchange
 1. Rule of descent and rule of residence are same, system is harmonic. That is patrilineal descent with patrilocal residence Rule of descent and rule of residence are not same or disharmonic
 2. Reciprocity is indirect and delayed, the group does not take woman from the group to which it has given woman Reciprocity is direct and assured, that is a group takes a woman from the group to which it gives woman
 3. Marriage with either matrilineal cross-cousin, i.e. MBD (mother's brother daughter) or patrilineal cross cousin, i.e. FZD (father's sister daughter). Marriage of person with his bilateral cross cousins
- 2) The feature of asymmetrical exchange as found among Kareira of Australia are:
 1. A patrilineal society with restricted exchange. They have four section system in which two sections are subdivided into two or more by generation.
 2. The four sections are Karimera and Burung and Palyeri and Banaka.
 3. Both exchange wives between themselves; i.e. Karimera and Palyeri will exchange women and so will the Burung and Banaka.
 4. Children of a Karimera man and Palyeri woman will be Burung; children of a Burung man and Banaka woman will be Karimera. Vice-versa if we consider women, since this is a patrilineal society.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) In the system of bilateral Cross-cousin marriage, the ego marries his MBD (Mother's Brother's Daughter) who is also his FZD (Father's Sister Daughter). In other words, two intermarrying groups exchange women as wives and thus constitute a self-sufficient unit. It is also known as sister exchange. Levi-Strauss called this type of exchange as closed or restricted exchange and correlates with disharmonic transmission.
- 2) Two differences between patrilineal cross-cousin marriage and patrilineal cross cousin marriages are
 - a) In patrilineal cross-cousin marriage the ego must marries his father's sister's daughter, or his patrilineal cross cousin. In matrilineal cross cousin marriage, the ego marries his mother's brother's daughter or matrilineal cross cousin.
 - b) The direction of transfer of women changes in every generation in such a manner that it is in same direction in alternating direction whereas in matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, the direction of exchange of woman is same in every generation.

Check Your Progress 3

- 1) The three limitations in Levi-Strauss's alliance theory are:
 - a) Levi-Strauss considers women as a commodity, 'something' to be exchanged'. This he does by looking at marriage exclusively from men's perspective and does not take into account residence and other related aspects of kinship system
 - b) He uses incest prohibition and exogamy as synonymous in understanding marriage exchange which is tautological.
 - c) There is a narrow understanding of the concept of exchange, limited to one-to-one relation. In reality exchange can be wide and abstract happening between many groups of people.
- 2) The main contributions of Needham to alliance approach are:
 - a) A refinement of the concept of alliance and the substitution of it with more structural understanding for a more empirical notion.
 - b) The important opposition between the wife givers and wife takers is not necessarily a group activity because it can take place in smaller groups and not always in larger groups like lineage.
 - c) Marriage is symbolic in nature and emphasis should be paid to meanings and symbols rather than only direction of exchange.

UNIT 6: FICTIVE*

Structure

6.0 Objectives

6.1 Introduction

6.2 Fictive Kin: An approach to Kinship

6.2.1 Related terms – Relatedness, Kinshipping etc

6.2.2 Types of Fictive Relations

6.3 Factors for Formation of Fictive Ties

6.3.1 Absence of Family like Setting

6.3.2 Religious Practices

6.3.3 Sharing of Common Substance or Life Situation

6.3.4 Honour/Respect for Non-kin members

6.3.5 Medical/Legal Requirement

6.4 Cultural Manifestations of Fictive Kinship

6.4.1 Feast of Souls

6.4.2 Miteri

6.4.3 Compadrazgo

6.4.4 Gurung tradition of 'Rodi'

6.4.5 Sorority among American Communities

6.5 Strengths of Fictive Relations

6.5.1 Build Social Network and Strengthens Community

6.5.2 Used as a Form of Address

6.5.3 Relevant as a Mode for Socialisation

6.6 Problem with Concept of Fictive

6.7 Let Us Sum Up

6.8 References

6.9 Specimen Answers to Check Your Progress

6.0 OBJECTIVES

After reading this unit you will be able to:

- Explain that kinship is also cultural construction;
- Narrate different fictive kinship practices across cultures;
- Relate the problems associated with the term fictive

6.1 INTRODUCTION

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

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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.

The creation of fictive relation requires individuals having prolonged physical proximity in order to develop a relationship that is both interdependent and mutually beneficial. Such bonding consistently contributing to the emotional or material needs of an individual over time. Non-kind bonds of interpersonal association were more prominent in the tribal and peasant society but also found in the modern urban society. Rather it is found in greater number in contemporary society because of increase in social and geographic mobility and soaring divorce rates. These changes have led to formation of non-traditional family forms based more on voluntary ties and social networks.

Some of the salient features of fictive kinship are:

1. Fictive relationships are defined by criteria distinct from those establishing blood or marriage relationships. They may mimic the ties they copy, but they are defined in their own terms. These terms may have a religious or economic component, be predicated on existing social networks, or manipulate reality to fill gaps in real kinship networks.
2. Fictive kin are accorded many of the same rights and statuses as family members and are expected to participate in the duties of the extended family.
3. Relation are non-voluntary but involves a set of responsibilities and obligations.
4. Emulates even distant relationship as in the case of cousins and the practice of individuals becoming “honorary” uncles to their friend’s children.
5. Ensures the extension of kinship relation and terminology to a wide network of people

A comparison of pure kinship formed on basis of blood and marriage and fictive kinship is illustrated below.

Comparison between Pure kinship and Fictive kinship		
	Pure kinship	Fictive kinship
1.	Defined in relation to blood or marriage	Defined in relation to the fact of sharing and relating
2.	It is non-voluntary in the sense that relations are established on birth, especially those through blood. Even rules of marriage prescribes the relatives through marriage.	It is voluntary and often create in individual’s everyday social life.
3.	It assumes that kinship is universal and uniform in every culture.	It points at the relevance of cultural specificity.
4.	Responsibilities defined through blood and marriage are clear and identifiable.	There is a sense of ambiguity and lack of clarity in defining roles and responsibilities.

5.	Relationships are permanent and assumed to exist even after death.	Relationships are impermanent. They can change over the life course. And can even be dissolved at any time.
6.	Blood and marriage creates one to many relations, i.e. a marriage not only creates a relation between husband and wife but also with relatives of both.	Is restricted to individual and does not extend to other members. For example, someone's fictive sister does not automatically becomes a fictive child of that person's mother.

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) Briefly outline three features of fictive kinship.

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- 2) Discuss any three difference between pure kinship based on blood and marriage and fictive kinship. Use three lines to answer.

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6.2 FICTIVE KIN: AN APPROACH TO KINSHIP

The early view that kinship is based on biological and affinal relationship was critiqued on the ground that it was shaped largely by western notion of natural and universal importance of blood ties. Such a view excluded a variety of culture in which kinship was not based on the natural facts of marriage and reproduction. The critiques argued that it not the mere fact of biology that defined kinship. Kinship can also be based on large number of other factors which are social and thus kinship is a process in which relations are created in multiple ways. In an attempt to revitalise kinship, the concept of 'fictive' was used to study systems of kinship that was not based on blood and marriage.

6.2.1 Related terms – Relatedness, Kinshipping etc.

According to Lewis Morgan there are two kinds of kinship classes: the descriptive or natural and the classificatory or the artificial. The later or classificatory kinship has also been described as fictive or claimed kinship referring to relations without evidence of biological descent. This type of relationship is often used to encourage social and political interaction.

Another way fictive kinship has been described in anthropology is the use of the term relatedness. The term was used 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. Rather kinship is more social in the sense that relations are constructed through relatedness.

Shyrock, Trautman and Gamble have used the term 'kinshipping' to describe the human ability to construct relations that are not based on genetic kinship but which nonetheless allows people to move freely between non-related groups.

It implies that kinship relations are no longer only face to face experience nor based only on genetic ties. It elaborates the social ability of human to construct relation beyond blood and marriage. It is the process by which people decide who family is and who is a stranger.

6.2.2 Types of Fictive Relations

Since fictive kinship varies from culture to culture there is existence of different types of relations described as fictive. There are different ways in which fictive kinship has been classified. One type of categorisation is on the basis of the formation of relationship, it could of three types- peer group, religious group and bonds of friendship. Then there is the distinction between horizontal relation, those between peer groups resembling sibling ties and the vertical or those resembling intergenerational ties, example co-parenting.

6.3 FACTORS FOR FORMATION OF FICTIVE TIES

Not all close non-kin ties are transformed into fictive kin and not every individual is equally likely to designate close others as part of the family. Relationships are negotiated over time and circumstances. There are many factors or conditions under which fictive ties are created, established and maintained. Fictive relations develop over time, involve frequent contact and requires close proximity and support.

6.3.1 Absence of Family like setting

The absence of certain primary family relationships often leads to the desire to be surrounded by close relatives. As a result a non-family relationship develop into a family-like relationship where members feels the sense of belonging. Thus fictive kin ties often formed when primary family ties such as adult children or a partner is missing or absent. For example in Africa, the slave population replace their absent extended family with “fictive kin,” from the same ethnic or national community to perform the role of absent family members. Another example is that of immigrant who are in foreign land without their primary family members. They cultivate interpersonal ties with the co-workers in an effort to cope with uncertainty and resource scarcity. Such form of kinship is relevant to people who form relationships in which they regard another as being part of their family due to ties of affection or emotional significance. Non-traditional family forms such as gay and lesbian unions can also be defined as fictive kinship. Lesbian and Gay men who are rejected by their family and are excluded from cultural definition of family create fictive kin with their homosexual partners as a way to legitimise and reinforce their relationship.

6.3.2 Religious Practice

Fictive kin associations are established in a religious setting, like a baptism. Baptisms are the act of initiating an individual into a religion and making them a part of a network of people with shared beliefs. The godparents of the individual being baptised form a fictive kinship connection with the newly baptised, their parents and with any other godparents the baptised person may have. Further, members of religious movements may refer to each other as "brother" or "sister" while observing the rules and prohibitions attached to those statuses. The act of being part of the same religious ceremonies and rituals also creates a sense of relatedness and may develop into kinship ties.

6.3.3 Sharing of Common Substance or Life Situation

Fictive relations are created and maintained in many avenues outside the traditional sites of kinship, mainly family, clan etc. The military has also been an avenue to propagate fictive kinship, such as the sense of brotherhood felt by the soldiers. Fictive kinship has been demonstrated among the spouses of military men and women as well. These relationships may facilitate close bonds that are beneficial during times of hardship. Another example is the establishment of brotherhood among migrants and immigrants. They are known to form pseudo-families in which they cooperate within living and working situations. These relationships benefit them by creating a support system that would otherwise be unavailable to those living far from home. Crime networks and youth gangs employ kinship bonds and ideas of "blood brotherhood" as organising principles.

6.3.4. Honour/Respect for Non-kin Members

In many societies fictive kinship can be observed in everyday life as a form of showing respect. Older middle aged men and women (late 30s and above) are termed as 'uncle' or 'auntie', usually by people who are younger in comparison. In this context these terms are used as form of friendly yet respectful address to an older person. It also creates a temporary and seemingly familiar relationship and helps to facilitate interaction. It is also common for one to address friends of parents as 'auntie' or 'uncle'.

6.3.5 Medical/Legal Requirement

Some fictive kin relationships have been discovered in Israel in relation to organ transplants. Hospital committees are formed to assess whether the organ donation is from a true family member or from a friend. In order to obtain organ transplants, some individuals are forced to find strangers and pay them compensation for the procedure. However, the relationship between the donor and recipient must be invented as a familial relationship in order to pass through the hospital committee. In this case, fictive kinship is created knowingly to both parties in order to achieve their goals, and is mutualistic in nature.

Check Your progress 2

- 1) Discuss any four conditions that can lead to the creation of fictive ties in society.

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6.4 CULTURAL MANIFESTATIONS OF FICTIVE KINSHIP

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

6.4.1 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.

6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 Compadrazgo

Compadrazgo is 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 formalises bonds between godparents, parent and children.

6.4.4. Gurung tradition of 'Rodi'

A noted Gurung tradition is the institution of "Rodi", where teenagers form fictive kinship bonds and become Rodi members to socialise, perform communal tasks, and find marriage partners. This is an institution by teenagers formed in the aim of socialisation, to undertake cultural responsibilities together and to look for marriage potentials.

6.4.5. 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

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 3

2). Explain the following:

a. Miteri

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b. Compadrazgo

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c. Sorority	Fictive
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6.5 STRENGTHS OF FICTIVE RELATIONS

Fictive kinship is as important as, or more important than, comparable relationships created by blood, marriage, or adoption. Today fictive kin persists as a form of extended kin for pooling resources, extending familial networks, and extending social support among many ethnically marginalised families.

6.5.1 Builds Social Network and Strengthens Community

Fictive relationships serve to broaden mutual support networks, create a sense of community, and enhance social control. In essence, fictive kin ties elaborate social networks and regularise interactions with people otherwise outside the boundaries of family. It enables people who do not have a place in the kinship system to be adopted into the system and therefore being accepted in the community. It fosters a sense of community and regularises interactions with people outside the boundaries of family. Fictive relationships serve to broaden mutual support networks, create a sense of community, and enhance social control.

6.5.2 Used as a Form of Address

Fictive kinship is used as a form of address which expresses familiarity or as a public validation or for replacement kin (Ibsen and Klobus 1972). In Ju/'hoansi society, of the Kalahari desert one way to define a kinship relationship is by namesake. Children are named after ancestors and all persons with the same name are sibling and regarded as 'brother' or 'sister'. Further anyone with the same name of father is regarded as 'father' and so on. This allows establishing familiar relationship between distant relatives or strangers.

6.5.3 Relevant as a Mode for Socialisation

Fictive kinship can be considered as a social lubricant, in association with manners and courtesy. Manners help society to run more smoothly and ease social tensions as it encourages people to act in consideration of others. Fictive kinship is therefore an important and highly used function in society for people to posit themselves in relationships and act accordingly to each other. It is viewed as the normal idiom of social relations.

6.5.4 Acts as a Resource to Face Unfamiliar Environment

A fictive kin system enhances an immigrant's social capital and becomes a resource for aiding their integration into a new society. Social capital through fictive kinship acts as a support in the process of settling into an unfamiliar environment. 'Fictive kin serve as social and economic resources that can be used in a hostile social environment. Migrants can use these relationships to form closer ties between themselves and another individual, giving them an ally in their new home through spirituality. Fictive kinship exists to provide support to newcomers in the population.

6.6 PROBLEM WITH CONCEPT OF FICTIVE

The term tends to subsume all forms of relationship under one all-encompassing notion. This masks distinction that may remain important in people's everyday lives. A major problem with the concept of fictive kinship is that it is applied so liberally that its usefulness for comparative purposes is open to question. All fictive kin relationships are defined in their own terms and are subjective to change leading to lack of permanence. Fictive kin terms are sometimes used not to label or supplementary or replacement kin but to describe and validate familiarity. Blended and same sex family illustrates this problem. Further fictive kinship is "catch-all" term used for describing often misleading relationships that do not follow a typical kinship pattern.

6.7 LET US SUM UP

In this unit we have learnt about fictive as an approach to study kinship relations that are based outside blood and marriage. The term fictive became relevant in anthropology due to the limitation in the descent and alliance approach. These approaches emphasised on kinship as natural and universal. We also examined the different conditions, like religious practice, absence of family, sharing of substance that led to the creation of fictive kinship. The practice of fictive kinship in different societies has been explained in order to comprehend its cultural manifestation. Fictive kinship like pure kinship serves several functions in society. It extends the network of relations beyond blood and affinal kin. At the end of the unit some of the problems of the concept of fictive have been examined.

6.8 REFERENCES

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6.9 SPECIMEN ANSWERS TO CHECK YOUR PROGRESS

Check Your Progress 1

- 1) The salient features of fictive kinship are:
 - i. Fictive relationships are defined by criteria distinct from those establishing blood or marriage relationships. Some of the criteria for

formation of fictive kinship could be religious, economic, legal or political.

- ii. Fictive kin are accorded many of the same rights and statuses as family members and are expected to participate in the duties of the extended family.
- iii. Relation are non-voluntary but involves a set of responsibilities and obligations.

2) Difference between pure and fictive kinship:

	Pure kinship	Fictive kinship
1.	Defined in relation to blood or marriage	Defined in relation to the fact of sharing and relating
2.	It is non-voluntary in the sense that relations are established on birth, especially those through blood. Even rules of marriage prescribes the relatives through marriage.	It is voluntary and often create in individual's everyday social life.
3.	It assumes that kinship is universal and uniform in every culture.	It points at the relevance of cultural specificity.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) The four conditions that can lead to the creation of fictive ties in society are :
 - i. Absence of primary family- fictive kin ties are formed when primary family ties such as adult children or a partner is missing or absent.
 - ii. Religious practices - fictive kin associations are established in a religious setting, like a baptism or membership of religious organization.
 - iii. Sharing of common substance or life situation-fictive relations are created and maintained in many avenues outside the traditional sites of kinship, mainly family, clan etc. These are situations where individual share similar life situations and tend to develop emotional support.
 - iv. Honour/Respect for non-kin members-In many societies fictive kinship can be observed in everyday life as a form of showing respect. Older middle aged men and women (late 30s and above) are termed as 'uncle' or 'auntie', usually by people who are younger in comparison.

Check Your Progress 2

- 1) These are different forms of fictive kinship found in different society.
 - i) Miteri is an individualistic form of fictive or ritual kinship common among Hindu caste and ethnic group of Nepal.
 - ii) Compadrazgo is a form of fictive kinship found in Central Mexico. It refers to the set of relationships between a child, their parents, and their godparents.
 - iii) Sorority 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.