

Kinship : Consanguinity and Affinity; Principles and types of descent (Unilineal, Double, Bilateral Ambilineal); Forms of descent groups (lineage, clan, phratry, moiety and kindred); Kinship terminology (descriptive and classificatory); Descent, Filiation and Complementary Filiation; Descent and Alliance.

(Unit 2.5 , Paper I)

MEANING AND DEFINITION

Kinship refers to a principle by which individuals or groups of individuals are organised into social groups, roles, categories, and genealogy by means of kinship terminologies. In any society, every normal adult individual belongs to the 2 different nuclear families. The family in which he was born and reared is called the “family of orientation”. The other family to which he establishes relations through marriage is called the “family of procreation”. The universal fact of individual membership in two nuclear families gives rise to the kinship system. As the name implies, it is a system of different relationships where individuals are bound together by complex interlocking and ramifying ties.

1. According to **Levi Strauss**, “Kinship and its related notions are at the same time prior and exterior to biological relations to which we tend to reduce them”
2. **A.R. Radcliffe Brown (1952)**- agreed that “Kinship terms are like signposts to interpersonal conducts or etiquette, with the implication of appropriate reciprocal right, duties, privileges and obligations.
3. Anthropologist **Robin Fox** states that "the study of kinship is the study of what man does with these basic facts of life – mating, gestation, parenthood, Socialization, siblingship etc. “
4. According to **John Beattie**, “Kinship is not a set of genealogical relationships; it is a set of social relationships”.

Consanguinity and Affinity

Kin are of two basic kinds:

1. *Consanguineous* : Related by ties of blood and/or sharing common ancestors
2. *Affinal* : Related by marriage. In some societies other pairs of individuals also treat each other as relatives—for example, the wives of a pair of brothers, relatives by adoption etc.

Kinship Studies

Anthropologists in the first half of the twentieth century focused on finding out who, in a particular culture, is related to whom and in what way. Typically, the anthropologist would conduct an interview with a few people, asking questions such as “What do you call your brother’s daughter?” “Can you (as a man) marry your father’s brother’s daughter?” and “What is the term you use to refer to your mother’s sister?” The anthropologist would ask an individual to name all of his or her relatives, explain how they are related to the interviewee, and provide the terms by which he or she refers to them.

From this information, the anthropologist would construct a kinship diagram, a schematic way of presenting the kinship relationships of an individual, called *ego*, using a set of symbols to depict all the kin relations of *ego*. A kinship diagram depicts *ego*’s relatives, as remembered by *ego*. In cultures in which kinship plays a major role in social relations, *ego* may be able to provide information on dozens of relatives.

In contrast to a kinship diagram, a *genealogy* is a schematic way of presenting a family tree, constructed by beginning with the earliest ancestors that can be traced, then working down to the present. A genealogy, thus, does not begin with *ego*. When **Robin Fox** attempted to construct kinship diagrams beginning with *ego*, the Tory Islanders were uncomfortable with the approach. They preferred to proceed genealogically, so he followed their preference. Tracing a family’s complete genealogy may involve archival research in the attempt to construct as complete a history as possible.

Symbols and Abbreviations		Relationship	Abbreviations
△ man	△ dead	Mother	M
○ woman	≠ divorce	Father	F
= marriage	▲ Ego	Sister	Z
— connecting sibling	∧ twins	Brother	B
□ unspecified sex		Daughter	D
		Son	S
		Wife	W
		Husband	H
		Mother's Brother's Daughter	MBD
		Father's Sister's Husband	FZH
		Elder	e
		Younger	y

Symbols used in Kinship Diagrams

Concept of Descent

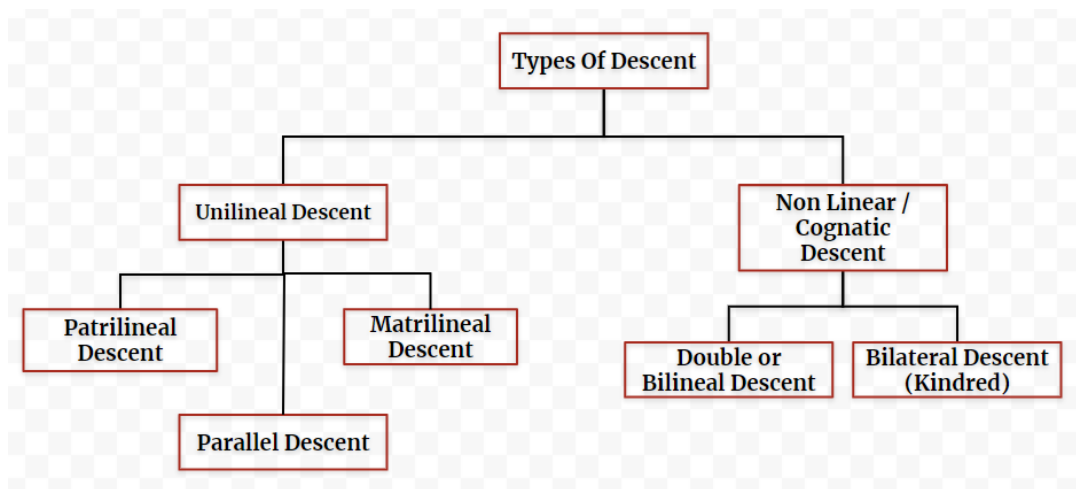
The term descent denotes the relationship that bonds the child to its mother or father, through which the elements that constitute the main characteristics of their status are transmitted. These include name, surname, heritage and so on. Descent rules determine mainly membership to the parent's kinship groups; in other words, descent is more of a social convention than a biological relationship. Consanguinity may exist, but it is in no way a necessary requirement. For instance, we consider adopted individuals (fictitious or ritual kinship) to have the same descent as the members of the group that adopted them. Just as it applies to individuals, descent can pertain to groups when group members biologically descend from a common ancestor or when they declare this to be the case, as slaves did by assuming membership of their owner's kinship group. **Morgan** and especially **Pitt-Rivers** and **Radcliffe- Brown** formulated a series of theories that reproduction by way of descent is the main principle of kinship. **These theories are known as descent theories.** A different view to these older theories is aired by **Lévi-Strauss's alliance theory**, which links the exchange of women and the prohibition of incest as the organizational principles of kinship.

Descent is the tracing of kinship relationships through parentage. It is based on the fact that everybody is born from someone else. Descent creates a line of people from whom someone is descended, stretching through history. But not all cultures reckon descent in the same way.

Some cultures have a **bilineal descent system**, in which a child is recognized as being related by descent to both parents. Others have a **unilineal descent system**, which recognizes descent through only one parent, either the father or the mother. The distribution of bilineal and unilineal systems is roughly correlated with different modes of livelihood. This correspondence makes sense because economic systems—production, consumption, and exchange—are closely tied to the way people are socially organised.

The practical importance of descent comes from its use as a means for one person to assert rights, duties, privileges, or status in relation to another person, who may be related to the first either because one is ancestor to the other or because the two acknowledge a common ancestor. Descent has special influence when rights to succession, inheritance, or residence follow kinship lines.

Principles and Types of Descent

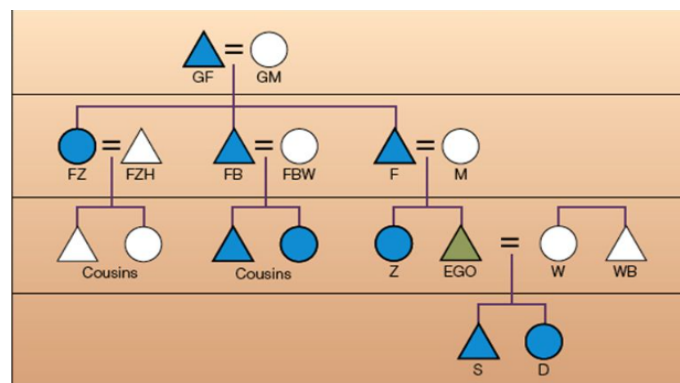


UNILINEAL DESCENT :

Unilineal descent establishes descent group membership by a direct line from a common ancestor exclusively through one's male or female ancestors, but not both. In this way, each individual is automatically assigned from the moment of birth to his or her mother's or father's group and to that group only. **Thus unilineal descent can either be matrilineal or patrilineal.**

In non-Western societies, unilineal descent groups are quite common. Depending on the culture, the individual is assigned at birth to membership in a specific descent group, which may be traced either through the female line, that is by matrilineal descent, or through the male line, by patrilineal descent. In matrilineal societies females are culturally recognized as socially significant, for they are considered responsible for the group's continued existence. In patrilineal societies, this responsibility falls on the male members of the group, thereby enhancing their social importance.

PATRILINEAL DESCENT AND ORGANISATION



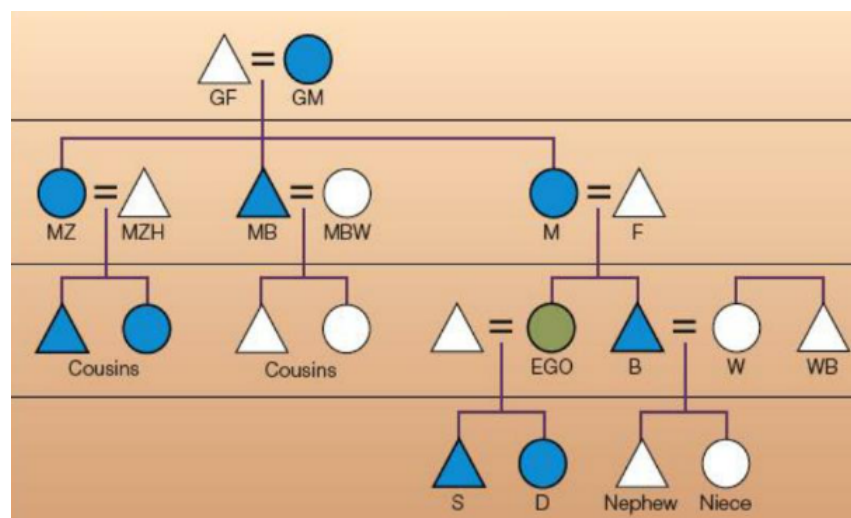
Blue Colored Kin (Including Ego) Share the same Patrilineal Descent Group

Patrilineal descent (sometimes called *agnatic* or *male descent*) is the more widespread of the two unilineal descent systems. Through forefathers, the male members of a patrilineal descent group trace their descent from a common ancestor. Brothers and sisters belong to the descent group of their father's father, their father, their father's siblings, and their father's brother's children. A man's son and daughter also trace their descent back through the male line to their common ancestor. In the typical patrilineal group, authority over the children rests with the father or his elder brother. A woman belongs to the same descent group as her father and his brothers, but her children cannot trace their descent through them.

Patrilineal kinship organisation is traditionally embedded in many cultures throughout the world and often endures despite radical political and economic changes. Such is also the case among the **Han**, the dominant ethnic majority in modern China. Until the communist takeover in 1949, most of rural Chinese society was strongly patrilineal, with a few exceptions such as the **Mosuo of Yunnan Province** in the southernmost part of the country. Since then, considerable changes have occurred, although vestiges of the old system persist in different regions. Traditionally, the basic unit for economic cooperation among the Han Chinese was the large extended family, typically including aged parents and their sons, their sons' wives, and their sons' children.

A patrilineal society is very much a man's world. No matter how valued women may be, they inevitably find themselves in a difficult position. Amongst Yoruba of west Nigeria the social order depends on the integration of political, economic and religious activities through systems of patrilineage called Idilies. The oldest male member is acknowledged as the head of idilies. He exercises religious and political authority over his lineage mates. In India most traditional North Indian Hindu families are organised patrilineally.

MATRILINEAL DESCENT AND ORGANISATION:



Blue Colored Kin (Including Ego) Share the same Matrilineal Descent Group

Matrilineal descent is traced exclusively through the female line, just as patrilineal descent is through the male line. However, the matrilineal pattern differs from the patrilineal in that it does not automatically confer gender authority. For Example among matrilineal **Mosuo** of China, property passes through the female line, women are often heads of their household and they are usually the ones making the business decisions—yet, political power tends to be in the hands of males.

Indeed, while women in matrilineal societies may have considerable power, they do not hold exclusive authority in the descent group. They share it with men. Usually, these are the brothers, rather than the husbands, of the women through whom descent is traced. Apparently, a function of matrilineal systems is to provide continuous female solidarity within the female work group. Matrilineal systems are usually found in **horticultural societies** in which women perform much of the work in the house and nearby gardens. Matrilineal descent in part prevails because women's labour as crop cultivators is regarded as so important to the society. In a matrilineal system, brothers and sisters belong to the descent group of the mother, the mother's mother, the mother's siblings, and the mother's sisters' children. Thus, every male belongs to the same descent group as his mother, and a man's own children belong to his wife's descent group, not his.

Although not true of all matrilineal systems, a common feature is the relative weakness of the social tie between wife and husband. A woman's husband lacks authority in the household they share. Her brother, and not the husband-father, distributes goods, organises work, settles disputes, supervises rituals, and administers inheritance and succession rules. Meanwhile, her husband fulfils the same role in his own sister's household. Furthermore, his property and status are inherited by his sister's son rather than his son. Thus, brothers and sisters maintain lifelong ties with one another, whereas marital ties are easily severed. In matrilineal societies, unsatisfactory marriages are more easily ended than in patrilineal societies. For Example, **Nayars** have a matrilineal group called **Tharavad**. In this society there is no significant marital alliance and residence is **matrilocal**. In this society authority vests in the hands of the elder brother, a system called avunco-potestality.

Matrilineal Puzzle

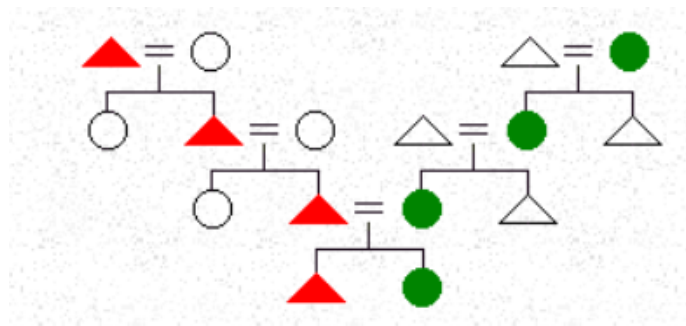
Scholars have analysed matrilineal norms and practices within the framework of the “matrilineal puzzle,” a term that was introduced to kinship theory by the British anthropologist **Audrey Richards**. It arose from **structural functionalism**—which was most strongly associated with the work of social anthropologist **A.R. Radcliffe-Brown**.

Richards was puzzled by the position of men in matrilineal societies. The issue at question was whether, in practice, a matrilineal system in which men have ambiguous roles and dual loyalties could work. The debate that followed also focused on what it was that made matrilineal societies different from what was seen as “normal” patrilineal systems.

In the study of kinship, a basic assumption is that the essential family unit consists of father, mother, and children. According to scholar **David M. Schneider**, in classic kinship theory, it was assumed that men had authority over their wives and offspring. Schneider also noted that in patrilineal societies authority and kinship were passed on through patrilineal descent, but in matrilineal societies males did not pass their status to their sons. **Men’s authority would be based only on their position in the matriliney.** The salient roles of the male, therefore, would be that of brother and uncle instead of husband and father.

Under that interpretation of the structures and norms of all societies, male dominance, assumed as a given in patrilineal societies, *did not translate into a corresponding female dominance in matrilineal societies.* Under the “principle of male authority,” in a matrilineage, descent passed from a woman’s brother to her son and from him to her sister’s son. That meant, to some scholars, that the core structures of matrilineal groups were the positions of **uncle and brother**. In the practice of virilocal residence (in which a woman moves into her husband’s home), the in-marrying wife will presumably adapt to a dependent role (as in a patrilineal society) but also occupy a significant role as the mother of children, particularly of sons who will perpetuate the patriliney. In matrilineal societies, although in-marrying men may be deemed necessary and useful as husbands, fathers, and human resources for labour, their function becomes part of the puzzle; in the context of assumptions about male authority, their roles may seem to be ambiguous.

PARALLEL DESCENT:



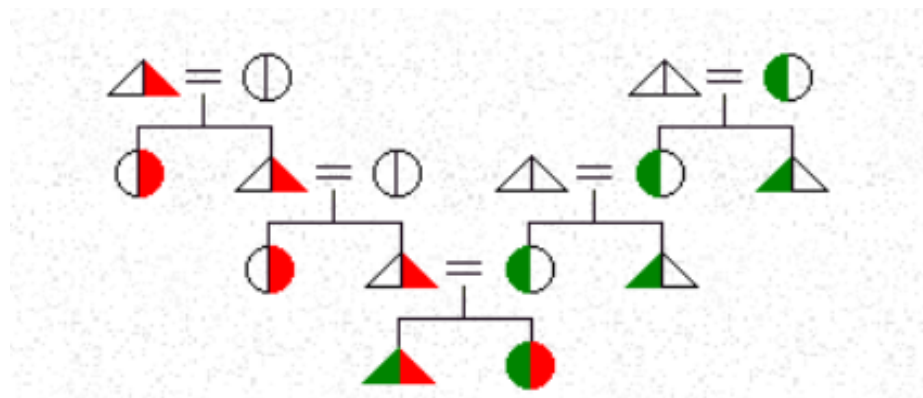
Men trace their ancestry through male lines and Women trace theirs through female lines

Parallel descent is a possible form but is extremely rare. In such a type of descent rule the males reckon them through the male line and females reckon their descent through the female line. In 1975, **Jane Safer**, reported this type of a descent rule among the **Saha who live in Santa Marta Mountains near Caribbean Coast of Columbia**, close to the Venezuelan border.

NON-UNILINEAL OR COGNATIC DESCENT:

Cognatic means “a kin to both the parents.” The number of societies with such rules of descent are relatively less. They do not have clear cut membership as that of a unilineal kin group. They are of 2 types :

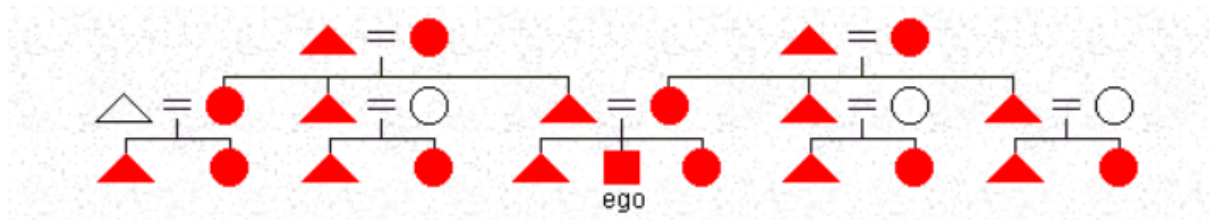
1. **Bilineal or Double Descent:** Double descent or double unilineal descent or bilineal descent, where descent is reckoned *both patrilineally and matrilineally*, is very rare. In this system descent is matrilineal for some purpose and patrilineal for others. Generally, where double descent is reckoned each lineage takes corporate action in different spheres of society.



Every individual is a member of his or her mother's matrilineage and father's patrilineage

For example, among the **Yako of Eastern Nigeria** property is divided between patrilineal line possessions and matrilineal line possessions. Patrilineage own immovable property such as lands, whereas the matrilineage owns consumable and ritualistic properties such as livestock. The weaker matrilineal line is somewhat more important in religious matters than the patrilineal line. Because of the existence of double descent rule, a Yako individual might inherit grazing lands from the father's patrilineal group and certain ritual privileges from the mother's line. **Todas** also follow double descent.

2. **Bilateral Descent:** Bilateral means “two-sided” and in this case it refers to the fact that one’s relatives on both the mother’s and father’s sides are equal in importance or, more usually, in unimportance. Kinship reckoning in bilateral societies does not refer to common descent but rather is horizontal, moving outward from close to more distant relatives rather than upward to common ancestors. **It is not a true descent.** The term **kindred** better describes a person’s bilateral set of relatives who may be called upon for some purpose.

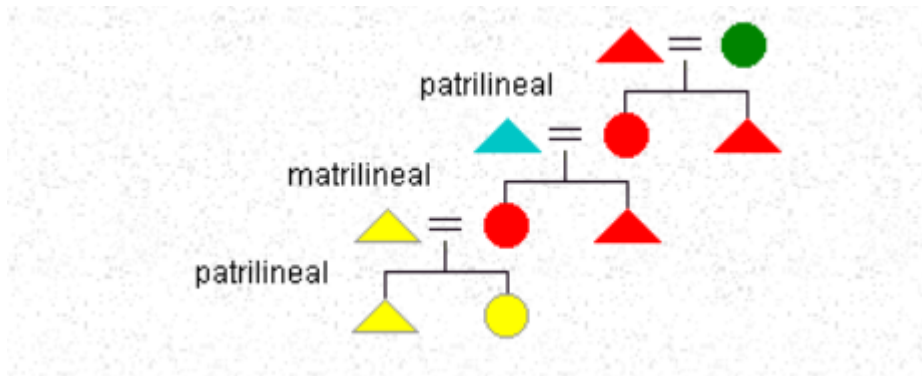


Bilateral Descent or Kindred Maps Out all Possible Blood Relatives of an Ego

Kindred is laterally organised rather than lineally organised. Most bilateral societies have kindred that overlap in membership. In North America, Kindred is thought to be people who might be invited to weddings, funerals, or some other ceremonial occasion. Kindred, however, is not usually a definite group. Your kindred contains relatives spreading out on both mother’s and father’s sides, but the member of your kindred is affiliated only by way of their connection to you (ego, or the person in focus). **Thus, the kindred is an ego-centred group of kin.** In bilateral society, the kindred may provide social insurance against adversity. Among the **Chipewyan of Subarctic Canada**, people would borrow a fishing net from a kindred member, or ask a kindred member to provide childcare for a young person whose parent was ill.

AMBILINEAL DESCENT:

Ambilineal groups differ from unilineal groups in that they do not automatically exclude either the children of sons or those of daughters. **People can choose the descent group they join** (for example, that of their father’s father, father’s mother, mother’s father, or mother’s mother). People also can change their descent-group membership or belong to two or more groups at the same time.

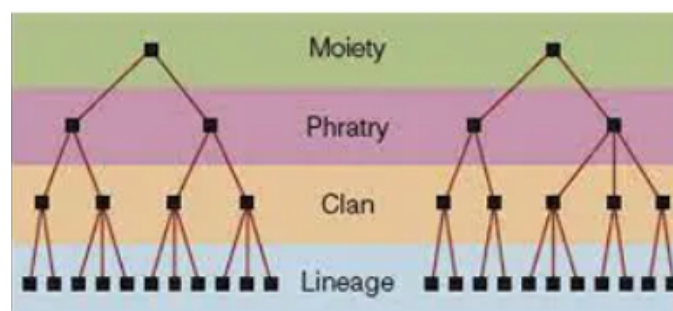


Here the descendants have a choice between choosing either matrilineal or patrilineal descent

Unilineal descent is a matter of ascribed status; ambilineal descent illustrates achieved status. With unilineal descent, membership is automatic; no choice is permitted. People are born members of their father's group in a patrilineal society or of their mother's group in a matrilineal society. They are members of that group for life. Ambilineal descent permits more flexibility in descent-group affiliation.

Among **Samoan Islanders** (and numerous other cultures in the Pacific as well as in Southeast Asia) a person has the option of affiliating with either the mother's or the father's descent group. Known as ambilineal descent, such a kin-ordered system provides a measure of flexibility. However, this flexibility also introduces a possibility of dispute and conflict as unilineal groups compete for members. Samoan Islanders follow ambilineal descent because of depopulation which occurred due to contact with Europeans (due to European diseases).

Unilineal Descent Groups



1. **Moiety** : When a whole society is divided into two kin groups based on unilineal descent, each group is called moiety (after the French word for 'half'). The members in each moiety believe them to be descended from a common ancestor even though they can not specify how. **W.H.R. Rivers** had reported about a moiety system existing among the **Todas of Nilgiri Hills** in Kerala, India. They have a dual organisation of two groups - *Teivali* and *Tarthar*. Each of the two halves is

again divided into a number of clans. The two moieties are endogamous. The Monsangs of Manipur have moieties that are exogamous.

According to **People of India Project**- Moiety is found in about 64 communities, with Arunachal reports the highest incident of moiety followed by Nagaland.

2. **Phratry:** A Phratry can be defined as a unilineal descent group composed of two or more clans. The members of a clan may feel that they have particular close ties with other clans of the phratry. Phratry is found in very few societies of the world. For example : **Muria Gonds** are described into 5 phratries- the Nag Vans (Snake), Kachimvans (Tortoise), Bakra Vans (Goat race), Bagh vans(Tiger), Bodmink (Fish race). They are not allowed to eat their totem and mourn if one dies. Based on the principle of descent, phratries can also be classified into 2 types: Matriphratries and Patriphratries. The phratries in a society can be named or may not be named. They may or may not be exogamous. Like for example among the **Hopis**, the phratries are exogamous and among the crow **Red Indians**, they are endogamous. The phratries are characterised by common religious obligations and observe common religious rites. A phratry may be associated with totemism like Muria Gonds. According to the **People of India project** Phratry is found among about 151 communities belonging mostly to ST in Central India.
3. **Clan :** A clan—typically consisting of several lineages—is an extended unilineal descent group whose members claim common descent from a distant ancestor (usually legendary or mythological) but are unable to trace the precise genealogical links back to that ancestor. This stems from the great genealogical depth of the clan, whose founding ancestor lived so far in the past that the links must be assumed rather than known in detail. It lacks the residential unity that is generally, although not always, characteristic of a lineage's core members. As with the lineage, descent may be patrilineal, matrilineal, or ambilineal. Because clan membership is dispersed rather than localised, it usually does not involve a shared holding of tangible property. Instead, it involves shared participation in ceremonial and political matters. Only on special occasions will the membership gather together for specific purposes. Clans, however, may handle important integrative functions. Like lineages, they may regulate marriage through exogamy. Because of their dispersed membership, clans give individuals the right of entry into associated local groups no matter where they are. Members usually are expected to give protection and hospitality to others in the clan. Hence, these can be expected in any local group that includes people who belong to a single clan For Example- **The Winnebago Red Indians** have clan-based organisation. They have 12 clans in total. The chief is from the Thunderbird clan, the army is from the warrior clan, the beat clan performs the role of police and so on.

4. **Lineages:** A lineage is a set of kin whose members trace their descent from a common ancestor through known links. There may be patrilineages or matrilineages, depending on whether the links are traced through males only or females only. Lineages are often designated by the name of the common male or female ancestor. A lineage is always a strict exogamous unit. It helps in smooth maintenance of the purity and pollution relating to birth and death. All members of a lineage have psychological unity. Lineage provides social security to its members. It co-operates with all the members of a lineage in the economic field, for example in agriculture. During the time of crisis, the lineage members unite and cooperate with each other. Patrilineage are found among **Witoto Red Indians of Amazonia, Nuer of Africa**. Matrilineage is found among **Khasi and Garo of Meghalaya**.
5. **Segmentary Lineage:** In some cases, especially where there is substantial depth, larger units are subdivided into smaller components through a process of branching or segmentation. This arrangement involves the successive formation of smaller groups from parent lineages. Segmentary lineage systems are important because in many tribal societies lineage groups based on descent through the male line are vested with important economic and political responsibilities. The original and most famous description of these systems, **The Nuer**, described a pastoral tribal people living in the southern Sudan. **Evans-Pritchard** recounted the correspondence between the lineage system and the territorial system that made possible their functioning as a decentralised, egalitarian, and expansionist political system. These systems are widespread in Africa (Somali, Libyan Bedouin) and in the Middle East (Turkmen, Arabian Bedouin, Baluch). Segmentary lineage systems are best understood as means of defence and social control. The balanced opposition serves as a deterrent to aggressive adventurism. Collective responsibility of group members for each other guarantees that no individual or small group is a free target. Loyalty to one's lineage is not so much a sentimental attachment to blood kin as it is a hardheaded recognition of who one can count on when one gets into trouble. **The Tiv of Nigeria** offers a classic example of segmentary lineage system, one that happens to link all the Tiv into a single genealogical structure or tribe. The segmentary lineage system was presumably very effective in allowing the Tiv to intrude into new territory and take land from other tribal societies with smaller descent groups. Individual Tiv lineage segments could call on support from related lineages when faced with border troubles. A segmentary lineage system may generate a formidable military force, but the combinations of manpower it produces are temporary, forming and dissolving as the occasion demands.

Functions of Unilineal Descent Groups:

1. Regulating Marriages (Rules regarding endogamy , exogamy and incest taboo)
2. Economic Functions Members of a person's lineage or clan are often required to side with that person in any quarrel or lawsuit, to help him or her get established economically, to contribute to a bride price or fine, and to support the person in life crisis. Mutual aid often extends to economic cooperation on a regular basis. The unilineal group may act as a corporate unit in land ownership. Descent groups members may also support one another in such enterprises as clearing bush or forest for farmlands and providing food and other items for feasts, potlatches, curing rites, and ceremonial occasions, such as births, marriages and funerals.
3. Political Functions (For example among role of descent groups among Tiv of Nigeria and Nuer of South Sudan)
4. Religious Functions : A clan or lineage may have its own religious beliefs and practices, worshipping its own gods or goddesses and ancestral spirits. (For example totemism among Muria Gonds)

Filiation and Complementary Filiation

Filiation can be defined as the *relationship between child and his parents* which is considered equally important from the mother's or the father's side, irrespective of the fact whether the lineage traced is patrilineal or matrilineal.

Meyer Fortes explains filiation, as the relationship created by the fact of being the legitimate child of one's parents. Filiation is essentially the bond between successive generations- a bond of compounded rights and identifications epitomized in the rules of inheritance and succession on one hand, and of differences and gaps symbolized in the incest taboo, and in customs of respect and avoidance.

An important point here is that the individuals in unilineal descent groups also have important relations with relatives other than those in his descent group and in relation particularly with the parent other than those from whom he has gained his descent group membership. This is called the "COMPLEMENTARY FILIATION", points out Meyer Fortes.

Complementary filiation was a term introduced by the group of anthropologists of Africa who are often referred to as 'descent theorists', foremost of whom was M. Fortes. The phrase referred to the fact that in societies with unilineal descent groups people nonetheless recognize kinship links with relatives who do not belong to their own descent group. Thus, in societies with patrilineal descent groups, individuals have important socially defined links with members of their mother's family, such as, for example, their mother's brother or their maternal grandparents, while in matrilineal

societies individuals have similar ties to their father's family. Originally the concept was used to describe an important ethnographic characteristic of many African societies, such as the **Tallensi of Ghana**. Thus, Fortes described how Tallensi individuals saw their complementary filiation links as different from their lineage links, yet essential to their well-being (**Fortes 1949**). While lineage links always have a political and hierarchical character, complementary filiation is more emotional and more personal. This is because all members of a descent group have different ties of complementary filiation from one another, but are undifferentiated on the basis of descent, so that complementary filiation gives an idiom to feelings of individuality and independence. This sociological perspective is, argued Fortes (1961), also reflected in the religious domain. J. Goody (1962), following in the same tradition, stressed the importance of inheritance and showed how, while one inherited a certain type of property and status inside the descent group, one also inherited different types of property and status along the lines of complementary filiation.

Fortes and a number of other anthropologists argued that the existence of groups was, at bottom, always similar and always involved the recognition of the complementary role of the two parents. Thus, in patrilineal societies, while for political, jural and military purposes lineages ignored links through mothers, *there nonetheless existed a domestic level where links through women were recognized in the form of complementary filiation*.

Kinship Terminology

Kin terms are the labels used to refer and address various kins and affines. **LH Morgan** was the first one to observe that kinship terminology could serve as a basis of classification. In different systems, the kin terms differ drastically. In some systems all the men of the parental generation of both father's and mother's side are brought under the same kin term. While in other systems there are different terms for father's brothers and mother's brothers

L. H. Morgan (*Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family*, 1871) on the basis of his observation in North American Indian societies established two systems of terminology such as follows:

1. **Classificatory system:** According to this system, a single term is used for calling more than one type of kin. Normally the similarity in age, group, sex and same generation is the basis for this categorization. In some societies, those kin who have the same status and position are called out by the same kin term. Classificatory kinship terminology places lineal and collateral kins into the same category.
2. **Descriptive system:** In this system, every kin is designated by a different kin term. Separate terms are used to refer to different kin. It distinguishes between lineal and collateral kins. For example: In English societies the term brother and sister

are descriptive as they are used to refer to the son and daughter of one's parents only. But in North India the term 'Bhai' and 'Behan' is used to refer to the son and daughter of one's parents and also for cross and parallel cousins.

L. H. Morgan as an evolutionist viewed this system of classification in evolutionary perspective. He considered the classificatory system to be the characteristic of simple societies which are less differentiated while descriptive terminology to be a feature of more advanced and modern societies. But this idea is not very absolute as even in modern Western societies the classificatory terms like Uncle, Aunt, brother-in-law and sister-in-law are also used. **WHR Rivers** stated that kinship terms came into existence with some marriage practices. Today even if those cultural practices have vanished, the kinship terms associated with them still exist. So, by studying kinship terms, we can trace those marriage customs and practices. This can be proved as a significant finding in case of simple societies which generally lack written records of the past.

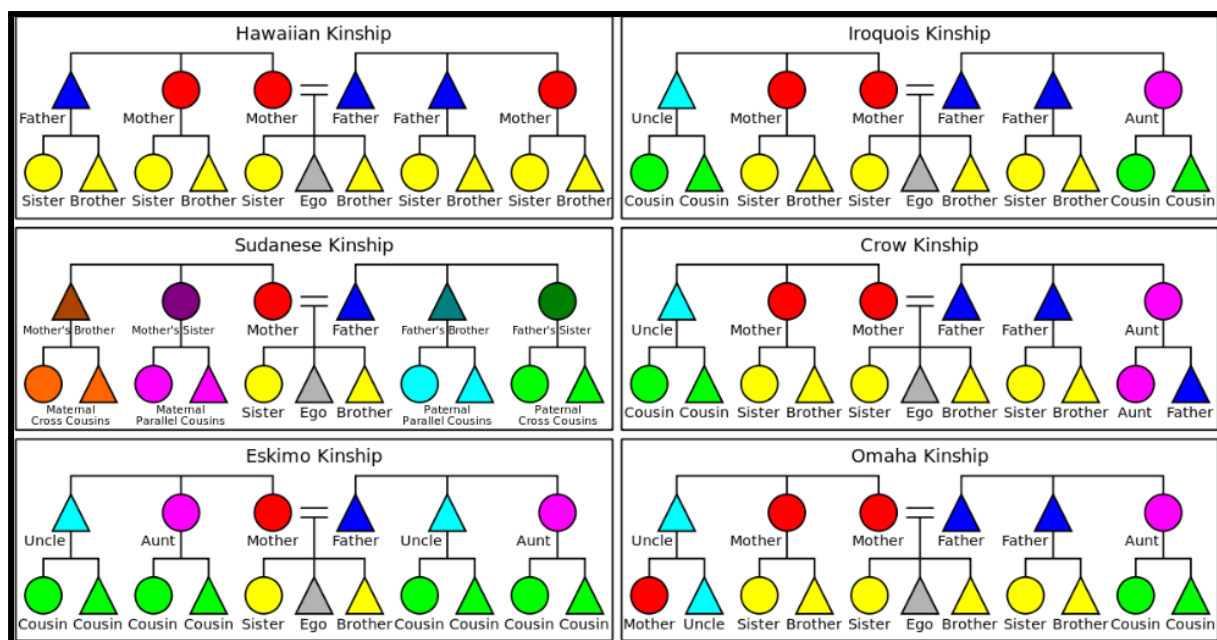
Murdock in his detailed analysis of kinship presents an elaborate scheme for understanding kinship terminology. According to him kinship terms are technically classified in 3 different ways:

1. By the mode of use :Basing on the mode of use the kinship terms can be divided into two sections. Some terms are for direct addressing and others are for indirect reference. A "term of address" is used to call a relative, whereas "term of reference" is used to designate a relative for speaking about him/her to a third person.
2. By the linguistic structure : When classified according to linguistic structure, kinship terms are distinguished as elementary and derivative. An elementary term is an irreducible word like in English "Father" "Nephew" which cannot be analysed into components having kinship meanings. Therefore, called "elementary term" A derivative term is one which combines two or more elementary terms to denote a specific relative. A derivative term is like grandfather, father-in-law, step daughter, etc.
3. By the range of application : Here the kinship term is differentiated into two groups-denotative term and classificatory term. Denotative terms applied to the relatives of a single kinship category, defined by the generation, sex and genealogical connection. For example, the English terms, brother, sister, daughter, son-in-law, etc., denote several persons with the same designation. In contrast, classificatory term is the term that applies to the persons of two or more kinship categories. For instance, in English the term grandmother stands for both mother's mother and father's mother, uncle may be brother of any one of the parents or may be husband of father's sister or mother's sister.

G.P. Murdock had identified six major systems of terminology on a global basis.

They are as follows:

1. **Hawaiian terminology:** This distinguishes only between sex and generation. In this system of terminology siblings and cousins are classified alike by one or two terms distinguished by sex. There is no distinction between direct and collateral relations. This terminology is classificatory in nature. Example: It can be observed in Hawaiian Polynesians. Examples of Hawaiian terminology can be seen in the **Zeme tribe in Assam and Manipur** where the word 'Asi' is used for sister, brother, all cross and parallel cousins, sister-in-law and brother-in-law as well. There is no distinction between genders.
2. **Eskimos terminology:** It has both classificatory and descriptive terms, it provides different terms for nuclear family members. It also distinguishes between lineal and collateral relatives. The lineal relatives have descriptive terms while the collateral kins have classificatory terms. It also differentiates between siblings and cousins, but all types of cousins are put together in one category. Unlike other terminologies, the Eskimo system provides separate and distinct terms for the nuclear family members. This is probably because the Eskimo system is generally found in bilateral societies where the dominant kin-group is the kindred, in which only immediate family members are important in day-to-day affairs.
3. **Omaha terminology:** Father's and Father's brother are both named by the same term. Mother and Mother's sister are both named by the same term. Also, mother's brother's daughter is also referred to by this term. All male members of one's mother's patrilineage descent are also known by the same term (i.e., mother's brother and his son). It is apparent that relatives on the father's and mother's sides are grouped differently in this system. Example: Among the **Sumi Naga tribe of Nagaland** the mother's brother and mother's brother's son are put under the same kin term. (MB=MBS= Ingu).
4. **Crow terminology:** Crow system is the mirror image of the Omaha system. The same principle of lumping kin types is employed except that the crow system is associated with matrilineal descent, so the individuals in my mother's matrilineal group are not lumped across generations, whereas individuals in my father's matrilineal group are. I call both my mother and mother's sister by same term. I call my father's father's brother and my father's sister's son with the same term (all male members of my father's matrilineal group). I call my father's sister and father's sister's daughter by the same term. And I refer to my parallel cousin in the same way I refer to my brother and sister.



Kinship Diagrams for Various Terminology Systems

5. **Iroquois terminology:** In the Iroquois system of kinship terminology, the father and father's brother are referred to by a single term, as are the mother and mother's sister; however, the father's sister and mother's brother are given separate terms. In one's own generation, brothers, sisters, and parallel cousins (offspring of parental siblings of the same sex—that is, the children of the mother's sister or father's brother) of the same sex are referred to by the same terms, which is logical enough considering that they are the offspring of people who are classified in the same category as EGO's actual mother and father. Cross cousins are distinguished by terms that set them apart from all other kin. In fact, cross cousins are often preferred as spouses, for marriage to them reaffirms alliances between related lineages or clans. Examples: In India, this terminology is used by the **Ao Naga** tribe of Nagaland where parallel cousins are called as oti (male), oya (female) and cross cousins are called as amo (male), oku (female).
6. **Sudanese terminology:** This system provides different labels to each genealogical position. It is descriptive in nature. Siblings are differentiated from cousins. Example: In North Indian families, the ego's parental generation has different names.
 Father's elder brother = 'tau'
 Father's elder brother's wife = 'tai'
 Father's younger brother = 'chacha'
 Father's younger brother's wife = 'chachi'

Descent and Alliance

Historically, there was a clear division between those who saw kinship as based upon descent links between parents and children, and those who concentrated on alliance relationships created by marriage. **Radcliffe-Brown** was foremost among those who saw kinship primarily in terms of descent. Along with other descent theorists like **Fortes** and **Jack Goody**, he drew a clear distinction between kin (or relatives by descent) and affines (or relatives through marriage); hence his frequent use of the phrase 'kinship and marriage', implying that the latter was somehow external to the former. He further distinguished *agnates*, persons descended from a common ancestor through males only, from *cognates*, descendants of a common ancestor or ancestress counting descent through both males and females.

Radcliffe-Brown classified kinship systems according to how descent was recognized. Two particularly distinctive forms are patrilineal descent, reckoned through males only, and matrilineal descent, reckoned only through females. These should not be confused with patriarchy and matriarchy, for in both cases official power resides primarily with men; under patriliney a child acquires social status primarily from its father, whereas under matriliney its mother's brother is the key figure (the avunculate). Patrilineal descent is more common worldwide, perhaps because of the added complexities involved when men transmit rights to other men in the female line.

The emphasis of descent theory was on the transmission of property, office, ritual complex and rights and obligations across the generation (either in father's or mother's line or both) which produces solidarity among the members of the group related by the ties of consanguinity. Lineage was seen as a corporate group, property holding and organising labour on the lines of blood ties. In this set of ideas, marriage was secondary. Since one could not marry one's sister or daughter, because of the rules of incest taboo, one married from another group. The primary objective of marriage was the procreation of the descent group.

Descent theory made sense in some lineage based African societies but proved inappropriate for much of Australasia and the Americas, either for the reasons just discussed or because marriage alliance, far from being ephemeral, forms enduring patterns which persist over time. For example, marriage among the **Kachin of Burma** is hypogamous, i.e., the bride's family is higher status than the groom's family (**Leach 1961**). It follows that marriage can only occur in one direction, and that any two lineages are in a wife-giver/wife-taker relationship which is just as persistent over time as the lineages themselves.

Alliance theory, which stresses marriage as a structural principle, is especially associated with **Dumont, Leach and Needham** but its pioneer was **Lévi-Strauss**. He saw marriage as the other side of the coin from incest prohibitions: both helped prevent local groups from becoming sexually self-sufficient, and so encouraged wider social cohesion.

In his book, “**Elementary Structure of Kinship**”, Levi Strauss gave alliance theory in opposition to what is called descent theory, which was put forth by British anthropologist (Radcliffe Brown) and was the dominant theory in kinship studies till then. The emphasis of descent theory was on the transmission of property, office, ritual complex and rights and obligations across the generation (either in father’s or mother’s line or both) which produces solidarity among the members of the group related by the ties of consanguinity. Lineage was seen as a corporate group, property holding and organising labour on the lines of blood ties. In this set of ideas, marriage was secondary. Since one could not marry one’s sister or daughter, because of the rules of incest taboo, one married from another group. The primary objective of marriage was the procreation of the descent group.

Levi Strauss’s alliance theory brought marriage to the centre. The function of marriage was not just procreative. It was far from important, for it led to the building of a string of relations between groups, respectively, called the **wife givers and wife takers**. In this context the concept of incest taboo acquires a central place. For Levi Strauss it is the ‘cornerstone’ of human society. The logical outcome of the prohibition of incest taboo is a system of exchange. It is not only the negative aspect of the rule of incest taboo that needs to be recognized, as was the case with descent theorist. What was significant to Levi- Strauss was the positive aspect- it is not only that I do not marry my sister, but I also give her in marriage to another man whose sister then I marry. Sister exchange creates a ‘federation’ between exchanging groups. For Lévi-Strauss, there are two models of structure in the study of kinship and exchange in marriage. **Elementary and Complex Exchange**.

Elementary structures according to him are those systems of kinship in which the kinship nomenclature itself provides an easy determination of the circle of consanguine and set of affines. Societies with elementary structures of kinship are dominated by a prescribed marriage system and hence he calls this system of exchange as “*closed system of exchange*”. Complex structures, according to Levi-Strauss are those systems which at best define a circle of relatives i.e., consanguine and leave the choice of finding a spouse to “other mechanisms”. Hence, he calls this system an “*Open system*” of exchange. Thus, alliance is a crucial and inevitable mechanism towards integration of the society. Once the alliance relationships are established, they are usually perpetuated and hence the “solidarity” between the groups. Levi-Strauss views cross-cousin marriage as the most elementary form of exchange.

Some Miscellaneous Terms Used in Kinship Studies

→ **Agnate**: One person is said to be an ‘agnate’ of another if the two are related either by blood or adoption or wholly through males. The agnatic relation may be male or female. It must be remembered that

the relationship referred to here is relationship by blood and not by marriage. Thus one's father, grandfather, etc., in the ascending line; uncle's son etc., in the collateral line or son, grandson in the descending line are agnates.

- **Cognate:** One person is said to be Cognate of another if the two are related by blood or adoption but not wholly through males.
A person is said to be cognate of another if the two are related through a female such as sister's son or daughter's son. This class includes relationships by marriage.
- **Uterine Blood:** Two persons are said to be related to each other by uterine blood when they are descended from a common ancestress but by different husbands.
- **Ego:** The individual who forms the central reference point in a kinship diagram.
- **Stock:** All descendants of a common ancestor.
- **Kindred:** The totality of matrilineal (kins traced from mother's side) and patrilineal (kins traced from father's side) kins recognized by a person
- **Collateral:** Parallel cousins in a group are called collaterals. These collaterals reckon the same ancestor but not in a direct line. Example, Ego and Ego's cousins. Collateral is opposite to lineage where in a direct line is highlighted.
- **Inheritance:** The transmission of Property following the death of its owner. Inheritable property is not limited to material goods. Names, titles, ceremonial and ritual knowledge and paraphernalia etc. may also be inherited, and may constitute important valuables.
- **Rules of Inheritance :** Custom or law according to which inheritance will be shared among those entitled for it. In simple societies it is usually of two types - Primogeniture and Ultimogeniture
- **Primogeniture:** Right, by law or custom, of the firstborn legitimate child to inherit the parent's estate in preference to shared inheritance among all or some children, any illegitimate child or any collateral relative. In most contexts, it means the inheritance of the firstborn son (agnatic primogeniture), it can also mean the firstborn daughter (matrilineal primogeniture), or firstborn child

(absolute primogeniture). Today, perhaps the most widely known example of primogeniture is the succession of the British throne, which gives preference to the eldest male child above all others.

→ **Ultimogeniture:** Ultimogeniture, also known as postremogeniture or junior right, is the tradition of inheritance by the last-born of a privileged position in a parent's wealth or office. Among the Khasis of Meghalaya of North East India the immovable property like the ancestral house is inherited by the youngest daughter from her mother's mother (grandmother) and is known as the *Kakhaddu*

Kinship Usages/ Kinship Behaviour

The study of kinship systems does not end with the description of various kinds of kin and the basis of their classification but it also includes the study of behaviour patterns of different kins. Every relationship involves a particular type of behaviour. The behaviour of a son towards his father is one of respect while the behaviour of husband towards wife is one of love. The behaviour of a brother towards his sister is one of affection. There are some usages which regulate the behaviour of different kin. These usages are called kinship usages. Some of these usages are as following:

1. **Avoidance:** In all societies the usage of avoidance is observed in one form or another. It means that the two kin members should remain away from each other. In other words, they should avoid each other. They should not only avoid sexual relationships but in some cases avoid seeing the face of each other. Thus, a father-in-law should avoid daughter-in-law. The *purdah* system in Hindu families illustrates the usage of avoidance. Different explanations have been given for the usage of avoidance. According to **Radcliffe Brown** avoidance serves to forestall further and more serious trouble between relatives.
2. **Joking Relationship:** It is the reverse of an avoidance relationship. Under it a relation is permitted to tease or make fun of the other. The relationship between devar-bhabhi, jija-sali is a joking relationship. The joking may amount to an exchange of abuse and vulgar references to sex. **RADCLIFFE-BROWN (1940)** interpreted joking relationships as the equivalent to relationships of avoidance, in the sense that they function in order to maintain the distance between persons in a potentially conflictual relationship.
3. **Teknonymy :** The term was coined by anthropologist **Edward Burnett Tylor** in 1889. According to this usage, a kin is not referred to directly but he is referred to

through another kin. A distinct kin becomes the medium of reference between two kins. Thus, in a traditional Hindu family a wife does not utter the name of her husband. She calls him through her son or daughter.

Example - The **Cocos Malays of Keeling Island**, where parents are known by the name of their first-born child, for instance, a man named Hashim and his wife, Anisa, have a daughter named Sheila. Hashim is now known as "Pak Sheila" (literally, "Sheila's Father") and Anisa is now known as "Mak Sheila" (literally, "Sheila's Mother").

4. **Avunculate:** This kinship usage is a peculiar feature of the matriarchal system. It gives the maternal uncle a prominent place in the life of his nephews and nieces. He has special obligations towards them which exceed those of father. He has a prior right over their loyalties. He comes first among all male relatives.
RADCLIFFE-BROWN suggested that there are two different sets of roles relating to the mother's brother/sister's son relationship, and that the incidence of these sets was determined by the rule of descent. An example of the avunculate relationship can be found among the **Iroquois people of North America**. In Iroquois culture, uncles play a central role in their nephews' lives, teaching them important skills such as hunting and fishing. The bond between uncle and nephew is so strong that it is believed to continue even after death.
5. **Amitate :** When a special role is given to the father's sister it is known as amitate. The father's sister gets more respect than the mother.
6. **Couvade:** This is a queer usage which is found among many primitive tribes like the **Khasi and the Toda**. Under this usage the husband is made to lead the life of an invalid along with his wife whenever she gives birth to a child. He refrains from active work and takes a sick diet. He observes the same taboos which are observed by his wife.

The major function of kinship behaviour is to govern the role relationships between kin; that is, how one kinsman should behave in a particular kinsman's presence, or what one kinsman owes to another. Kinship assigns guidelines for interactions between persons. It defines a proper, acceptable role and relationship between father and daughter, between brother and sister, between son-in-law and mother-in-law and between fellow lineage members and clansmen. Kinship thus acts as a regularizer of social life and maintains the solidarity of the social system.

Previous Year Questions From Unit 2.5

- 1. Discuss how the rules of descent , contradict the principles of residence in matrilineal societies , mentioning suitable examples (2022)**
- 2. Write a note on Descent Groups (2021)**
- 3. Write a note on Kinship Terminology (2017)**