
UNIT 1 KINSHIP

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Learning Objectives



This unit will help you to understand:

- what is Kinship all about?
- some of the terms used in kinship parlance. The different ways in which kinship systems categorizes the kins;
- the early studies related to kinship especially of Morgan; and
- the shift in focus in kinship studies in the 20th century.

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Human beings are known as social animals even though many species have shown social behaviour, what sets humans apart is the complexity of our social organisation. This unit will introduce the students to the concept of kinship. The underlying factors that help a person trace his/her kinsman. The concentration herein would be in understanding the terminologies used in kinship and in tracing relations. We would also discuss in this unit the early studies in kinship and how with the changing times the focus of kinship studies have also changed and the addition of new kinship terminologies which were not studied till recent times.

1.2 IDEA OF KINSHIP

As soon as a human child is born it enters this world with some given characters like a system of beliefs, a language, parents and siblings and many other relationships and sometimes social positions, like a potential heir to a throne, a priestly position, an occupation or a vocation in life. Such are the ascriptive characters of what is understood as social personhood. Thus to be born is to have an identity as a member of a society and a receiver of a culture. But these social identities can only be reproduced through marriage or a socially recognised bond rather than by mere mating. To be human is to reproduce socially and not simply biologically. Every human is embedded in a network of relationships that can be called kinship relationships that are either based on the notions of putative blood connections or

of marriage as a socially recognised bond; what in anthropological terminology are known as **consanguineal** and **affinal** relationships; that is relations by blood and by marriage respectively. Relatives by blood are those who are recognised *culturally to be so* and not who are genetically connected, as with the case of adoption, fostering and step-relations.

The basic principle of kinship is to keep these two categories separate. In other words those who are supposed to be blood relatives can never be joined by marriage and in all human societies these rules appear as the fundamental rule of **incest taboo**. Apart from the basic relationships of parents and children and siblings, there is a wide variation in the rules of incest taboo, like the taboo on marrying within the same village in Northern India and the variations in rules of marrying children of one's parent's siblings. In a few historical instances like the Egyptian royal family, even the incest taboo between siblings could be broken, but such was very rare. The definition of who is a blood relative is not determined biologically but socially and thus kinship is about the social interpretation of putative biological relations. It is the concept of legitimacy that determines the social recognition of parent child relationships and not the fact of a biological descent.

1.2.1 What is Kinship? Concept and Definitions

The term kinship enfolds in it the various organisations of a society. Inheritance and property rights, political office and the composition of local communities are all embedded in kinship. In societies where ancestor worship was practiced, even religion was based on kinship. To understand the intricacies of the term kinship let's start with a few definitions of kinship.

Kinship and marriage are about the basic facts of life. They are about 'birth, and conception, and death', the eternal round that seemed to depress the poet but which excites, among others, the anthropologist. Man is an animal, but he puts the basic facts of life to work for himself in ways that no other animal does or can, Fox (1996 [1967]: 27). While, Godelier, (1998: 387) stated that Kinship appears as a huge field of social and mental realities stretching between two poles. One is highly abstract: it concerns kinship terminologies and the marriage principles or rules they implicitly contain or that are associated with them. The other is highly concrete: it concerns individuals and their bodies, bodies marked by the position of the individual in kinship relations. Deeply embedded in them are the representations that legitimize these relations through an intimacy of blood, bone, flesh, and soul. Between these two poles lie all the economic, political, and symbolic stakes involved from the outset in the interplay of kinship relations or, conversely, that make use of them. Stone, (1997: 5) recognised Kinship as a relationship between persons based on descent or marriage. If the relationship between one person and another is considered by them to involve descent, the two are **consanguines** ("blood") relatives. If the relationship has been established through marriage, it is **affinal**. Encyclopaedia Britannica in its webpage has defined Kinship as the socially recognised relationship between people in a culture who are or are held to be biologically related or who are given the status of relatives by marriage, adoption, or other ritual. Kinship is the broad-ranging term for all the relationships that people are born into or create later in life and that are considered binding in the eyes of their society. Although customs vary as to which bonds are accorded greater weight, their very acknowledgment defines individuals and the roles that society expects them to play. Tonkinson, (1991:57), stated in his work that Kinship is a system of social relationships that are expressed in a biological idiom, using terms like "mother", "son," and so on. It is best visualized as a mass of networks

of relatedness, not two of which are identical, that radiate from each individual. Kinship is *the* basic organising principle in small-scale societies like those of the Aborigines and provides a model for interpersonal behaviour.

From the above definitions of kinship it can be summed up that kinship determines the journey in a man's life. From birth to death it is the rules of kinship which governs the rites of passage. Kinship through its systematic organisation, rules of marriage and descent ascribes to a person whom he can marry, who would bear his children, who would inherit his property (either son or daughter) and ultimately at the time of demise who would conduct the last rites. These rules differ in different societies and in order to understand the rules of kinship in different societies the next section would help you to get acquainted with some of the terms frequently used in kinship.

1.2.2 Definitions of Some Basic Terms Used in Kinship

Before we embark on the history of Kinship, it would be beneficial to understand some of the basic premises and the definitions on which kinship relations are based.

Descent refers to a person's affiliation and association with his/her kinsman. In a patrilineal society a person traces his descent through father while in a matrilineal society descent is traced through the mother. **Descent Group** comprises of people having a common ancestor, the common ancestor can either be a living, non living or mythical being like an animal, tree, human being, thunder etc. Rules of descent can be divided into two distinct types a. Unilineal and b. Cognatic or Non-Unilineal descent. **Unilineal Descent** is a descent group where lineage is traced either through the father's or mother's side. Herein, only one parents descent is taken into account based on the type of society – matriarchy or whether patriarchy. In a patrilineal society it is traced through the father while in a matrilineal society it is traced through the mother.

Patrilineal Descent is a kinship system based on patriarchy where inheritance, status, authority or property is traced through males only. It is also known as agnatic descent. For example: sons and daughters belong to their father's descent group, sons' children both sons and daughters will be a part of grandfather's descent group, but the daughter's children would belong to her husband's descent group. Many of the societies of the world belong to this realm like the classical Romans, the Chinese and also the Hindu society of India. In the Hindu society, the rule of descent follows the transfer of authority and immovable property to the oldest son or the first born commonly known as primogeniture.

Matrilineal Descent is a kinship system based on matriarchy where inheritance, status, authority and property is traced through females only. It is also known as uterine descent. A matrilineal descent group comprises of a woman, her siblings, her own children, her sisters children and her daughters' children. The Ashanti of Ghana studied by Meyer Fortes, the Trobriand Islanders of Western Pacific studied by Malinowski, some of the societies of Indonesia, Malaysia, some Native American tribes like Navajo, Cherokee and Iroquois, and also some of the tribes in India like the Khasis of North East India and the Nayars of southern India are examples of societies with matrilineal descent. Among the Ashanti of Ghana, the authority lies with the mother's brother and a son inherits the property of the mother's brother, whereas 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*. Herein, the rule of descent lies in the ultimo geniture that is the youngest in the family.

Double Descent is a kinship system in which descent is traced through both the paternal and maternal side. In such a descent system for certain aspects descent is traced through the mother while for other aspects descent is traced through the father. Usually the distinction is that fixed or immovable property is handed down from father to son while the movable property moves from mother to daughter which may include small livestock's, agricultural produce and also items of cultural value like jewelry etc. As in the case of Sumi Nagas of Nagaland, which is basically a patrilineal society during marriage *Achiku* a traditional necklace is handed down from mother to daughter and moves in the same line. This necklace if acquired from the market has no value but is treasured as a family heirloom if passed on from mother to daughter (example related by one of the Sumi Naga participants in a seminar). Other example of double descent well described is seen among the Yako of Nigeria, Forde (1967:285-332).

Ambilineal descent is a form of descent wherein a person can choose the kingroup to affiliate with which he wants to affiliate with, either his father's kingroup or his mothers. Bilateral descent is a kinship system wherein a person gives equal emphasis to both his mother's and father's kin. **Lineal kinship** or the direct line of consanguinity is the relationship between persons, one of whom is a descendant of the other. Examples are like from father to son, grandfather to grandson etc. In a partilineal society, people tend to remember their ancestry for several generations like in the case of Tallensi of Ghana sometimes they could trace the lineal descent upto fourteen generations. **Collateral kinship** is the relationship between people who descend from a common ancestor but are not in a direct line. Examples are the relation between two brothers, cousin to cousin etc.

In Kinship studies Ego plays a vital role. **Ego** is the respondent through whom a relationship is traced. It can be a male or a female for example if the ego is (C) the son of a person (A) then all relations in this case would be traced through C. For better understanding please refer to the diagram below showing Ego (C's) family genealogy.

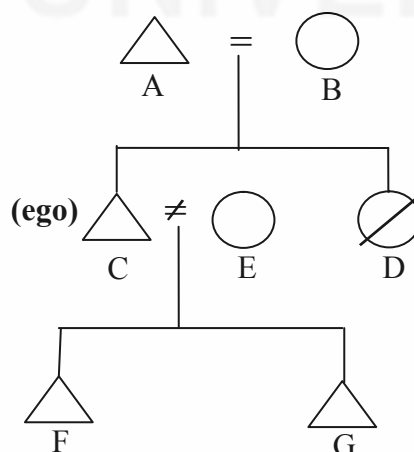


Fig. 1.1

As stated above in the diagram the EGO is C son of A. Let's, see how the relations would be traced in this situation if we start from the EGO. Ego is A's son that is father is A, and mother is B while D is his sister (sibling). E is ego's wife, and F and D are his two sons. Herein, for male the sign is Δ and the female is \circ , the = sign signifies marriage, while \neq stands for divorce, and \perp connects parents and children, — connects siblings while $\cancel{\circ}$ or $\cancel{\Delta}$ signifies death.

Reflection and Activity

Trace your line of descent and explain the category of descent it falls under: a. Unilateral or b. Cognatic descent group. To assist you below a representation of each group is given:

- a. Unilateral descent groups comprise of kingroups who trace their descent either through the male or female line.
- b. Cognatic descent groups comprises of kingroups who trace descent from both the male and female lines. Double descent, ambilineal descent and bilateral descent are types of cognatic descent groups.

Clan consists of members who trace their origin to a common ancestor which can be a living or non-living being without knowing the genealogical links to that ancestor. It is also defined as a unilateral exogamous group. **Totemism** is the belief that people are related to a particular animal, plant or natural object by virtue of descent from a common ancestral spirit. A totemic clan traces their origin to some particular non human object like the tiger, a bird, thunder etc. Examples of totemic clans are found all over the world like Africa, Asia, Australia, Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and the Arctic polar region. Among the Kimberly tribe of Australian Aborigines one of the clans traces their origin to the butcher bird (*karadada*).

The term Phratry is derived from the Greek term *phrater* meaning brother. **Phratry** is basically a kin group comprising of several clans based on brotherhood mostly through common descent and is a consanguineous group. A **moiety** is the literal division of the society in two halves. A moiety consists of many phratries and it is a bigger unit than a phratry. All moieties have phratries in it but a phratry need not be a moiety. As per legends, northern Kimberley tribe of Australia has two moieties and is represented by two birds, *Wodoi* the Spotted Nightjar, and *Djungun* the Owlet Nightjar (<http://www.aboriginalculture.com.au/socialorganisation.shtml>, accessed on 29th March, 2010). The moieties are exogamous that is they marry outside of their moiety and never within the same moiety.

Endogamy and **Exogamy** are two concepts which we would be referring to in terms of marriage, which also follows the kinship rules. Endogamy is the practice of marrying within the group. In most of the tribes and caste based societies the rule of endogamy exists. For example among the Naga Tribe of North East India there are different Naga Tribes like the Semi, Ao, Sumi, Angami etc. The tribes rarely marry outside their own tribes. Likewise in the caste based system of India a caste group always marries within their own caste like a Brahmin would marry a Brahmin and not a Kshatriya. Exogamy is marrying out. Within the tribe and caste the system rule of exogamy is followed by which a person has to marry outside his own clan while in a caste based society one has to marry outside his gotra. Herein the moiety and phratry also comes into play. As stated earlier a moiety is exogamous and one has to marry into the other moiety.

1.3 A BRIEF HISTORY OF KINSHIP STUDIES IN ANTHROPOLOGY

The study of Kinship has its home in anthropology since the early 19th century. In the initial ages it emerged as a subject which became an integral part of social anthropology and the anthropologists engaged themselves in collecting data on genealogies. The terminologies used in describing kinship relation took centre

stage in social anthropological studies but by the turn of the century the new generation of anthropologists started questioning the relevance of collecting genealogies when it was looking at the society from Marxist and Feminist perspectives. Kinship studies were on the verge of collapse as the than anthropologists moved on to explore new avenues in anthropology. It was with the work of Schneider that there was a revival of kinship studies which tend to be historically grounded, focus on everyday experiences, and understandings, representation of gender, power and differences. Thus, under this section we would take up Kinship studies in two perspectives: i) Morgan’s Kinship system which laid the basis for the study of Kinship and ii) Contemporary Kinship studies how it emerged and what are the aspects under its consideration.

1.3.1 Morgan’s Kinship System

In Anthropological parlance Lewis Henry Morgan took up the initial studies on Kinship. Morgan’s idea of kinship was reflected in his two major works *Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family* (1870) and *Ancient Society* (1877) which consisted of ethnographic data collected from the Iroquois, an American tribe during his student days. Later he also acted on behalf of the Iroquois in cases related to land rights. As mentioned in Unit 1, Block 3 Morgan coined and described the terms **Classificatory** and **Descriptive** systems of kinship relationships. Morgan discovered that the Iroquois had two types of terminologies referring to their kinsman. He stated that in the classificatory system the Iroquois merged lineal kin with the collateral kins who were linked through the same ties (sex), like for example a father’s brother is classified as a father (both having the same ties through men) and a mother’s sister as mother (again both having same ties through female). While on the other hand distinguished lineals from collaterals who were not linked through the same ties, for example mother’s brother had a separate term of reference Uncle (being related differently-different sex) and father’s sister as Aunt. Likewise, parallel cousins (father’s brothers’ children and mother’s sisters’ children) were considered as siblings whereas cross cousins (father’s sisters’ children and mother’s brothers’ children) were not considered as siblings.

Morgan’s descriptive system on the other hand classified all collaterals together and kept them separate from the lineal kin. The descriptive system is commonly seen in the European societies where parents (father/mother) are distinguished from all collaterals, who themselves have common terms of reference regardless of the line of descent (uncle, aunt, nephew, niece). The **Iroquois Kinship System** clearly shows the distinction between the classificatory and the descriptive system.

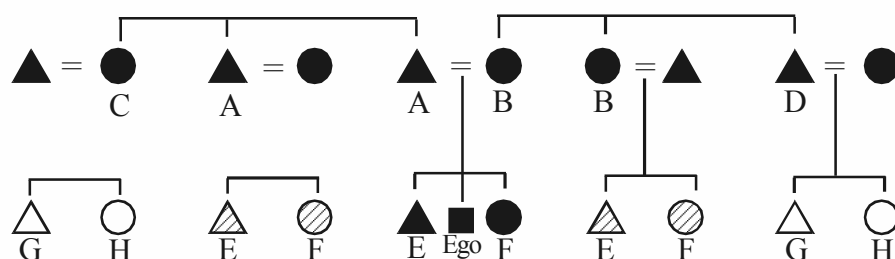


Fig. 1.2: Iroquios kinship system

Adapted from: Nanda, Serena and Richard L. Warms. 2010: 184

Herein, this figure we see that the Ego has the same term of reference for the kins with the same numbers. Under this system with unilineal descent mother’s side of the family (B and

D) is distinguished from father's side of the family (A and C), and cross cousins (△ and ○) from parallel cousins (△ and ⊙).

Morgan later discovered that Ojibwa Indians had the same classificatory and descriptive kinship terminology as the Iroquois, though the language spoken was completely different. Similarly, it was discovered that Tamil and Telegu populations of South India shared similar kinship terminologies as with the Iroquois and the Ojibwa Indians. The South Indian kinship later came to be known as **Dravidian kinship**. This part related to Kinship system in India would be taken up in detail in unit 5 of this same block.

The Eskimo's also had both classificatory and descriptive terms; in addition to sex and generation, and further distinguishes between lineal and collateral kins. Lineal relatives have highly descriptive terms; collateral relatives have highly classificatory terms. This kinship system came to be known as **Eskimo Kinship**.

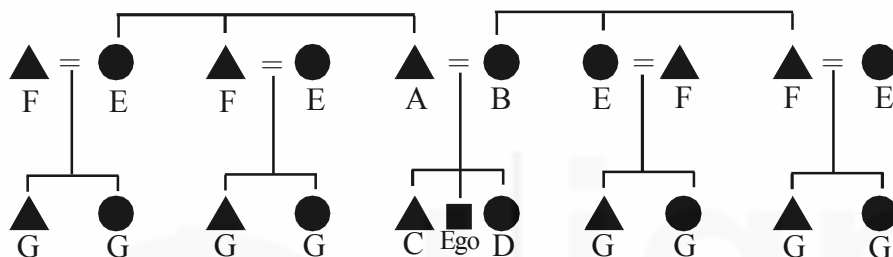


Fig.: 1.3: Eskimo kinship system

Adapted from: Nanda, Serena and Richard L. Warms. 2010: 184

In the Eskimo kinship a clear cut distinction is seen between the lineal and collateral relations. Ego uses one set of terms to refer to his lineal relations (A, B, C and D) and another set of term to refer to his collateral relations (E.F and G).

Even the **Omaha Kinship** is like the Iroquois, but further distinguishes between mother's side and father's side. Relatives on the mother's side of the family have more classificatory terms, while relatives on the father's side have more descriptive terms.

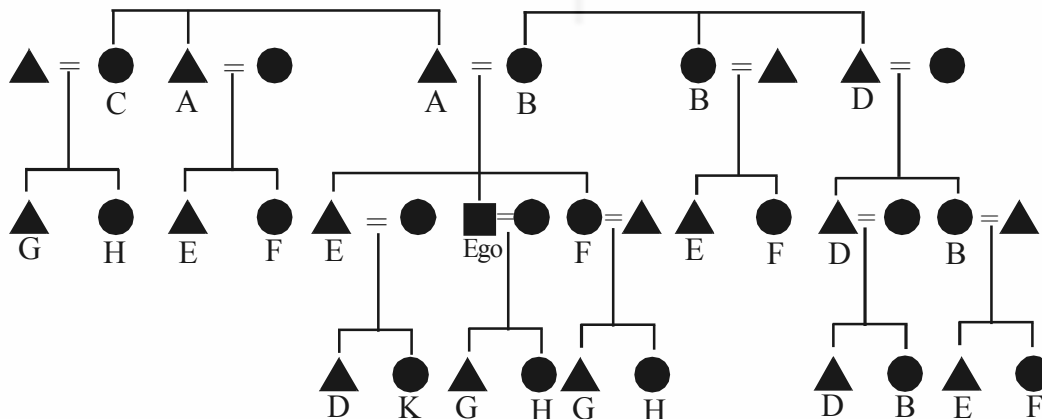


Fig.: 1.4: Omaha kinship system

Adapted from: Nanda, Serena and Richard L. Warms. 2010: 185

In the Omaha kinship a bifurcate merging system is seen among the patrilineal relations. Like in the Iroquois system it merges father and father's brother and mother and mother's sister. However, in addition it merges generations in mother's side. So, men who are members of Ego's mother's patrilineage are referred to by same term as for mother's brother, regardless of age or generation.

While the **Crow Kinship** is also like Iroquois, but further distinguishes between mother's side and father's side. Relatives on the mother's side of the family have more descriptive terms, and relatives on the father's side have more classificatory terms.

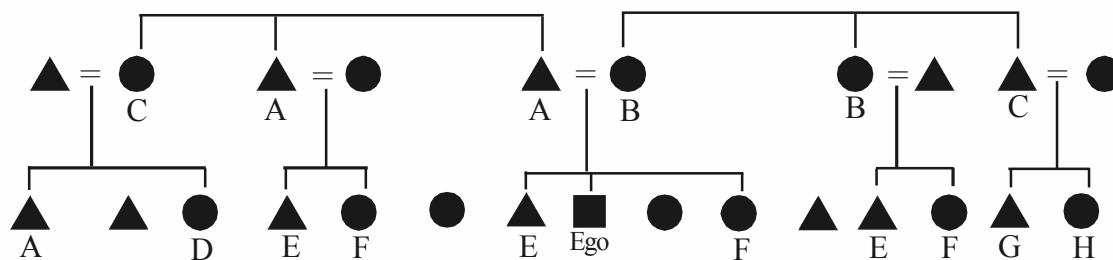


Fig.: 1.5: Crow kinship system

Adapted from: Nanda, Serena and Richard L. Warms. 2010: 185

The Crow kinship system is similar to Omaha Kinship system but is found among matrilineal society. Like the Omaha system it merges father and father's brother and mother and mother's sister. However, unlike the Omaha system, it merges generations on the father's side. So, all women who are members of Ego's father's matrilineage are referred to by same term as for father's sister, regardless of age or generation

Variations on the classificatory terminology was also observed by Morgan among certain groups called as Malayan but rephrased as **Hawaiian** or **generational** by later anthropologists. Under this kinship terminology mostly related to Polynesia each generation of males have one term while the females have another. Under such a system there is no distinction in terminology for relations from matrikin-mother's side and patrikin- father's side belonging to the same gender, lineal and collateral belonging to the same generation.

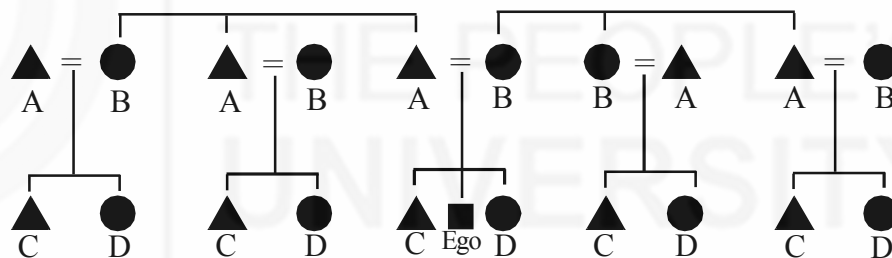


Fig.: 1.6: Hawaiian kinship system

Adapted from: Nanda, Serena and Richard L. Warms. 2010: 184

In the Hawaiian kinship the primary distinctions are between men and women and between generations. All members of the Ego's generation are designated by the same terms Ego uses for brother and sister. All members of Ego's parent's generation are designated by the same term Ego uses for mother and father.

Sudanese Kinship on the other hand was more descriptive that is no two relatives share the same term.

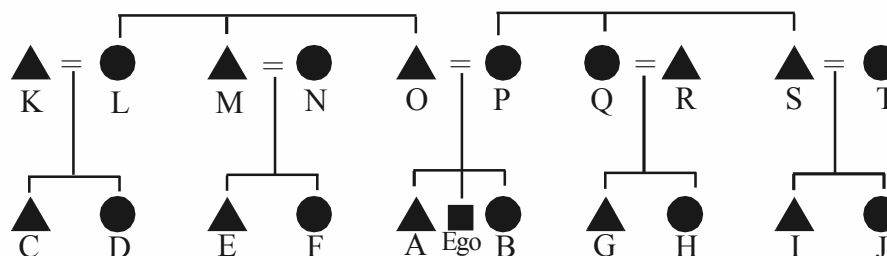


Fig.: 1.7 Sudanese kinship system

Adapted from: Nanda, Serena and Richard L. Warms. 2010: 185

The Sudanese kinship system occurs most frequently in societies with substantial hierarchy and distinctions of class. It includes a separate term for each relative.

Based on the above studies Morgan explained the evolution from a supposed form of primitive promiscuity. This was seen as a primordial situation in which the human population was divided into hordes with no form of marriage or restriction on sexual intercourse. Leading to a situation where children could identify their mothers only. Morgan related this state to the Malayan system of kinship.

Morgan's idea of Kinship was at par with the works of Johann J. Bachofen, a Swiss lawyer who postulated the theory of 'matriarchate' in which women ruled the society, later on followed by 'patriarchate' where marriage and family became a part of society. Scottish lawyer John McLennan working in the same lines postulated 'survivals' in terms of ritual expressions – of bride capture and female infanticides. According to McLennan for the early hunters and gathers a daughter was a liability whereas a wife was an asset. As daughters were killed off it led to competition for wives, which was eased by the practice for **polyandry** – a marriage where a woman can have more than one husband at the same time. While Sir Henry Maine (1861) a lawyer by profession from his experience of administrative work in India claimed that the earliest form of social organisation was the patrilineal family under the absolute authority of father-husband. Maine thus placed family at the start of social evolution followed by development of other social organisations as descent, clan etc. The conflict between historical priority of clan or family persisted into the 20th century. W. Robertson Smith (1885), Sir James Frazer (1910) and Emile Durkheim (1912) correlated the development of clans to early forms of religion involving blood, sacrifice and totemism. The association of religion with clan postulated by Durkheim in *The Elementary Forms of Religious Life*, (1912) was shown to be inappropriate by Alexander Goldenweiser a follower of Franz Boas. Although Radcliffe-Brown tried to revive the theory of Durkheim, an attempt which was put to rest by Levi-Strauss stating that clan is merely cognitive as it only provides an understanding of social universe.

An alternative approach was put forward by Malinowski, for whom nuclear family was the fundamental unit in society and dismissed kinship terminology as *kinship algebra* way to confusing to the understanding of ways of society. W.H.R. Rivers conceptualised the Genealogical method for collecting kin terms. The genealogical terminology used in many genealogical charts describes relatives of the Ego in question. Below a list of abbreviations is provided alongwith a diagrammatic representation which would help in tracing genealogical relationships. The abbreviations may be used to distinguish a single or compound relationship, such as BC for brother's children, MBD for a mother's brother's daughter, and so forth.

- B = Brother
- C = Child(ren)
- D = Daughter
- F = Father
- GC = Grandchild(ren)
- GP = Grandparent(s)
- P = Parent
- S = Son

- Z = Sister
- W = Wife
- H = Husband
- SP = Spouse
- LA = In-law
- SI = Sibling
- M = Mother
- (m.s.) = male speaking
- (f.s.) = female speaking

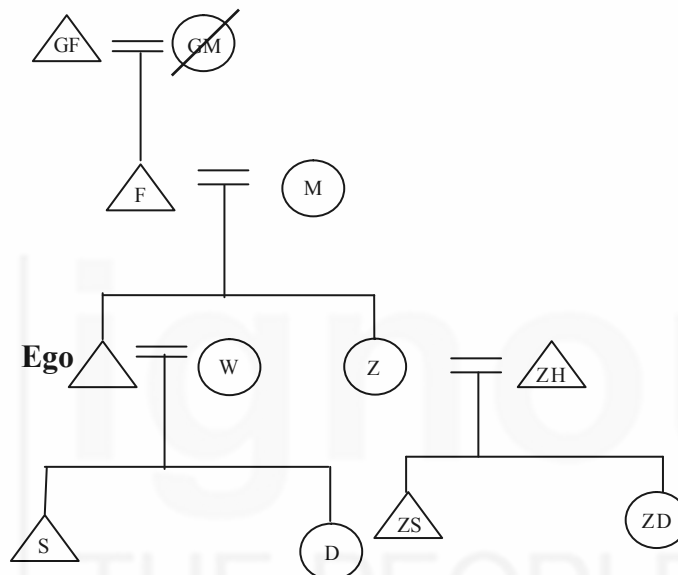


Fig.: 1.8

Reflection and Action

Trace the genealogy of your family considering yourself as the Ego. Also utilize the symbols to show the relations.

1.3.2 Contemporary Kinship Studies in the Late 20th Century

The shift of Kinship studies in terms of focus from emphasis on terminologies, tracing genealogies and usage was seen in Schneider’s work *American Kinship A Cultural Account*, (1968) which centered on symbols and meanings. It was an exemplary work in terms of interpretative anthropology. He was focused on representing American Kinship in terms of symbols and meanings rather than on kinship statuses, roles and institutions. He himself had stated that his book be considered as an “*account of what Americans say when they talk about kinshipthe symbols which are American Kinship*”. His work presented Kinship in a more lucid way pertaining to the symbols such as ‘family’, ‘home’ etc. which till date remains a significant insight to kinship in North America and Britain.

Levis- Strauss’s concern was mainly with the understanding of the underlying relationships among the constituent elements in kinship. His search for ‘deep structures’ capable of revealing the workings of the Mind was seen in his analysis of the structural significance of ties of marriage and alliance, the ways in which they link descent units of various kinds. Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship* (1969) was a move from descent to alliance which redefined

the study from kinship, and marriage in particular to a critical reevaluation of the entailments of descent and various dimensions of unilinear groups. While under the same pattern of studying structures Kelly developed upon sibling ship as a principle of social order with principles of descent, filiations and affinity. Kelly's *Etoro Social Structure: A Study in Structural Contradictions* (1977) is a landmark work wherein the deviation was seen with the focus being on siblings rather than parent-child relations in kinship.

The early 70^s also saw a rise in Feminists writing and the influence was also seen in the works related to kinship. Some of the major works of the time were G. Rubin's, *The traffic in women: notes on the 'political economy' of sex*, (1975) and *Worlds of Pain: Life in the working class family*, (1976). Among other criticisms Levi Strauss's "exchange of women" came under strong criticisms in Rubin's works. Levi Strauss in his work has portrayed women as a means of exchange and a passage for political gains. In Evans-Pritchard's ethnography on the Nuers, he had also elaborated on the bride price/wealth of cattle exchange to show the wealth of a tribe, a means of establishing political ties between two tribes. Among the Nagas of North East India bride price is also a common practice. It's a system wherein a brides family is compensated for the loss of one earning member in the family.

Goody's work *Family and Inheritance: Rural Society in Western Europe 1200-1800*, (1976) was a departure from the study of kinship as structure, as it considered continuity and change in kinship and inheritance based on historic data as well. Le Roy Ladurie and others have during the time relied on legal records and archival material to discover the kinship ties in relation to peasant testimony on marriage, sexual division of labour etc. In relation to historical change Sahlin's work brings into focus the role of ambiguity and structural contradictions in historical change. Michael G. Peletz, *A Share of the Harvest: Kinship, Property and Social History Among the Malays of Rembau* (1988) and *Reason and Passion: Representations of Gender in Malay Society* (1996) focuses on the changes in kinship, gender and social structure in the Malays a matrilineal society associated with British colonialisation, coming in contact with globalisation and Islamic nationalism and reform.

The rise in societies with social class and social institutions saw the effects in the receding status of women in the context of breaking up of the kin-based societies. There was also a shift in the power and production system with the coming up of the states where the economy determines the mode of production as opposed to the kinship dominated mode of production in the segmentary societies. Meillassoux and Godelier showed the relation of lineage and production in a society. Herein these studies the Marxist tradition is seen.

In the present era we are also concerned with complex kinship related questions due to the new means of reproductive technologies such as sperm banks, in vitro fertilization (IVF) and surrogate motherhood. Herein the question lies with maternal rights whom to be considered as a mother- the biological mother who donates an egg, in such cases a husband's sperm is fertilized in controlled laboratory atmosphere with a woman's egg besides his wife (as she is not able to produce eggs due to various medical reasons) and then implanted into another woman's womb for gestation, or the surrogate mother who carried the child in her womb for nine months? Kinship studies have also encompassed the Kinship relations based on choice and not 'blood'. Weston's, *Families We Choose: Lesbians, Gays, Kinship*, (1996) relates the present day gay and lesbian relationships and the legalization of

the same in some countries thereby creating new types of families and marriages. These would be further taken up in the units on Family and Marriage in the same block.

1.4 SUMMARY

To sum up we can state that Kinship is one of the integral avenues of study in social anthropology. Kinship as we had seen is a social recognition of the biological ties and it takes into its fold adoption also. Kinsman cannot change their kinship ties and one has to follow the rules of kinship in descent and marriage. A man has two types of kin groups those related by blood ties, his cognates and those related by marriage- affines. One shares different types of relationship with his kinsmen based on the type of society either patrilineal or matrilineal. In a patrilineal society all relations are traced through his father while in a matrilineal society the ties are traced through the mother. Inheritance, descent and authority are based on the type of society patriarchy or matriarchy. In the history of Kinship we had seen that kinship study has been enveloped in controversies. In the late 20th century there were times when anthropologists had negated the relevance of kinship studies as ethnocentric and build upon certain western ideas about kinship. In the words of Malinowski kinship is 'kinship algebra' and the collection of genealogies had no meaning. Kinship studies however, in the late 20th century came up with a new vision and it moved beyond the realms of collection of genealogy. With the coming of modernism and feminism kinship studies ventured to new avenues and also took into its fold the study of latest trends that is of the gay and lesbian kinship. Thus, we can say that kinship studies are very much prerogative in the study of social anthropology and would remain so in the long run. In the upcoming unit, we would discuss about the theories of descent and alliance which helped in shaping kinship ties.

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Sample Questions

- 1) What is kinship?
- 2) What is the relationship between kinship and descent explain with examples.
- 3) What is matrilineal descent?
- 4) Give examples of patrilineal descent.
- 5) Discuss critically Morgan's classificatory and descriptive kinship.

