



## **GENERAL SCOPE AND USES OF SOCIAL & CULTURAL ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Course Name:**

**ANTHROPOLOGY**

**Paper No. & Title:**

**B.A. / B.Sc. 3rd Semester  
(Theory)**

**Topic No. & Title:**

**( 8/22 ) Kinship:**

**Types of Kinship- Consanguineal and Affinal**

### **1. Introduction:**

Kinship is one of the important aspects of social structure and one of the basic principles for organizing individuals into social groups, categories and genealogy. In anthropology, kinship system includes people related through the bond of marriage and birth. Marriage establishes social recognition of copulation which is the basic need of life. The socially sanctioned union of mates reproduces offspring. It provides the basis for the social status of 'husband' and 'father'. Hence, kinship is the social recognition of the biological ties of marriage and birth and all those who are



related to each other through these bonds are known as 'kins' as distinguished from 'non-kins' who may be related to each other through other ways.

## 2. Types of kinship:

Regarding the types of kins, it can be thought that the body of kin who are recognized by one man will be different from those recognized by any other, except his own brother and sister. The kindred are the individual's world of kins and can not form a continuing element in the structure of society. It is simply the total of kins who are genealogically linked and have common obligations for being linked. In some societies it is the duty of a man's kindred to avenge his murder.

This used to be the rule among the Anglo-Saxons, and Philippines (Lucy Mair 1965).

Broadly, there are two types of kin - i) Affinal kins ii) Consanguineal kins.

- Affinal kins:

Those related to each other through marital relationship are called affinal kins or affines. The affinal kins are not related through the bond of blood. And, the kind of bond between spouses and their relatives on either side which arises out of legally defined marital relationship is known as affinal kinship.

- Consanguineal kins:

Those who are related to each other by 'blood' are known as consanguineal kin or cognates and the relationship based on blood-ties is called consanguineous (same blood) kinship. There are three types of consanguineal kins. These are given below.

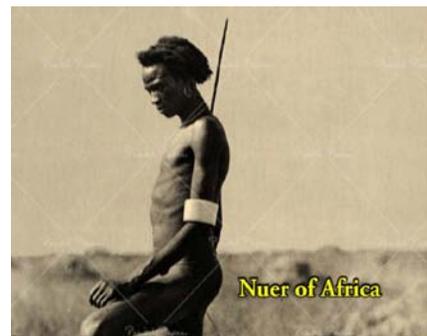
- Lineal kins who are the direct descendants of common progenitors in a vertical line, for instance, grand father-father-son-grand son.
- Siblings who are the brothers and sisters i.e., the children of the same parent.
- Collateral kins who are not related in the single line and are related indirectly through a linking relative, such as father's brother or brother's daughter.



In connection to consanguineous kinship, not only biological fact (actual blood relationship) but also social recognition (adoption or convention as in polyandry) are important. Among many primitive societies the role of a father is unknown, as among the Trobriand Islanders of Melanesia. Among them it is the wife's husband who is conventionally accepted as father. Among the Toda, a polyandrous people in which all the brothers share a common wife, fatherhood of a child is established through a ceremonial presentation of a bow and arrow to the wife. Until and unless another brother performs this ceremony, he is the father of all the children born to the wife, even if he is away for a long time or dead (Majumdar & Madan 1987:99).

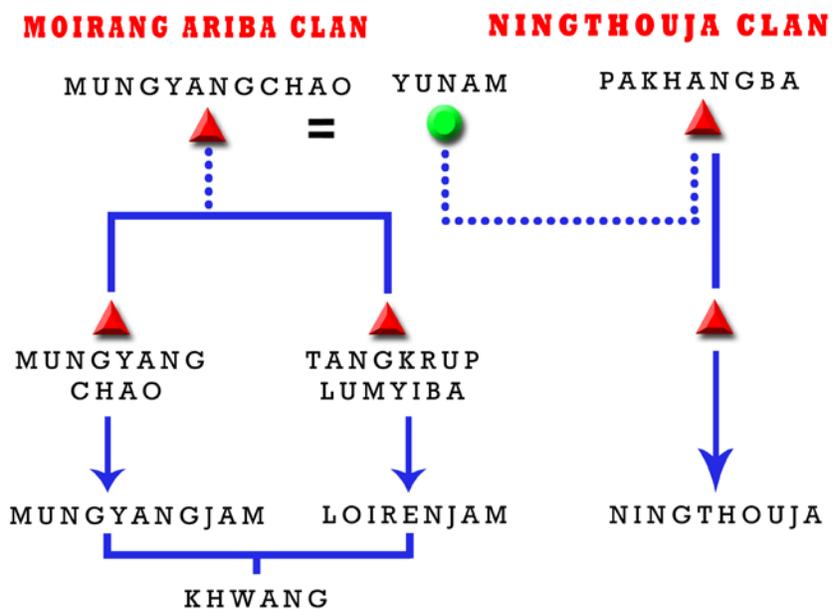
### 3. Social kinship:

The definition of kinship can not rest exclusively on the notion of genealogical connection. The concept of kinship must take account of and be defined by social and not only genealogical relationship. In many societies, the identity of genitor is not posited and seems quite unnecessary. These are societies that posit genealogical connections but ascribe little or no social significance to them. The issue is the necessity and sociological utility of Malinowski's 'principle of legitimacy' and of his and Radcliffe-Brown's concept of 'social kinship' that describes social relations ascribed on the basis of genealogical connection (Scheffler 1997:751). It means that the role of *pater* or 'social father' is more important than that of the *genitor*. Radcliffe-Brown (1950:4) mentions that 'social fatherhood is usually determined by marriage' and so, a man who is not married to the genitrix of his offspring has no right in respect of them as their genitor, and if the genitrix is married to another man, that man is entitled to claim the offspring as his own for any and all social purposes. Here, it is mentionable that a husband can acquire two main rights over his wife – rights *in uxorem* and rights *in genetricem*. Rights *in uxorem* are rights over a woman considered as exclusive sexual and domestic partner; rights *in genetricem* are rights over a woman's reproductive capacity as a mother regardless of their presumed paternity. Among the Nuer of Africa, a remarkable



kind of consanguineal relationship is established through which a child belongs to the lineage of the man who holds the rights *in genetricem* over its genetrix, whether or not he is presumed to be the genitor, and in many cases he is not. In many cases, proxy fathers are created through ‘ghost marriage’ as the Nuers believe that every man has a right to marry and found his own line of descent. But sometimes, a young man dies before his marriage or a man has no son, then it is the duty of the nearest kinsman to marry a wife to his name. The children of this marriage will count as dead man’s children and a kinsman will have to make a ghost marriage. A ghost family consists of the ghost (the pater), his wife, their children and the kinsman-genitor.

Among the Meitei of India, there is a kinship system having a peculiar kind of agnatic pools known as *sairuk tinnaba*. The Meitei has seven exogamous, patrilineal clans which are again divided into lineages and sub-lineages. *Sairuk tinnaba* groups are not included in this division of descent groups. It points to the common reference of different descent groups (because of rights *in genetricem*) to an ancestor (because of the same genitor).



For instance, Pakhangba, the Meitei king who belonged to *Ningthouja* clan, while taking asylum in Moirang, became the conjugal father of two sons, namely, Mungyang Chaoba and Tangkrup Lumyiba whose mother was Yunam and pater was Mungyangchao who belonged to *Moirang (ariba)* clan. The descendants of Mungyang Chaoba became the lineage *Mungyangjam* whereas the descendants of Tangkrup Lumyiba became the lineage *Loirengjam*. Both the lineages belong to the *Khwang* group under *Moirang (ariba)* clan and not under *Ningthouja* clan. But, the

members of *Khwang* group and *Ningthouja* clan are prohibited to intermarry thereby lingering the incestuous relationship between the two descent groups because of their common apical genitor. This norm of kinship relationship is expressed as *sairuk tinnaba*.

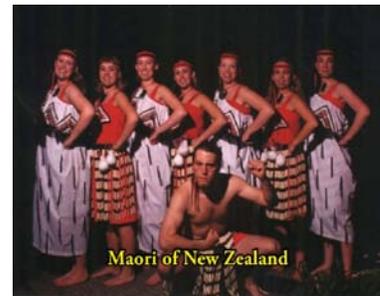
#### 4. Kinship and descent:

In order to know the genealogical connection among the members of a society, it is necessary to distinguish the concept of descent from that of kinship. In kinship system, egocentric systems of social identities and statuses are described whereas in descent system, it is ancestor-oriented. Here again, Fortes distinguishes between descent and filiation, the former being the relation between a person with his ancestors among whom the nearest one is a grand parent whereas the latter being the relation of a person with his own parents. Whatever it may be only blood tie is counted in descent system. Then, who are the persons to be connected through blood tie. If descent is traced only in one line, the principle is called unilineal descent. Where descent is traced through males exclusively it is called patrilineal or agnatic and if it is traced exclusively through females it is called matrilineal or uterine. In patrilineal descent, a child belongs to the lineage (a corporate group recruited by descent) of his father. Because of his relationship through his father, a man has a claim on the productive resources of the lineage not only for his own subsistence, but also for special needs, such as, the payment for his marriage or payment of compensation for a wrong done by him to a member of another lineage, etc. His rank as a king or noble or commoner is ascribed by his lineage membership. He also has certain obligations by virtue of his membership in the particular descent group. In matrilineal descent, every person belongs to the lineage of his mother. The Ashanti of Ghana, the Khasi, the Garo of India, etc., have the matrilineal system of consanguinity.



Even though a person traces his descent, he has mutual rights and obligation with the kin of the other. There is the importance of matrilineal kin in patrilineal society and of patrilineal kin in a matrilineal society. 'Lateral' means 'on the side'; 'lineal' means 'in a line'. This egocentric category of kin beyond the descent category of kin is known as *complementary filiation*.

If the descent is traced in the male line for some purposes and the female line for others, it is called double unilineal descent. Among the Yako of the Cross River in the east of Nigeria where this kind of descent is prevalent, a man inherits land-property through patrilineage and he also inherits livestock and currency, tools, weapons and household goods in the female line. Another form of descent is bilateral or ambilateral descent that allows a person to choose his descent either in the father line or in the mother line, but not in both lines. The Iban of Borneo, the Maori of New Zealand trace descent through the bilateral system.



From the above discussion it is known that the totality of any individual's kin is bilateral but the relation of kinship is different from the relations of common descent.

## 5. Importance of kinship in Anthropology:

In simple societies, relationships to ancestors and kin are the bases of group formation. These are the relationship around which social interactions, claims and obligations, loyalties and sentiments turn. Social structures in these societies are structures of relationships of such kin-based groups. In such societies, statuses are ascribed and a man's place in society, his rights and duties, and his claim to property largely depend on the genealogical relationships to other members. Thus, loyalties to kin supersede all other loyalties. Kinship is the hub of the entire social organization.

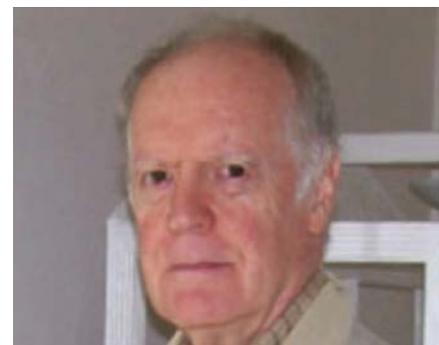
Psychologically, kinship refers to the feelings of oneness among certain individuals simply because they are of the same blood. By kinship relations are meant relationships to an ancestor or ancestress or as many ancestors and ancestresses as so claimed in certain cases or still

to both an ancestor or ancestress, and relationships among their descendants. And these relations are derived from the feelings of oneness of the members of the kin groups, based on the theory of the same blood.

It is perhaps basic in human nature to trust the familiar and fear the strange. If it is so, then those who share one's blood share part of oneself, and so are by definition the most familiar of all. Thus the sense of security lies at the fountain-head of kinship, to interpret it in its psychological terms. As such, kinship bonds are the most fundamental and original of all bonds.

The kinship principle of social organization was not completely abandoned when human development reached the stage of civil society with the formation of state. In most cases the territorial principle of state organization functioned rather as the content of the new formation while its form still lingered on assuming kinship character in that process of state formation. Kinship does not die out in history. It survives in the present era too. In the modern developing countries bureaucratic rationality often loses out to kinship loyalties: it is all too apparent in such countries that recruitments to public services are often based not on the criterion of ability to do the job, but on the closeness of relationship. From Clifford Geertz, we know that kinship works as one of the primordial sentiments in raising obstacles to the bounden concern of the new states in the modern developing countries to install integration in such states which are composed of diverse ethnic elements. He (1963: 109) reports, "...the new states are abnormally susceptible to serious disaffection based on primordial attachments. By a primordial attachment is meant one that stems from the 'givens'- or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens'- social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly... "

Even in the modern western enlightened and rational societies kinship ideology looms large and pervades most corners of political and public life perhaps except in the case of the less conservative and more mobile middle-classes among whom kinship is seemingly of little relevance beyond the level of parent-child relationship. And, in noble families the length of genealogy has been a measure of relative prestige. Robin Fox (1964:15-16) concludes the point while saying, "Thus, even our relatively kinless society can not throw off this slowly accumulated, almost innate wisdom of the blood".



Kinship is tenacious. To the materialist grand theorists of society it holds on at the very core of society. Historical materialists hold it to be a part of the determining factor of history. Thus, in his preface to the first edition (1884) of his *The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, Frederick Engels (1977: 191-192) says, “According to the materialist conception, the determining factor in history is, in the last resort, the production and reproduction of immediate life. But this itself is of a two fold character. On the one hand, the production of the means of subsistence, food, cloth and shelter and the tools requisite therefore; on the other, the production of human beings themselves, the propagation of the species. The social institutions under which men of a definite historical epoch and of a definite country live are conditioned by both kinds of production: by the stage of development of labour, on the one hand, and of the family, on the other. The less the development of labour, and the more limited its volume of production and, therefore, the wealth of society, the more preponderatingly does the social order appear to be dominated by ties of sex...”

This materialist theory clearly places both economy and kinship in the base-structure of a society as the two-fold character of the determining factor in history. Marxist anthropologist like Maurice Godelier (1978) also evaluates the basal importance of kinship along with economy in the deterministic factor. To him kinship is the conditioning factor within the base-structure of society.

These grand theories of society suffice to testify the supreme importance of kinship in human social affairs. Certainly, it is so. Accordingly it has been popularly held that kinship is to anthropology what logic is to philosophy or the nude to formal logic. Kinship is so the basic discipline of anthropology. What is more, after exploring the universal basic dyadic structure, true of all human societies, on the analysis of the Purum kinship and marriage system, the Oxford anthropologist Rodney Needham (1971) commends that the Purums are what the whole of social anthropology is all about. Here, Needham’s “the Purum” should be construed as referring to Purum kinship and marriage system. This remarkable comment of Needham implies that kinship is the epitome of the entire social organization. It is definitely a logically elegant understanding of the thing under discussion. Methodologically, one may observe a more critical and deeper concept of social structure in Levi-Strauss’ structural thought as compared to Needham’s formalist and non-dialectical conception of social structure in terms of a naïve non-dialectic dualism. Odd to the current trend of assessing the amazingly dominating status of

kinship in anthropology, Levi-Strauss has, however, relegated it to a realm of social reality by which alone one can't discover the inner structure of the human mind which he hopes to unravel in the study of mythologies. Levi-Strauss departs at this point from empirical anthropology. The point is that within the limit of empirical anthropology the theoretical significance of kinship study stands large unswerving still in this discipline.

Admittedly, there are differences among human societies of different times and different places in respect of the intensity with which kinship ties are utilized to induce social bonds; no society so far has managed to dispense with an irreducible minimum of kinship-based social relationship. However, from the point of view of the comparative nature of the science of empirical anthropology even the society with the least intensity of kinship bonds is not less important than one obsessed with kinship.

## **6. Conclusion:**

Kin relationship may be derived either from descent or be established through affinity. In other word, kins are of consanguineal and affinal types. In the simple societies, the most important statuses are defined in terms of kinship through which a person's place in society, his rights and duties, and his claim to property largely depend on the genealogical relationships to other members. Thus, loyalties to kin supersede all other loyalties. Kinship is the hub of the entire social organization. Consequently, the anthropologists, who take more interest in simple societies, have directed a great deal of attention to the structure and meaning attached to kinship.

Anthropology is interested in the comparative study of societies and culture through time and space.