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another



The kinship system is governed by some basic principles which can be called the “ facts of life”. Robin Fox speaks of four such basic principles which are mentioned below: Principle-1: The women have the children Principle-2: The men impregnate the women Principle-3: The men usually exercise control Principle-4: Primary kin do not mate with each other. These principles emphasise the basic biological fact on which kinship system depends. Men and women indulge in sexual interaction and as a result women bear children.

This leads to blood ties between the individuals and the special terms are used to recognise this relationship: mother, child, and father. The relationship based on blood ties is called “ consanguineous kinship”, and the relatives of this kind are called ‘ consanguineous kin’. The desire for reproduction gives rise to another kind of binding relationship. “ This kind of bond, which arises out of a socially or legally defined marital relationship, is called a final relationship”, and the relatives so related are called ‘ a final kin’. The final kinds [husband and wife] are not related to one another through blood.

Rule of Descent: ‘ Descent’ refers to the social recognition of the biological relationship that exists between the individuals. The ‘ rule of descent’ refers to a set of principles by which an individual traces his descent. There are three basic rules of descent: matrilineal descent, matrilineal descent and bilateral descent. (à) Patrilineal Descent: According to this rule, descent is traced through the father’s or male line. Here the descent criterion is restricted to males, and only descendants of a common ancestor in the male line will be recognised as kin. These are known as agnatic or patrilineal kin.

(b) Matrilineal Descent: Here the descent of the individual is traced through the mother or female exclusively. The descendants are called here uterine or matrilineal kin. These two modes of tracing the descent are called “ unilinear, that, they select one “ line” only either the male or female. These principles or rules are not necessarily mutually exclusive within a society.

(c) Bilateral Descent: This is a rule in which the descent is traced through the lines, the female line and also the male line for some or the other purpose. What is important here is that almost all kinship systems recognise ‘ bilateral’ relationships, that is, relationships to both maternal and paternal kinds. Ex: Some societies such as the “ Yako” of Nigeria utilise matrilineal descent for some purposes and praline descent for others. Here there exists a system of double unihneal descent’ which is normally known as “ double descent”. Importance of the Rule of Descent: The rule of descent is very important for two main reasons: (a) Rule of descent establishes for every individual a network of social positions in which he participates. He comes to know about his obligations and rights. (b) Rule of descent invariably defines some rights of inheritance. Inheritance and succession would go normally along the line of descent.

Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Kins: Kinship has got various ramifications. On the basis of nearness or distance, kins are classified into (0 primary kins, (ii) secondary kins, and (Hi) tertiary kins. (i) Primary Kins. Every individual who belongs to a nuclear family finds his primary kins within the family. There are 8 primary kins: husband-wife, father-son, mother-son, father-daughter, mother-daughter, younger brother-elder brother, younger sister-elder sister, and brother-sister. (ii) Secondary Kins: Outside the nuclear

family the individual can have 33 types of secondary relatives: Example: Mother's brother, brother's wife, sister's husband, father's brother, etc....

(iii) Tertiary Kins: Tertiary kins refer to the secondary kins of our primary kins. Example: wife's brother's son, sister's husband's brother, and so on.

Anthropologists have spoken of 151 tertiary kins. Unilineal or Unilateral

Groups: Lineage: " A lineage is a unilineal descent group in which membership may rest either on patrilineal descent [patrilineage] or on matrilineal descent [matrilineage]".

A lineage thus consists of descendants in only one line, either the father's or the two other's. These descendants know their exact genealogical relationship and who recognise obligations to one another. A lineage is thus smaller and more localised than the broader category of kinship grouping.

Clan or Sib: " A clan is a unilineal descent group, the members of which may claim either, patrilineal descent (patrician) or matrilineal descent (matrician) from a founder, but do not know the genealogicalities with the ancestor/ancestress". " A clan is a named unilineal descent group: that is, a body of persons claiming common descent from an ancestor (often mythical) and recruiting the children of either male or female members, but not both ". The ancestor or mythical ancestor, through whom the descent is claimed, may be human, human - like, animal, plant or even inanimate object.

The " gotra" group of the Hindus represents a clan. These clans are larger groups and are geographically more dispersed. The clans may have a common totemic name and common ritual taboos against eating the flesh of the totemic animal. Phratry: " A Phratry is a grouping of clans which are

related by traditions of common descent”. Mythical ancestors are common in clans and phratries. The Phratry is larger than the clan and includes people scattered over relatively large areas among whom it is not possible to trace relationship without bringing in a mythical common ancestor. Moieties: “Where the descent groups of a society are organised into two main divisions, these are known as moieties [halves] “. The term “ moiety” refers to the bisection of a tribe into two complementary social groups.

Some writers would restrict the term ‘ moiety’ to ‘ exogamous’ social divisions, while others use the term to mean any dualorganisation, exogamous or not. Kinship Usages: Kinship usagers or the rules of kinship are significant in understanding kinship system as-such. Kinship Usagers serve two main purposes: 1. Firstly, they create groups or special groupings or kin. Example: Family extended family, clan etc. 2.

Secondly, the kinship rules govern the role of relationships among the kins. Kinship usage provides guidelines for interaction among persons in these social groupings. It defines proper and acceptable role relationships. Thus it acts as a regulator of social life. The kinship relations are regulated according to usages prevalent in the society.

Some of these relationships are: avoidance, teknonymy, avunculate, amitate, couvade and joking relationship.