

ANANTAM IAS · OPTIONAL NOTES

Sociology Optional Systems of Kinship

Paper 1 · Unit 9

The three concepts examiners want kept apart (family, household, marriage), the descent and alliance machinery, and patriarchy read through the feminists who actually built the concept.

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UPSC SYLLABUS

(a) Family, household, marriage. (b) Types and forms of family. (c) Lineage and descent. (d) Patriarchy and sexual division of labour. (e) Contemporary trends.

Kinship — the Field and Its Vocabulary

Kinship is the culturally recognised network of relations traced through descent and marriage, and the rights, duties and groups built on it. It is the oldest technical area in the discipline and the one with the least forgiving vocabulary, because the terms are close together and the examiner is testing whether you can hold them apart.

- Two axes generate the whole field. Consanguinity is relatedness by presumed common descent, that is, ties of blood as a society reckons them. Affinity is relatedness created by marriage. Ego is the reference point from whom a kinship diagram is drawn.
- Kinship is social, not biological. Adoption, the Nuer ghost marriage where a dead man is recorded as father, and the Trobriand denial of physiological paternity all show that a society decides who counts as kin. David Schneider (A Critique of the Study of Kinship, 1984) pushed this to its limit, arguing that kinship as anthropologists defined it was a Western folk notion of blood projected onto everyone else.
- Lewis Henry Morgan (Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family, 1871) founded the comparative study and drew the first great distinction: classificatory systems, which merge several kin under one term (father and father's brother are both 'father'), and descriptive systems, which specify each relative separately.
- Kinship usage falls into three layers that answers routinely blur: kinship terminology (what you call people), kinship behaviour (how you must act towards them, including avoidance, joking relationships and the mother's brother's obligations), and kinship groups (lineage, clan, family).
- George Peter Murdock (Social Structure, 1949), working on a sample of 250 societies, produced the standard six terminological systems: Hawaiian, Eskimo, Iroquois, Sudanese, Omaha and Crow. The point of the classification is that terminology correlates with descent rules, so what people call each other reveals how the society organises rights.
- Radcliffe-Brown's contribution was to read kinship as a structure of jural rights and obligations rather than sentiment, which is why he treated the mother's brother's indulgence in patrilineal societies as structurally produced, not affectionate.
- Degrees of kin: primary (parents, siblings, spouse, children), secondary (primary kin of primary kin), tertiary, and so on outward. Useful for precision, not for filling space.

KEY TERMS

Consanguinity — Relatedness through socially recognised common descent, as against relatedness created by marriage.

Affinity — Relatedness created by marriage; the in-law tie.

Classificatory terminology — Morgan's type in which one term covers several distinct genealogical positions, merging lineal and collateral kin.

Family, Household and Marriage — Three Concepts, Not One

UPSC has asked candidates to distinguish family from household at least twice in recent memory, which tells you how often the two are used interchangeably. The distinction is not pedantry: it is what lets you study

migrant workers, servants, single-person living and joint property without breaking your categories.

- Family is a kinship unit: a group related by descent, marriage or adoption, recognised as such, with obligations of support and usually of socialisation. Murdock's definition adds common residence, economic cooperation and reproduction, and includes at least two adults of both sexes maintaining a socially approved sexual relationship.
- Household is a residential and economic unit: people who share a dwelling, and typically a hearth, budget or arrangements for the preparation and consumption of food. The census concept is a household precisely because you can count roofs and cooking pots but not sentiments.
- The two cross-cut. A household may contain non-kin (servants, lodgers, co-workers, roommates), and a family may be spread across households (migrants, transnational families, students, split joint families). Neither concept subsumes the other.
- Donald Bender (1967) made the refinement that anchors this answer: family, co-residence and domestic functions are three logically independent variables, and their empirical overlap is what needs explaining, not what may be assumed.
- The household is also a developmental thing rather than a state. Meyer Fortes's developmental cycle of the domestic group shows every household passing through expansion (marriage and childbearing), dispersion or fission (children marry out), and replacement (the senior generation dies and the unit reconstitutes). Snapshot data will therefore always show 'nuclear' and 'joint' households side by side in the same society, because they are the same households at different stages. This is the concept the 2018 question was pointing at.
- Marriage is a socially recognised, relatively enduring union that legitimates sexual relations and, above all, assigns rights: to sexual access, to labour, to property and inheritance, and to the status of the children.
- The classic definition (Notes and Queries on Anthropology) made marriage a union between a man and a woman such that children born to the woman are the recognised legitimate offspring of both. It fails on the ethnography. The Nuer practise ghost marriage (a man marries in the name of his dead brother) and woman-to-woman marriage (a barren woman takes a wife and stands as her social husband), documented by Evans-Pritchard.
- Kathleen Gough's Nayar case (The Nayars and the Definition of Marriage, 1959) is the standard destroyer of the universal-family claim. The tali-tying ritual created a ritual husband with almost no further obligations; sambandham unions with visiting partners followed; the tarawad, a matrilineal joint household headed by the karanavan, did the residence, economics and childrearing. Murdock's nuclear family, on his own criteria, was not there.
- Edmund Leach (1955) drew the conclusion: no single definition covers marriage everywhere, so treat it as a bundle of rights, of which any given society allocates some. Marriage is best defined polythetically, by a cluster of rights it may confer, not by a common essence.
- Bronislaw Malinowski's principle of legitimacy is the surviving universal claim: every society has a rule that a child needs a socially recognised father, whatever the biology. This is the function marriage most consistently performs.
- Other counter-cases worth naming: the Israeli kibbutz (Spiro), where the collective children's house took over childrearing, and the Caribbean matrifocal household (R.T. Smith), where the mother-child unit is the stable core and the conjugal tie is not.

Family, household and marriage kept apart

Concept	Basis	Defining criterion	Can exist without the others?
Family	Kinship	Descent, marriage or adoption plus recognised obligation	Yes: dispersed migrant family shares no roof
Household	Residence and economy	Shared dwelling, hearth or budget	Yes: unrelated flatmates, or a single-person household
Marriage	Jural and ritual	Socially legitimated union assigning rights over sex, labour, property, children	Yes: Nayar sambandham, cohabitation, ghost marriage

KEY TERMS

Household — A co-residential and commensal unit, defined by shared dwelling and domestic arrangements rather than by kinship.

Developmental cycle of the domestic group — Fortes's concept: households pass through expansion, dispersion and replacement, so household form is a phase, not a type.

Principle of legitimacy — Malinowski's claim that every society requires a socially recognised father for every child.

Matrifocal household — R.T. Smith's term for a unit in which the mother-child bond is structurally central and the conjugal bond marginal.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Distinguish between family and household as sociological concepts. [2016]
- Distinguish between family and household with reference to the concept of development of the household. [2018]
- Does the institution of marriage continue to be sacred in Indian society? [2020]

Types and Forms of the Family

This looks like a listing question and is usually answered as one, which is why it is scored low. The marks are in the theoretical argument attached to the types: does industrialism produce the nuclear family, and does the evidence support the claim?

- By structure: nuclear (a couple and their unmarried children), extended (nuclear plus other kin, vertically or laterally), joint (the Indian variant, extended with common property, common kitchen, common worship and a recognised head), and stem (Le Play's *famille souche*, one heir stays with the parents while other children leave).
- By emphasis: conjugal, organised around the husband-wife tie, against consanguineal, organised around a blood core such as brothers or a mother and daughters, with spouses as peripheral.
- By reference point: family of orientation, the one you are born into, against family of procreation, the one you make. Both terms are Warner's, and precision here saves you from muddled sentences.
- By authority: patriarchal, matriarchal, egalitarian. Note the caution that matriarchy as a documented social system is not attested; what exist are matrilineal and matrilocal societies, which is a different claim.
- By residence: patrilocal or virilocal, matrilocal or uxorilocal, neolocal, avunculocal (with the mother's brother, a common matrilineal solution), duolocal or natolocal (spouses stay in their natal homes, as among the Nayar and Ashanti).
- By marriage form: monogamy, polygyny (Murdock's sample found this the most widely permitted form, though monogamy remained numerically dominant even where polygyny was allowed, because of the sex

ratio), polyandry (fraternal among the Toda and in parts of the Himalaya, associated with land fragmentation and scarce resources), and group marriage, for which good evidence is essentially absent.

- Talcott Parsons and Robert Bales (Family, Socialization and Interaction Process, 1955) supply the functionalist argument: the isolated nuclear family is structurally fitted to industrial society because it frees geographical and social mobility from kin claims, and it retains two irreducible functions, primary socialisation of children and stabilisation of adult personalities.
- William Goode (World Revolution and Family Patterns, 1963) is the comparative version: industrialisation and urbanisation push everywhere towards the conjugal family. His important qualification, usually missed, is that the ideology of the conjugal family travels faster than the structure, because it is attractive to the young and to women before the economy supports it.
- The evidence against the fit thesis is strong and should be deployed. Michael Anderson's study of Preston (Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire, 1971) found early industrialisation increased kin co-residence, because mutual aid was the only insurance available. Peter Laslett and the Cambridge Group showed pre-industrial English households averaged under five persons, so there was no large extended family for industrialism to have destroyed. Eugene Litwak's modified extended family describes what actually persists: dispersed kin who remain in contact and exchange support without co-residence, which telephones, remittances and cheap travel make easy.
- Michael Young and Peter Willmott (Family and Kinship in East London, 1957) found the extended family thriving in Bethnal Green on the mother-daughter tie, and only fraying when families were rehoused on a distant estate. In The Symmetrical Family (1973) they argued a three-stage march to the privatised, home-centred, symmetrical stage-three family, diffusing down the class structure by stratified diffusion. Ann Oakley's data on housework demolished the symmetry claim, since 'helping' with the housework is not sharing it.

Forms of the family at a glance

Basis of classification	Types	Note for answers
Structure	Nuclear, extended, joint, stem (Le Play)	Joint is the Indian type: common property, kitchen, worship, head
Emphasis	Conjugal (spouse core) vs consanguineal (blood core)	Determines whether spouses or siblings are the structural centre
Reference point	Family of orientation vs family of procreation	Warner's pair; keep them straight in prose
Descent	Patrilineal, matrilineal, bilateral, double	Descent governs group membership, not authority
Residence	Patrilocal, matrilocal, neolocal, avunculocal, duolocal	Avunculocal and duolocal are matrilineal solutions to a real problem
Authority	Patriarchal, egalitarian (matriarchal unattested)	Matriliney is not matriarchy; say so explicitly
Marriage	Monogamy, polygyny, polyandry (fraternal, e.g. Toda)	Polygyny is widely permitted, rarely majority practice

KEY TERMS

Joint family — Extended family holding property in common, with a common kitchen, common worship and a recognised head; the Indian structural variant.

Isolated nuclear family — Parsons's type: a mobile, structurally detached couple-and-children unit fitted to industrial society.

Modified extended family — Litwak's term for dispersed kin who sustain support and contact without co-residence or economic dependence.

Stratified diffusion — Young and Willmott's mechanism by which family forms and comforts spread downward from higher to lower classes over time.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Critically examine the functionalist views on the institution of family. [2014]
- What are the new forms of family in developed societies? Discuss. [2018]
- Discuss various theoretical perspectives on the family. [2022]

Lineage and Descent

Descent is the socially recognised rule by which a person is assigned to a group through ancestry, and it is the mechanism by which property, office, name and ritual obligation pass across generations. The exam trap here is to confuse the rule of descent with the location of authority, and to hear matrilineal and think matriarchal.

- Unilineal descent traces membership through one sex only. Patrilineal or agnatic descent runs through males; matrilineal or uterine descent runs through females. Unilineal rules produce unambiguous, non-overlapping, corporate groups, which is exactly why they are common.
- Cognatic or bilateral descent traces through both parents. It produces a kindred, an ego-centred network unique to each individual, which is why bilateral systems rarely produce corporate descent groups. Modern urban societies are largely bilateral.
- Double or duolineal descent runs both rules simultaneously for different purposes: a person belongs to the father's patrilineal group for one set of property and to the mother's matrilineal group for another. The classic case is Daryll Forde's study of the Yako (Yakö) of Nigeria, where patrilineal groups held land and residence while matrilineal groups held movable wealth.
- Ambilineal or optative descent lets the individual choose which parent's group to affiliate with; parallel descent assigns men to the father's line and women to the mother's.
- The descent groups, in ascending order of inclusiveness: lineage, whose members can actually demonstrate genealogical links to a known common ancestor; clan or sib, where common ancestry is claimed but the links are not demonstrable and the founder is often mythical or totemic; phratry, a group of clans; moiety, a division of the whole society into two halves.
- A descent group is corporate when it acts as one legal person: holds property, has an office, endures beyond its members, and is liable collectively. Fortes and Radcliffe-Brown made corporateness the hinge of descent theory. Fortes's Tallensi work and his concept of the web of kinship show how descent organises politics where there is no state.
- Evans-Pritchard's Nuer (1940) is the segmentary lineage case you must be able to reproduce. Lineages segment at every level, and groups fuse or oppose according to the level of the dispute, so a minimal lineage

that fights internally will unite against a maximal lineage. He called the resulting order without government ordered anarchy, and it is complementary opposition, not central authority, that keeps it stable.

- Matriliney is not matriarchy, and it is not female rule. In most matrilineal societies authority over children and property vests in the mother's brother, so the woman transmits membership while a man exercises the jural power. The avunculate, the structurally central mother's brother, is the marker.
- Audrey Richards named the matrilineal puzzle: a man in a matrilineal society owes authority to his sister's children and affection or residence to his wife's household, and the two pull apart. Societies solve it structurally, by avunculocal residence (the boy moves to his mother's brother at puberty), by duolocal residence (spouses never co-reside, as among the Nayar), or by keeping brother and sister close and marriages local.
- Malinowski's Trobrianders are the standard matrilineal illustration: descent and inheritance through the mother, the mother's brother as authority and provider of urigubu yam gifts, the father an affectionate outsider with no jural claim. David Schneider and Kathleen Gough's edited *Matrilineal Kinship* (1961) is the comparative statement.
- Nayar and Khasi are the Indian cases; note that Khasi property descends to the youngest daughter, the khadduh, while the mother's brother retains managerial authority, which makes the same point about the descent-authority gap.
- Descent rules matter because they allocate scarce things. Where the productive resource is land held by a group, unilineal descent tends to persist. Where wage income is individual and mobile, descent groups lose their corporate function and the kindred is enough. This is the sentence that turns a listing answer into an argument.

KEY TERMS

Descent — The socially recognised rule assigning a person to a group by ancestry, thereby transmitting membership, property and office.

Lineage — A descent group whose members can demonstrate genealogical connection to a known common ancestor.

Clan — A descent group claiming a common, usually mythical or totemic, ancestor whose genealogical links cannot be traced.

Double descent — Simultaneous patrilineal and matrilineal affiliation for different classes of right, as among the Yako.

Segmentary lineage — Evans-Pritchard's Nuer structure of nested groups that fuse and oppose by level of conflict, producing order without a state.

Matrilineal puzzle — Richards's term for the structural tension between a man's authority over his sister's children and his ties to his wife and her household.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Is male authority absent in matrilineal society? Discuss. [2015]

Descent Theory versus Alliance Theory

The great methodological quarrel of kinship studies, and one UPSC has asked directly. The question is what the elementary unit of kinship is: the descent group that perpetuates itself, or the marriage that links groups. British structural-functionalism said the first; Levi-Strauss said the second.

- Descent theory (Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, Evans-Pritchard) treats the unilineal descent group as the basic building block. Groups are perpetuated by descent, they hold property and office, and marriage is a device for recruiting members to them. The analytic focus is on continuity, jural rights and political function in stateless societies.
- Alliance theory (Claude Levi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, 1949) inverts the priority. Descent groups exist in order to exchange women, so the marriage tie, not the descent line, is the elementary structure. Kinship is a system of communication, and women are the message.
- The incest taboo is the hinge of Levi-Strauss's argument. It is not a prohibition on marrying in but a positive obligation to marry out, and it is therefore the passage from nature to culture, the first social rule. E.B. Tylor had already given the functional version: marry out or be killed out.
- The engine is Marcel Mauss's reciprocity, applied to persons. Restricted or direct exchange (two groups swap sisters, typically producing bilateral cross-cousin marriage and two-section systems) is symmetrical and closes on itself. Generalised exchange (matrilateral cross-cousin marriage, a man marries his mother's brother's daughter) runs in a circle A gives to B gives to C gives to A, links many groups, and requires trust because the return is deferred.
- Patrilateral cross-cousin marriage (father's sister's daughter) produces delayed exchange, alternating direction each generation. Levi-Strauss argued it integrates less well than generalised exchange, which is the sort of claim Rodney Needham and Edmund Leach spent careers contesting and refining.
- Louis Dumont applied alliance theory to South India and coined affinity as a value: in Dravidian kinship, the affinal relation is not a one-off transaction but an enduring relation reproduced across generations, so cross-cousin marriage repeats an existing alliance rather than creating a new one.
- Marriage rules to keep straight: endogamy (must marry within a defined group, as with caste or gotra-external but jati-internal marriage in India) and exogamy (must marry outside, as with clan, gotra, village or sapinda rules). Every real system is a combination, endogamous at one level and exogamous at another. Preferential means a category is favoured; prescriptive means a category is required.
- Transactions attached to marriage: bridewealth or bride price flows from the groom's kin to the bride's and compensates them for the loss of her productive and reproductive capacity, typically where women's labour is valued and descent groups corporate. Dowry flows the other way, typically in stratified, hypergamous, plough-agriculture societies. Jack Goody argued dowry is a form of pre-mortem inheritance to the daughter, which is why it appears where property is transmitted bilaterally.
- On the incest taboo itself, note the competing accounts: Levi-Strauss (exchange and alliance), Tylor (survival by alliance), Freud in *Totem and Taboo* (the taboo suppresses a real desire), Westermarck (childhood co-residence produces sexual aversion, so the taboo codifies an existing disinclination). Arthur Wolf's Taiwanese minor-marriage data and Joseph Shepher's kibbutz study support Westermarck against Freud.
- The fair verdict: descent theory explains stateless political organisation and corporate property well and marriage badly; alliance theory explains marriage systems and prescriptive terminology well and political process badly. They answer different questions on the same data.

Descent theory and alliance theory contrasted

Dimension	Descent theory	Alliance theory
Founders	Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes, Evans-Pritchard	Levi-Strauss, developed by Leach, Needham, Dumont
Elementary unit	The unilineal descent group	The marriage exchange between groups
What marriage is	A device for recruiting members to the group	The purpose the group exists to serve
Intellectual debt	Durkheim's corporate group, jural analysis	Mauss's reciprocity, structural linguistics
Explains best	Property, office, politics without a state	Terminology, cross-cousin marriage, prescriptive systems
Regional base	African patrilineal societies	South and Southeast Asia, Amazonia, Australia

KEY TERMS

Alliance — The enduring relation created between groups by marriage exchange, treated by Levi-Strauss as the elementary structure of kinship.

Generalised exchange — Circular marriage exchange (A to B to C to A), typically matrilineal cross-cousin marriage, with deferred return.

Restricted exchange — Direct, symmetrical swapping of women between two groups, with immediate return.

Hypergamy — A rule or practice of women marrying into a status group equal to or higher than their own.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- How do the rules of descent and alliance in kinship differ from each other? Illustrate. [2015]

Patriarchy and the Sexual Division of Labour

Patriarchy is the most examined and least carefully used word in this unit. Literally it means rule of the father, and in Weber it names a form of traditional domination. Feminist sociology rebuilt it into a systemic concept, and the marks lie in that reconstruction, not in the dictionary meaning.

- Weber's patriarchalism is the original technical use: a form of traditional authority in which the household head commands by inherited status, unconstrained by rules. It describes a domestic power structure, not a society-wide system.
- Kate Millett (Sexual Politics, 1970) made the modern move. Patriarchy is a political institution, the most pervasive ideology of our culture, in which male dominance is reproduced through socialisation into gender roles and operates inside private relationships. Hence the personal is political: the family is not the shelter from power, it is a site of it.
- Sylvia Walby (Theorizing Patriarchy, 1990) gives the analytic architecture worth reproducing in any answer: six interlocking structures, the patriarchal mode of production in the household, paid work, the state, male violence, sexuality, and culture. Her historical claim is the shift from private patriarchy (individual husbands appropriating women's labour, strategy of exclusion) to public patriarchy (the state and the labour market doing it, strategy of segregation and subordination in place of exclusion).
- Gerda Lerner (The Creation of Patriarchy, 1986) attacks the universality claim historically: patriarchy has a beginning, roughly the second millennium BCE in Mesopotamia, and appeared with the state, class and the

appropriation of women's reproductive capacity. If it was made, it can be undone. This is the reference for any question asking whether patriarchy is universal.

- Engels (*The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State*, 1884) supplies the materialist story: the overthrow of mother-right was the world-historic defeat of the female sex, driven by a surplus, private property in herds and land, and the need for certain paternity to transmit it. Monogamy for women is an instrument of inheritance, not of love. Weakness: his evolutionary sequence rests on Morgan and Bachofen's now-discredited primitive matriarchy.
- The functionalist account of the sexual division of labour is Murdock's: it arises from biological differences in strength and childbearing and persists because it is expedient. Parsons formalised it into instrumental (male, breadwinner, task-oriented) and expressive (female, nurturant, tension-managing) roles, and argued a couple cannot compete for the same role without conflict.
- The critique is empirical and lethal. The cross-cultural variability of which tasks are 'male' undermines the biological argument (weaving, trading and farming are men's work in some societies and women's in others). Parsons's account naturalises what is a historical arrangement, and it presumes the arrangement benefits everyone equally, which is exactly what is disputed.
- Ann Oakley (*The Sociology of Housework*, 1974; *Housewife*, 1974) did the decisive work. She interviewed forty London housewives, found seventy per cent dissatisfied, and showed housework has the classic features of alienated labour: monotony, fragmentation, long hours, no pay, no boundaries, no colleagues. Her larger argument is that the housewife role is a historical creation of industrialisation, which pulled production out of the home and left women with a job that is not counted as one. She also demolished Young and Willmott's symmetrical family: husbands who 'help' are not equal partners, and the researchers' generous coding of help produced the symmetry they reported.
- Christine Delphy (*Close to Home*; with Diana Leonard, *Familiar Exploitation*, 1992) is the materialist feminist position. There is a domestic mode of production alongside the capitalist one, in which women's unpaid labour is appropriated by husbands, not by capital. Women are therefore a class defined by their relation to that production, and the immediate exploiter is the man in the house. This directly opposes the Marxist-feminist line (Margaret Benston, Zaretsky) that women's domestic work primarily reproduces labour power for capital.
- Heidi Hartmann's dual systems theory calls the attempt to fold patriarchy into capitalism the unhappy marriage of Marxism and feminism, and insists patriarchy and capitalism are two systems, sometimes cooperating and sometimes in conflict, as over women's cheap wage labour.
- Deniz Kandiyoti (*Bargaining with Patriarchy*, 1988) supplies the concept UPSC has asked for by name. Women do not simply submit; they strategise within a given set of constraints, and different systems offer different bargains. Under classic patriarchy, in the belt from North Africa through the northern plains of South Asia to East Asia, a young bride accepts subordination and seclusion in exchange for the authority she will eventually wield over her own sons' wives. The bargain explains why women often police other women and resist changes that would forfeit their accumulated stake. It also predicts backlash when the bargain breaks down without a replacement.
- Arlie Hochschild (*The Second Shift*, 1989) documents the outcome in dual-earner households: women's paid work rose, men's domestic work barely moved, and the resulting leisure gap amounts to an extra month of twenty-four-hour days per year. Patriarchy survives women's entry into the labour force by adding to their work rather than redistributing it.
- Pierre Bourdieu (*Masculine Domination*) explains persistence without coercion: gender hierarchy is inscribed in bodies and dispositions as habitus, so the dominated apply to their own condition the categories

of the dominant. He calls this symbolic violence, and it accounts for consent. R.W. Connell's gender order and hegemonic masculinity add that masculinity itself is stratified, so most men do not benefit equally either, though they collect a patriarchal dividend.

KEY TERMS

Patriarchy — A system of social structures and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby's formulation).

Private and public patriarchy — Walby's historical shift from appropriation of women by individual husbands in the household to appropriation by the state and labour market.

Patriarchal bargain — Kandiyoti's term for the strategies women adopt within a given patriarchal system to maximise security, often by accepting present subordination for future authority.

Domestic mode of production — Delphy's claim that unpaid household labour is a distinct mode of production in which husbands appropriate wives' work.

Symbolic violence — Bourdieu's term for domination that works through categories the dominated themselves accept, producing consent rather than coercion.

Second shift — Hochschild's term for the unpaid domestic work employed women perform after paid work ends.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Is patriarchy a universal phenomenon? How does patriarchy affect sexual division of labour? [2013]
- To what extent is patriarchy a cause for the problems of women? Discuss. [2016]
- Examine 'patriarchal bargain' as gendered division of work in contemporary India. [2017]
- Define patriarchy. How does patriarchy manifest in interpersonal relations? [2018]
- What is the impact of gender division of labour on the development of society? [2020]
- How do you understand the relationship between patriarchy and social development? [2022]

Feminist and Critical Critiques of the Family

The functionalists studied the family as it presents itself. The critics asked who pays for it. This section is what turns a functionalist listing into a debate, and it is where the family's dark side enters the answer.

- Marxist feminism reads the family as an economic service to capital. Margaret Benston: the unpaid labour of women maintains and reproduces labour power at no cost to the employer. Eli Zaretsky (Capitalism, the Family and Personal Life, 1976): the family is an illusory haven, promising personal fulfilment to compensate for alienated work, and it cannot deliver because it is the same system's other half.
- Radical feminism goes further back. Shulamith Firestone (The Dialectic of Sex, 1970) locates oppression in the biological family and reproduction itself, not in property. Millett locates it in socialisation inside it.
- Michelle Barrett and Mary McIntosh (The Anti-Social Family, 1982) make the argument the title advertises: the family is anti-social because it privileges its own members and impoverishes every relation outside it. By monopolising intimacy, care and legitimacy, it makes alternatives look like deficits.
- Ann Oakley and Christine Delphy, above, supply the empirical and materialist core of the feminist case: housework is work, it is appropriated, and calling it love is what makes the appropriation possible.
- The dark side of the family is a distinct line of critique. R.D. Laing and Aaron Esterson (Sanity, Madness and the Family, 1964) argued schizophrenic behaviour was intelligible as a response to the family's own communication; David Cooper wrote of the death of the family; and Edmund Leach's 1967 Reith Lectures argued the isolated nuclear family, with its privacy and its narrow emotional base, generates the discontents

it is credited with curing. Add the empirical record on domestic violence, marital rape, child abuse and elder neglect, which functionalism has no vocabulary for.

- Difference feminism supplies the corrective and is the mark of a sophisticated answer. bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins argue the family-as-oppressor model is drawn from the white middle-class household. For black and other subordinated communities the family has also been a site of resistance, solidarity and survival against racism, so it is oppressive and protective at once.
- Postmodern and difference approaches reject the search for a single verdict. Rhona and Robert Rapoport identified five kinds of family diversity, organisational, cultural, class, life-course and cohort, and argued diversity itself is the fact to be explained.
- The concession the critics must make: no society has dispensed with the family, the kibbutz and the commune experiments largely reverted, and Malinowski's principle of legitimacy still holds. The family is not indispensable in the functionalist's sense, but no alternative has yet displaced it at scale.

KEY TERMS

Illusory haven — Zaretsky's characterisation of the family as a promised refuge from alienated labour that the same system prevents from delivering.

Anti-social family — Barrett and McIntosh's argument that the family devalues all non-familial relationships by monopolising care and legitimacy.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Critically examine the functionalist views on the institution of family. [2014]

Contemporary Trends

The easiest section to fill with observations and the hardest to score on, because everyone lists nuclearisation, divorce and live-in. The marks come from naming the theorists who explain the direction of travel and from noticing that the trend is diversification, not simply decline.

- The demographic facts first, because they anchor everything else. Fertility is falling almost everywhere; India's total fertility rate reached 2.0 in NFHS-5 (2019-21), below the replacement level of about 2.1, with wide state variation. Marriage is later, first births are later, households are smaller, and lifespans are longer, which produces more years of marriage after the children leave and more years of elder care.
- Julia Brannen's beanpole family names the resulting shape: long and thin, four surviving generations with few members in each, so vertical intergenerational ties (grandparent care, elder support) matter more and lateral ones (siblings, cousins) matter less.
- Nuclearisation is real but overstated as a break. Fortes's developmental cycle explains part of the observed nuclear share; Litwak's modified extended family, migrant remittances, and cheap communication mean kin obligation survives the dissolution of the joint household. What has changed is co-residence, not the network.
- Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim (*The Normal Chaos of Love*, 1995) give the master theory: individualisation. As tradition and class scripts lose force, the biography becomes a do-it-yourself project, and family becomes negotiated rather than given. Two individualised biographies must be reconciled inside every relationship, so love becomes both more important and more fragile.
- Anthony Giddens (*The Transformation of Intimacy*, 1992) is the companion argument. The pure relationship is entered for its own sake and lasts only as long as both parties derive satisfaction from it;

confluent love replaces romantic love's forever; plastic sexuality is severed from reproduction by contraception. His optimistic reading is the democratisation of intimacy, since a relationship that cannot rely on external constraint must be negotiated.

- Zygmunt Bauman (Liquid Love, 2003) supplies the pessimistic mirror: relationships pursued as consumer choices, kept in a state of permanent revocability, offering connection without commitment.
- Cohabitation and live-in relationships: no longer a deviation but a stage in the life course in much of the West, and increasingly a legal category. India recognises a relationship in the nature of marriage under the Protection of Women from Domestic Violence Act, 2005, and the Supreme Court has laid down criteria in D. Velusamy (2010) and Indra Sarma (2013), extending maintenance protection without conferring the status of marriage. Note the sociological point: the law is following practice, and the practice is deinstitutionalisation.
- Andrew Cherlin (2004) names that process: the deinstitutionalisation of marriage. Marriage does not disappear; it loses its taken-for-granted rules and becomes a chosen, symbolic capstone rather than a foundation, which is why it is delayed by the poor and performed elaborately by the rich.
- LGBTQ families are the sharpest test of every definition in this unit. Kath Weston (Families We Choose, 1991) and Jeffrey Weeks with Brian Heaphy and Catherine Donovan (Same Sex Intimacies: Families of Choice, 2001) show families built on election rather than blood or law, which is exactly what a purely functional definition permits and a substantive one forbids. In India, Navtej Singh Johar (2018) decriminalised same-sex relations, while Supriyo v. Union of India (2023) declined to read same-sex marriage into existing law and left the question to Parliament. So the family here exists sociologically before it exists jurally, which is Malinowski's principle of legitimacy running in reverse.
- Judith Stacey (Brave New Families, 1990) argues there is no longer a single dominant family form to which others are deviations. She calls the result the postmodern family condition, and the point is the loss of a template, not the arrival of a new one.
- David Morgan's family practices shifts the whole question from what the family is to what people do: family is something you do, in daily acts of care, feeding, remembering and support, not a structure you belong to. Janet Finch adds displaying families, since practices must be seen and acknowledged by others to count, which is why non-standard families work so hard at visibility.
- Other trends to name with a theorist attached: the second shift and the stalled revolution (Hochschild); rising divorce with rising remarriage, producing reconstituted or blended families; living apart together couples; single-person households and voluntary childlessness; transnational families and global care chains, where a migrant woman's care work in a rich household is bought at the cost of care deficit in her own (Hochschild, Parrenas).
- The conclusion that earns marks: the direction of change is not from extended to nuclear, and not decline, but from a single institutionally prescribed form to a plural, negotiated, revocable field of arrangements. What is weakening is the family as institution; what persists, and in some respects intensifies, is the family as practice.

KEY TERMS

Pure relationship — Giddens's term for a bond entered for its own sake and sustained only while it satisfies both parties.

Individualisation — Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's process by which biographies become self-authored projects, making family a negotiated rather than given arrangement.

Deinstitutionalisation of marriage — Cherlin's term for the weakening of the shared social norms that once defined how marriage should be conducted.

Family practices — Morgan's reframing of family as a set of everyday activities that constitute relatedness rather than a fixed structure.

Beanpole family — Brannen's term for the multi-generational, few-members-per-generation family produced by low fertility and long life.

Global care chain — The transnational transfer of care work, in which a migrant woman's paid care abroad creates a care deficit at home.

PREVIOUS YEAR QUESTIONS

- Analyse the contemporary trends in family with examples. [2013]
- Examine the emerging trends in marriage and family as a response to changes in economic and social order. [2013]
- What do you understand by institutionalization of 'live-in relationship'? [2014]
- Discuss the contemporary trends in family as a response to social change in modern society. [2016]
- Examine the relationship between the contemporary trends in marriage and changing forms of family. [2017]
- In the light of judicial intervention on 'Live-in relationships', discuss the future of marriage and family in India. [2019]
- Discuss the changing nature of kinship relations in the contemporary world. [2021]

Last-mile revision

- Family is a kinship unit, household is a residential and economic unit, marriage is a bundle of jural rights. They cross-cut; none contains the others.
- Fortes's developmental cycle: nuclear and joint households in one village are often the same household at different phases. Never read a snapshot as a trend.
- Gough's Nayar case kills Murdock's universal nuclear family. Leach's response: marriage is a bundle of rights, define it polythetically. Malinowski's principle of legitimacy is what survives.
- Parsons: isolated nuclear family fits industrialism, two irreducible functions. Anderson's Preston and Laslett's household sizes contradict the fit thesis; Litwak's modified extended family describes what actually happens.
- Descent = rule of group membership. Patrilineal, matrilineal, bilateral (produces kindreds, not groups), double (Yako). Lineage links are demonstrable, clan links are not.
- Matriliney is not matriarchy. Authority sits with the mother's brother. Richards's matrilineal puzzle, solved by avunculocal or duolocal residence.
- Descent theory (Radcliffe-Brown, Fortes): the group is basic, marriage recruits to it. Alliance theory (Levi-Strauss): the exchange is basic, the group exists to exchange. Incest taboo = the passage from nature to culture.
- Restricted exchange is symmetrical and immediate; generalised exchange is circular and deferred. Dumont: in South India, affinity is a value reproduced across generations.
- Walby's six structures and the private-to-public patriarchy shift. Lerner: patriarchy has a start date, so it is not universal. Kandiyoti: women bargain, they do not merely submit.
- Oakley: housework is alienated labour and the housewife role is a product of industrialisation, not of biology. She also killed Young and Willmott's symmetry claim.
- Delphy (husbands appropriate, domestic mode of production) versus Marxist feminism (capital appropriates, reproduction of labour power). Hartmann keeps both systems separate.
- Contemporary direction of travel: not extended to nuclear and not decline, but institution to practice. Beck's individualisation, Giddens's pure relationship, Cherlin's deinstitutionalisation, Morgan's family practices, Stacey's postmodern family.

Common errors to avoid

- Using family and household interchangeably, then failing the direct question. Household is counted by roof and hearth; family is defined by kinship; the interesting cases are precisely where they do not coincide.
- Reading matrilineal as matriarchal. No documented society has been matriarchal in the sense of female rule; matrilineal societies vest jural authority in the mother's brother, which is why the avunculate exists.
- Confusing the rule of descent with the rule of residence and with the locus of authority. They vary independently, which is the whole point of the matrilineal puzzle.
- Confusing lineage with clan. Lineage members can demonstrate the genealogical link; clan members only claim one, usually to a mythical or totemic ancestor.
- Presenting alliance theory as a theory about marriage customs. It is a claim about what the elementary unit of kinship is, and it directly contradicts descent theory. State the contradiction.
- Writing about patriarchy with no theorist attached. Weber, Millett, Walby, Lerner, Kandiyoti and Delphy mean measurably different things by the word; using it as a free-floating adjective is the fastest way to a mediocre score.
- Attributing the patriarchal bargain to Walby or the second shift to Oakley. Kandiyoti wrote the first, Hochschild the second, Oakley wrote *The Sociology of Housework*.
- Explaining the sexual division of labour by biology and stopping there. Murdock and Parsons said that; the cross-cultural variability of task assignment is the standing refutation, and you should supply it.
- Treating the nuclear family as an industrial invention. Laslett's data show small households long before industry; Anderson shows industrialisation initially increasing kin co-residence.
- Listing contemporary trends with no theory. Nuclearisation, divorce and live-in are observations; individualisation, the pure relationship, deinstitutionalisation and family practices are the arguments that make them mean something.
- Writing about live-in relationships or same-sex families in a moralising register. The sociological question is what these forms reveal about the definition of family, not whether they are desirable.
- Claiming India's joint family is disappearing on the strength of household statistics alone, without separating co-residence from kin obligation and without accounting for the developmental cycle.