

WRAP Exams · wrapexams.com

Prelims PYQ, Mains model answers, and copy evaluation. Write to the desk for this paper, a doubt, or the AI waitlist.

ask@wrapexams.com · +91 85951 84903 · wrapexams.com

Q4(a)

Discuss the role of marriage regulations in traditional societies in India for strengthening social solidarity.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2023 · Anthropology GS 1 · 20 marks · Family

2.4 Family: Definition and universality; Family, household and domestic groups; functions of family; Types of family (from the perspectives of structure, blood relation, marriage, residence and succession); Impact of urbanization, industrialization and feminist movements on family.

Core demand of the question

- Discuss the role of marriage regulations in traditional societies in India for strengthening social solidarity
- Write at 20-mark length

Revision summary

Indian marriage rules combine caste endogamy with gotra and village exogamy.

Karve mapped north-south differences, including Dravidian cross-cousin preference.

Lévi-Strauss treats the rules as alliance that makes society.

Dumont reads endogamy as the reproduction of hierarchy.

Srinivas showed marriage as village politics and feast.

Solidarity is group repair, including unequal hypergamy, not simple equality.

Introduction

Traditional Indian marriage is a set of rules about who may marry whom, and those rules build groups as much as they join spouses. Social solidarity here means the ties of caste, clan, village, and alliance that those rules keep in repair.

Body

The regulatory field

- Caste **endogamy** keeps occupation, ritual rank, and food rules inside a marriage circle, which **Louis Dumont** in *Homo Hierarchicus* treated as the reproduction of hierarchy.
- Clan and **gotra exogamy**, with **sapinda** limits, force a man to find a wife outside the closest patriline, so incest taboo becomes a positive rule of alliance.
- North Indian **village exogamy** and the four-clan rule, mapped by **Irawati Karve** in *Kinship Organization in India*, send women out and create a web of affines across villages.
- South Indian **Dravidian** rules, read by **Thomas Trautmann** and earlier by Karve, prefer cross-cousin marriage, which repeats alliance inside a known set of lineages rather than scattering brides as far as the north.

Solidarity through alliance

- **Claude Lévi-Strauss** argued that the incest taboo turns women into the first exchange, so marriage regulations create society as a system of groups, not as a pile of couples.
- North Indian hypergamy and kanyadana rank wife-givers below wife-takers, which is hierarchical solidarity, not equality, and still binds affines through gift and ritual.
- Repeated affinity, as in many south Indian and some tribal systems, makes mother's brother a structural ally, which **A. C. Mayer** and village ethnography also found in practice.
- **M. N. Srinivas** showed that marriage feasts, factions, and village councils use these kin ties as the everyday staff of solidarity and conflict.

Other Indian patterns

- Muslim khandan and cousin preference, tribal bride-price systems of the middle Indian highlands, and polyandry in parts of the western Himalaya are other regulations, each making a different solidarity of property and labour.
- **Verrier Elwin** and later tribal ethnography recorded capture, service, and bride-price as lawful routes, still regulated, still about group reproduction.
- The joint household and patrilocality after marriage place the new wife under mother-in-law authority, which is domestic solidarity with a clear cost to the incoming woman.

Limits

- Solidarity for the caste or lineage can be exclusion for the Dalit, the widow, and the inter-caste couple.
- **Émile Durkheim's** mechanical solidarity of likeness (endogamy) and organic solidarity of interdependence (alliance, jajmani, gift) both appear; the rules do both jobs.
- Contemporary law, court marriage, and live-in unions weaken some regulations without erasing caste endogamy in practice.

Flow diagram

Marriage rules -> Caste endogamy
 Marriage rules -> Gotra village exogamy
 Caste endogamy -> Hierarchy Dumont
 Gotra village exogamy -> Alliance Levi-Strauss
 Alliance Levi-Strauss -> Social solidarity

Conclusion

Marriage regulations in traditional India organise endogamy and exogamy so that caste, clan, and village remain groups. Solidarity is the alliance and hierarchy those rules produce, not a romance of the couple, and it has always had a sharp edge of exclusion.

Facts & figures

Irawati Karve

Kinship Organization in India mapped regional marriage rules, including north Indian village exogamy and south Indian cross-cousin patterns.

Louis Dumont

Caste endogamy reproduces ritual hierarchy; marriage is not a free contract of individuals.

Claude Lévi-Strauss

Incest taboo and exchange of spouses create alliance between groups, the elementary structure of kinship.

Thomas Trautmann

Analysed Dravidian kinship as a systematic language of cross-cousin marriage.

M. N. Srinivas

Village ethnography showed marriage, feast, and faction as the working of local solidarity.

WRAP Exams · Write. Read. Analyse. Practice. · <https://wrapexams.com/upsc/mains-answers/anthropology-gs-1/2023/discuss-the-role-of-marriage-regulations-in-traditional-societies-in-india-for-strengthening-social-solidarity/> · ask@wrapexams.com · wrapexams.com