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Q5(b)

## Islam and Matriliney

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2015 · Anthropology GS 2 · 10 marks · Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization

1.1 Evolution of the Indian Culture and Civilization-Prehistoric (Palaeolithic, Mesolithic, Neolithic and Neolithic-Chalcolithic), Protohistoric (Indus Civilization). Pre-Harappan, Harappan and post-Harappan cultures. Contributions of the tribal cultures to Indian civilization.

### Core demand of the question

- Write a note on Islam and Matriliney
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length of about 150 words

### Revision summary

Islamic law is agnatic; some Indian Muslim communities remained matrilineal.

Kerala Mappila houses and **Lakshadweep** are the teaching cases.

Karve's southern kinship zone helps locate the taravad.

Shariat reform and courts push papers toward men.

Conversion did not instantly delete mother's-brother authority.

### Introduction

Islam in law prefers patrilineal descent and male-centred inheritance. In India it has also lived inside older matrilineal houses, especially among some Kerala Muslims and **Lakshadweep** communities.

### Body

#### The tension

- Sharia texts name agnatic heirs. Matriliney names the taravad or house through women.
- **Mappila** and related Kerala groups historically kept matrilineal households even after Islam, a compromise **Irawati Karve's** kinship zones help place in the south.
- Reform, courts, and the **Shariat Act** pushed many houses toward patrilineal papers without instantly killing mother's-brother authority on the ground.

#### Elsewhere

- **Lakshadweep** Muslim matriliney is a clear island case of faith plus female house.
- In most of North India, Islam met already patrilineal jati worlds, so the tension is small.
- The anthropological point is that Islam does not automatically erase matriliney; class, court, and reform do the slow work.

### Flow diagram

Islamic agnatic law -> Tension  
Kerala Lakshadweep taravad -> Tension  
Reform courts -> Patrilineal papers

## Conclusion

Islam and matriliney coexisted in parts of the south-west. Law and reform strain the house; custom did not vanish on conversion day.

## Facts & figures

### Mappila matriliney

Historical female-centred houses among some Kerala Muslims.

### Lakshadweep

Island Muslim communities with strong matrilineal practice.

### Shariat Act

Statutory push toward Islamic personal law in recorded inheritance.

### Irawati Karve

Mapped southern kinship, including matrilineal pockets, as a regional system.

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