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Q4(c)

What, according to Irawati Karve, are the Major difference between North Indian and South Indian Kinship system?

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2019 · Sociology GS 1 · 10 marks · Sociology

Sociology - The Discipline: Modernity and social changes in Europe and emergence of sociology; Scope of the subject and comparison with other social sciences; Sociology and common sense.

Core demand of the question

- What, according to Irawati **Karve**, are the major differences between North Indian and South Indian kinship systems?
- Keep the answer within a 10-mark length

Revision summary

- **Karve**: North Indian kinship stresses exogamy, hypergamy, and natal distance of the bride.

South Indian Dravidian type prefers **cross-cousin marriage** and closer daughter ties.

Kin terms encode who may marry.

Dumont's alliance theory neighbours this contrast.

NFHS consanguinity still traces the southern pattern in parts.

Introduction

Irawati **Karve** mapped Indian kinship by region, language, and marriage rule. North and South are types, not watertight boxes. The major differences sit in descent emphasis, marriage among kin, and the shape of the bride's tie to her natal home.

Body

North Indian type

- Preferential marriage is outside a wide circle of kin. **Village exogamy** is common in many northern belts.
- The bride is absorbed into the husband's patriline. Natal ties are thinned by distance and hypergamy.
- Gotra and clan bans stretch far. Kinship language marks wife-givers and wife-takers as unequal.

South Indian type

- Dravidian kinship, as **Karve** read it, allows and often prefers **cross-cousin marriage**.
- The woman remains a daughter in a closer kin field. Exchange repeats across generations.
- Terminology classifies cross and parallel kin differently, which organises who is a spouse.

Why it matters

- Louis Dumont also stressed alliance in the south. **Karve** tied the contrast to culture regions, not only to a Brahmanical text.
- **Census** marriage tables and later **NFHS** on consanguinity still echo the southern preference in some states.
- Neither type is "more modern". Both organise property and care.

Caution

- East, west, and tribal systems, and urban mixing, sit outside a blunt north-south binary.

Flow diagram

Karve -> North wide exogamy
Karve -> South cross-cousin
North wide exogamy -> Bride absorbed
South cross-cousin -> Repeated alliance

Conclusion

For **Karve**, the North emphasises wide exogamy and a sharp transfer of the bride; the South emphasises cross-cousin alliance and closer natal continuity. Terminology, village rule, and hypergamy versus repeated exchange are the major differences.

Facts & figures

Karve

Kinship Organisation in India: regional types linked to language and marriage rules.

Cross-cousin marriage

Preferred in much of the Dravidian south; generally banned in the northern type.

Village exogamy

Common northern rule; not the same organising key in the southern type.

NFHS

Records consanguineous marriage shares that remain higher in several southern states.