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Q3(c)

Compare the north Indian kinship System with the South Indian kinship system

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2017 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 marks · Rural and Agrarian Social Structure

Rural and Agrarian Social Structure: The idea of Indian village and village studies; Agrarian social structure - evolution of land tenure system, land reforms.

Core demand of the question

- Compare the north Indian kinship system with the South Indian kinship system
- Keep the note to a 10-mark length

Revision summary

North Indian kinship often bans close kin and sends women far.

South Indian Dravidian kinship often permits **cross-cousin marriage**.

Patriliney and Seed-and-Earth ideology are stronger in the northern map.

Matriliny is a regional exception, not the whole south.

Caste endogamy and modern law now cut across both systems.

Introduction

North and south Indian kinship are both organised by caste and marriage, yet they differ in who may marry whom, how women move, and how the line is named. The contrast is a teaching map, not a wall. Regions inside each zone vary.

Body

North Indian pattern

- **Village exogamy**, gotra rules, and a wide ban on marrying close kin push the bride far from her natal home.
- **Patriliney and hypergamy fit Leela Dube's Seed and Earth**: the woman is the field of another line.
- Purdah and strong affinal hierarchy often follow that distance.

South Indian pattern

- Many Dravidian systems allow **cross-cousin marriage**, so the bride may already be kin.
- **Irawati Karve** mapped this as a closer affinal web and a different gift cycle than the northern **kanyadaan**-at-a-distance.
- Matriliny in parts of Kerala and the north-east is a further south-western and eastern contrast, not a universal south.

Shared and changing

- Caste endogamy organises both.

- **Law, migration, and class now mix patterns:** north Indian urban groups may still forbid cousin marriage while south Indian metros delay marriage without dropping caste.
- **Andre Beteille's disharmony appears in both:** legal equality of spouses beside ranked kinship.

Flow diagram

North village exogamy -> Distant bride hypergamy
South cross-cousin -> Closer affines
Caste endogamy -> North village exogamy
Caste endogamy -> South cross-cousin

Conclusion

North Indian kinship stresses distant bride-giving and patrilineal honour. South Indian kinship more often recycles kin through cross-cousin ties. Both remain caste systems. Comparison explains marriage markets; it should not freeze two Indias.

Facts & figures

Irawati Karve

Mapped regional kinship types, including the north-south marriage contrast.

Village exogamy

Northern rule that the bride should not come from the same village.

Cross-cousin marriage

Preferred union in many south Indian caste systems.

Kanyadaan

Gift of the virgin that, in the north, often marks a sharper break from natal kin.