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Q3(c)

Illustrate the importance of 'Kanyadaan' and 'Kulavadhu' in changing institution of marriage and family.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2018 · Sociology GS 2 · 15 marks · Systems of Kinship in India

Systems of Kinship in India: Lineage and descent in India; Types of kinship systems; Family and marriage in India; Household dimensions of the family; Patriarchy, entitlements and sexual division of labour.

Core demand of the question

- Illustrate the importance of 'Kanyadaan' and 'Kulavadhu' in changing institution of marriage and family
- Keep to a 15-mark length

Revision summary

Kanyadaan gifts the daughter to another patriline.

Kulavadhu names the in-married woman as the line's moral worker.

Nuclear and working households still use both offices.

Dowry and son preference ride on the gift idiom.

Law can equalise heirs while ritual keeps women as given fields.

Introduction

Kanyadaan and **kulavadhu** are north-Indian Hindu kinship words that still organise marriage and family while the household form changes. **Kanyadaan** is the gift of the daughter. **Kulavadhu** is the in-married woman who must become the line's good wife. They matter because nuclear roofs have not cancelled these moral offices.

Body**Kanyadaan**

- The father gifts a virgin to another line, a ritual that fits Leela Dube's **Seed and Earth**: she leaves as field, not as continuing seed of her natal house.
- Irawati Karve's northern pattern of distant bride-giving makes the gift sharper than in many south Indian cross-cousin systems.
- **Changing marriage**: delayed weddings, courtship, and some love matches still often end in a staged **kanyadaan** for honour and caste publicity.
- Dowry travels inside the gift language, turning daughters into a cost, which feeds son preference.

Kulavadhu

- **The bride must absorb the husband's kul**: kitchen, in-laws, and fertility.
- Urban nuclear households still import this office through phone, visits, and ritual festivals.

- A working middle-class woman can be both earner and **kulavadhu**, the double role of 1991-era change.

Changing institution, persistent idioms

- Law gives daughters inheritance; **kanyadaan** symbolism still says she belongs elsewhere.
- **Andre Beteille's disharmony**: companionate equality in speech, ranked affinal duty in practice.
- Resistance appears in delayed marriage, refusal of dowry, and daughters who stay with natal kin, but the words remain the measure of a 'proper' family.

Flow diagram

Kanyadaan gift of daughter -> Natal line lets go
 Kulavadhu -> Husband kul absorbs
 Nuclear jobs delayed marriage -> Reconsecrated ritual
 Kanyadaan gift of daughter -> Reconsecrated ritual
 Kulavadhu -> Reconsecrated ritual

Conclusion

Kanyadaan and **kulavadhu** are not fossils. They are active offices that let the family modernise its kitchen and keep its line. Changing marriage uses new dating and jobs, then reconsecrates the gift and the in-married woman.

Facts & figures

Kanyadaan

Ritual gift of the daughter that marks a break from natal coparcenary in the northern Hindu map.

Kulavadhu

The good wife of the husband's lineage, a standard that survives urban nuclear living.

Seed and Earth

Dube's metaphor that explains why the gifted woman does not continue her father's seed.

Karve north

Distant marriage that makes kanyadaan a sharper transfer than many southern kin marriages.