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Q4(a)

## **Discuss the conceptual issues about lineage and descent in India. Give suitable illustrations ,**

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2020 · Sociology GS 2 · 20 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**

- Discuss the conceptual issues about lineage and descent in India. Give suitable illustrations

### **Revision summary**

Descent assigns belonging; lineage is the ancestor-traced set.

India includes patriliney, matriliney and mixed practices.

Seed-and-Earth ideology is not the only Indian rule.

Household coresidence often diverges from the genealogical chart.

Coorg **okka**, Kerala **taravad** and north Indian **gotra** illustrate the range.

### **Introduction**

Lineage and descent in India are concepts for how people trace belonging and property. The issues are that India is not one patrilineal type, and that ideology of the line does not always match the household on the ground.

### **Body**

#### **Concepts**

- Descent is the rule that assigns a child to a group. Lineage is a set of persons who trace that rule to an ancestor.
- Patriliney, matriliney, and cognatic mixes all exist. Clan, **gotra**, and **okka** are not interchangeable.

#### **Conceptual issues**

- Book-view Hindu law privileged male seed, which Dube named Seed and Earth, and treated other systems as exceptions.
- Colonial ethnography froze 'tribe' as unilineal custom and 'caste' as **gotra** exogamy, a rigidity Whitehead would see as synecdoche.
- **Descent as ideology versus descent as practice:** daughters may inherit in law while the lineage still names sons.
- Household is not lineage. A. M. Shah and others showed coresident groups that do not match the genealogical chart.

#### **Illustrations**

- **Coorg **okka**:** Srinivas's ancestral house as a patrilineal ritual-property unit.

- **Nair taravad in Kerala:** matrilineal jointness that colonial and later law recast.
- **North Indian gotra exogamy with village virilocality:** women leave, the line stays.
- Many Adivasi systems mix clan with village, defying a single ST descent type.
- Urban middle-class families keep **gotra** on the wedding card and a nuclear household in the flat.

### Implication

- Conceptual care stops us from reading all India as one patriarchal clan.

### Flow diagram

Descent rules -> Patriliney

Descent rules -> Matriliney

Seed ideology -> Practice and household differ

### Conclusion

Lineage and descent in India raise issues of diversity, of ideology versus practice, and of household versus genealogical group. Illustrations from **okka**, **taravad**, **gotra**, and tribal clans show why one Indological line will not do.

### Facts & figures

#### Okka

Coorg patrilineal house-line in Srinivas's study.

#### Taravad

Matrilineal joint group among some Kerala communities.

#### Gotra

Exogamous category often treated as descent, used in marriage.

#### Household versus lineage

Coresident unit studied by family sociologists against the clan chart.