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Q1(d)

Do you think that family bondings are being affected by the changing kinship patterns in India? Comment.

UPSC Civil Services Mains 2024 · Sociology GS 2 · 10 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

- Define family bonding and kinship pattern
- **Show change:** residence, marriage choice, migration, law, and media
- Argue that bonds are recast rather than simply destroyed
- Use **Shah**, I. P. Desai, **Karve**, Uberoi

Revision summary

Kinship patterns in India are changing through migration, law, education and marriage markets.

Shah and I. P. Desai separate residential nuclearisation from continuing joint family obligations.

Bonds are stressed around care, authority and marriage choice.

Remittances, caste weddings and digital contact keep translocal jointness alive.

The family remains the main care institution for most groups.

Introduction

Kinship is the rule-bound organisation of descent, marriage, residence and care. Family bonding is the **practical solidarity that those rules support: who eats together, who pays for a hospital, who decides a wedding. In India those patterns are changing. The question is whether bonds are breaking or being reorganised.** Village ethnography and urban studies both point to reorganisation more than to a simple collapse.

Body

What is changing

A. M. **Shah** distinguished household from family: people may live in smaller residential units while remaining a joint family for property and ritual. I. P. Desai found similar 'jointness' beneath nuclear façades. That distinction is now stretched by Gulf and metropolitan **migration**, dual-earner households, and delayed marriage. North Indian village exogamy and Dravidian cross-cousin patterns (**Karve**, Dumont, Trautmann) still operate, but they compete with office romances, caste-endogamous 'love' matches, and a small rise in inter-caste and delayed first marriage.

- **Law recast authority:** the Hindu Succession amendments, maintenance case law, and the **Domestic Violence Act** give wives and daughters claims that older karta power did not assume. NEP-era education and women's college enrolment change who can refuse a match. Smartphones keep a migrant son in daily contact and also expose youth to matches outside the local field.

Are bonds affected?

Yes. Authority of elders over marriage and occupation is weaker where wages are individual. Care of the aged is more contested when daughters-in-law work and sons live in another city. Divorce and separation, though still low by world standards, are more visible. Live-in and delayed household formation in metros alter the timing of bonding.

No, if 'affected' means emptied. **Patricia Uberoi** showed the family as an ideological site that modern India keeps investing in. Remittances, WhatsApp kin groups, caste samaj weddings, and return for death pollution show **translocal jointness**. Gay and lesbian couples still often negotiate with natal families rather than living as isolated individuals. The household remains the main welfare institution because public care is thin.

Bonded labour, kinship and the short 10-marker close

Family bonding is also affected when a bonded or circular-migrant husband is absent for months and the wife runs the farm under a father-in-law. That is kinship change produced by labour unfreedom, which links this short note to bonded labour and to agrarian class. The comment asked by the question is therefore: **yes, bonds are affected; no, they are not simply over.**

So changing kinship patterns **stress** bonds, **redistribute** them toward conjugal and sibling ties in some classes, and **stretch** them across cities. They do not replace kinship with a market of strangers for most Indians.

Flow diagram

Migration education law -> Changing kinship patterns
 Changing kinship patterns -> Residential split
 Changing kinship patterns -> Translocal jointness
 Translocal jointness -> Bonds recast not erased

Conclusion

- **Family bondings are affected:** residence splits, marriage choice widens a little, and elder authority is bargained. The Indian pattern is still jointness under new logistics-money, phones, and caste marriage markets-rather than the death of the family.

Facts & figures

Shah

Household and family are not the same unit; joint family can survive residential split.

Karve

North-South kinship contrast: village exogamy versus Dravidian alliance patterns.

Hindu Succession amendment 2005

Daughters as coparceners in Mitakshara joint property; a legal recasting of family bonds.

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