Introduction

The study of 'KINSHIP' has long been one of central concerns of Anthropology. The kinship plays an important part in all human life, sometime both in regulation of behaviour between persons and in the understanding of the social, cultural, political, jural and ritual aspect of any group of people.

Definition:

The term kinship has been defined by various authors on the basis of their work done in this field. Here I have included only the standard definition of the term kinship.

i) The Encyclopaedia of social sciences (vol 8, 1955) defines kinship as one of the universals in human society and therefore plays an important role in both regulation of behaviour and foundation of social groups.

ii) Encyclopaedia Britanica (vol 13, 1968) refers that the study of kinship is the investigation of how the social ties of the cognition and affinity are established, elaborated, fabricated, modified, forgotten or suppressed; how these ties are related to other manifestations; how sexual alliances are distinguished from social kinship.

iii) The Encyclopaedia of Anthropology (Hunter, Philip, Whitten 1976) refers the term kinship to social relationship linking people through genealogical lines.
Importance of Kinship Study

The study of kinship from an Anthropological point of view is all about the basic facts of life as culture, role analysis, behaviour, relationships, terminology, personality development and personality of people living in society. Kinship is one of the universals in human society. Its importance in Anthropology is significant in various ways, stated as under.

i) The human behavioural pattern can be understood through kinship analysis.

ii) To know the social set up and cultural orientation of the people, kinship study is essential.

iii) Kinship study is helpful in reconstructing the past historical aspect of the people.

iv) To understand the customs, norms and traditions of the people, kinship study is useful.

v) The meaning of the kinship term provides the cultural background of the people under study.

vi) The study of kinship term is helpful or important for the purpose of semantic analysis.

Therefore kinship is one of the important studies to understand the human society and its culture. It is studied through the study of an 'individual'. Here 'individual' means a person who is born in the family, which is established by marriage. Hence 'family' is the focus of study for 'kinship'.
In the development of structure of all human societies 'kinship' is very important. It has been one if not only major organising principle. The study of kinship lead to new understanding of people's view regarding their life as a whole.

Studies by the Earlier Scholars:

The study of kinship has long had a special place in Anthropological writing and research works. According to Malinowski (1930) kinship is really the most difficult subject of social Anthropology.

In the period immediately following the second world war, British social Anthropologists show 'kinship' an important aspect of human behaviour. In the general division of the subject matter of the Social Anthropology 'kinship' was accepted as one of the constituents along with politics, economics and religion. Over the intervening thirty years a good deal has changed. 'Kinship' no longer occupies a place along with other but has a separate recognition of its own. Now through kinship study political, economical, social, religious, cultural and jural aspect of a society can be understood.

It was the British anthropologist Malinowski (1930), who influenced the other scholars and 'kinship' began to receive more attention. The studies were followed by different authors from different corners of the world. The last twenty years have seen the emergence of a newer and more sophisticated form of kinship analysis, i.e. social, cultural, functional, structural and componential. The reason behind the progress of kinship study may be firstly due to the shift that has occurred in the range of societies available for emperical studies and secondly the increasing impact of the discipline on theoretical ground. However the kinship studies in India developed after Louis Dumont and D. Pocock (1957) with the first published work of them on village studies. Then onward different aspects of kinship study
by several authors over time is continuing with new dimension.

For the purpose of present study, the volume of kinship studies may be looked upon from three dimensions i.e. work done in different parts of the globe by western scholars, work by western scholars in India and by Indian scholars in India.

i) Studies by Western Scholars in Abroad

Scientific study of kinship dates from 1860 onward. L. H. Morgan (1971) was the first American anthropologist who laid the foundation for the study of kinship. His publication 'Systems of Consanguinity and Affinity of the Human Family' is wide collection of evidence principally of kinship terminology from many parts of the world. This publication is one of the classical works in kinship study. Then onward the study began to take its shape both in India and abroad by different authors.

W.H.R. Rivers, another British anthropologist who made a great contribution in the study of kinship system. In his publication 'Kinship and Social Organisation' (1914, 1968), he proposed that kinship is rigorously determined by the social conditions and particularly by forms of marriage and hence can be utilised to reconstruct the recent history of social institution. He put life to the study of kinship terminology into an analytical frame. Emile Durkheim, a French anthropologist, imparted great impact, which mostly resulted from his early development of a functionalist approach dealing predominantly with individual and society. In his 'Division of Labour in Society' (1893) necessary interrelationship between man and society has been shown. In another book 'Elementary Forms of Religious Life' (1912) he thought that what impressed primitive man was the overshadowing force of society, the clan of which he was a member.
Only by symbolising their clans and totems they became sacred. Thus in this way he did not make any contribution to the kinship study directly but through the study of marriage, origin of incest, religion, he showed its effect to individual and society.

A generation of anthropologists including A. R. Radcliffe-Brown was deeply influenced by Durkheim's theoretical perspective. A. R. Radcliffe-Brown, an eminent social anthropologist and a noted theoretician, made a valuable contribution to kinship study. In 'The Social Organisation of Australian Tribes', Oceania Monographs (1931), he said that in an Australian tribe the whole social structure is based on a net work of such relationship of person to person established through genealogical connections. So the kinship structure of such society consists of dyadic (set of two) relations, as between father and son, or mother's brother or sister's son. In 'Structure and Function in Primitive Society' (1952) he showed a wide range of kinship ties among the primitive society prevailing and on this basis of kinship relation, Radcliffe-Brown suggests that the inhabitants of one village interact with or are related to the inhabitants of other regions also. Then again his monumental work, 'The study of Kinship System' (1941), was the first to develop the conception of the kinship System as composed of both terminology and patterns of social behaviour and to see kinship as an integral part of larger social structure.

Another important turning point was the work of Evans-Pritchard and Meyer Fortes. Evans-Pritchard's work 'The Nuer' (1940) was on the kinship groups, particularly based on the descent in the male line from a known ancestor. He showed how the gens functioned as political groups in Nuer society which Meyer found fascinating in Rome and Greece but about which so little was known. In 1945 Meyer Fortes published 'Dynamics of Clanship among the Tallensi'. He showed in detail how the descent groups of this people in northern
Ghana were the framework of their social and political structure. His second book 'The Web of Kinship among the Tallensi' (1949) is from the point of view of the way individual and groups are tied together in a 'web' of relations of marriage and descent.

Needham criticised R. Brown's 'theory of sentiments' strongly in 'Structure and Sentiments' (1962) and went on to make a number of reformulation of what he calls 'Prescriptive' marriage system.

Besides this, A. L. Kroeber, J. P. Murdock, Louis Dumont, David M. Schneider, Edmund R. Leach and Levi Strauss have contributed to the development and modification of the structural as well as functional approach toward the kinship study.

Another dimension of looking into the kinship system has been introduced by Goodenough (1951, 1956 b) and Lounsbury (1956). They have made the componential analysis of kinship terminology and in certain case have looked into it in terms of cognitive system of the community.

ii) Studies by Western Scholars in India:

When turning to India, study of kinship by foreign authors is countable. W.B.R. River's in his publication 'The Toda's' (1906) a polyandrous tribe of Nilgiri Hills (India) showed a descriptive account of the Toda's kinship system in the social organisation of this tribe.

Robbins Burling in his 'Rensagri: family and kinship in a Garo village' (1963) focussed attention on their mode of interpersonal relationship.
Martin Orans in 'The Santals' (1965) found out how their solidarity is controlled by personal relation. A C. Mayer's 'Caste and Kinship in Central India' (1960) and study of Inden and Nicholas on 'Kinship in Bengali Culture' (1977) are some of the important works done by the foreign authors in India. Each scholar has tried to show the social, cultural and functional aspects of the people through kinship study in India.

iii) Studies by the Indian Scholars in India

After a discussion of the kinship study by foreign authors, both in India as well as abroad, it is now essential to go through the works done by Indian authors in India for the present context.

In India the study of kinship and marriage was very popular in the constructive period (from 1859 to 1900). Under the influence of British anthropologist it continued to flourish with further development in methods and theories. Irawati Karve's book on 'Hindu Kinship System' (1953), marked the beginning of turning point of Indian Social anthropology in kinship study. In the same year her publication 'Kinship Organisation in India' is worth mentionable. It shows how the kinship organisation is influenced and strengthened by the caste system and how both these conform to certain patterns found in wide geographical areas called linguistic region.

The study of kinship along with marriage was made by B. Mukherjee on 'Garo Marriage and Kinship Organisation' (1956), 'Marriage, Customs and Kinship Organisation of the Urali of Travancore' (1952) and 'Kinship System in tribal India' (1982-83). B.B. Goswami's publication on 'Garo Kinship of Assam' (1956, 1963) and 'Lushai Kinship Term' (1960) is worth mentionable.

A descriptive work in kinship study was done by T.N. Madan (1962, 63, 65) which is of great importance in clarifying the terms
and concepts and then in refining the analysis of social structural
model etc. in India. Madan's full length publication on 'Family and
Kinship: A study of the rural Kashmir' (1965) is a significant
contribution both from methodological and substantive point of view.

In recent time Madan on 'Structural Implication of Marriage
in North India' (1975), Leela Dube on 'Sociology of Kinship', an
analytical survey of literature' (1974), Satadal Dasgupta on 'Caste,
Kinship and Community' (1981), R.S. Khare on 'Normative Culture
and Kinship, essays, Hindu categories, Process and Perspective'
(1983), are few of the Indian notable authors who published works on
kinship study in India.

Kinship is important in theories of cognition. Rao's publi­
cation on 'Koya kinship System : A Componential analysis (1978-80),
N.K. Choudhuri's 'Nicobarese Kinship : Cognitive Analysis (1977),
and N.K. Behura's 'On componential Analysis of Kinship System' (1977),
drew attention to componential analysis.

Distinctiveness of Present Work

The Brahman and the Bagdi Castes occupying two extreme
poles in the caste hierarchy possess certain norms and behaviours
of their own, functioning in certain way of their ways of life.
These norms and values have been continuing for a long time forming
a particular custom. Sometime the norms and values of the upper
castes are emulated by the lower one and accepted by the society.
This is modernization and liberalisation. But at the same time,
these often guide the ways of their own life and separate them from
other castes. Based on this argument I have undertaken this compa­
rative study among the Brahman and the Bagdi. I have tried to find
out my answers of the above mentioned lines of argument by studying
the social-cultural aspect of kinship among the Brahman and the
Bagdi. However, both the castes are Bengali Hindu. Being ethnically
Bengali, I felt it easy to study among them so that, the language
bar can be avoided. It is however, not possible to include all aspects of kinship in one study. Therefore, the structure of kinship system, terminology, cultural background of the kin and the individual role analysis in daily life as well as in socio-religious activities have been studied so that the social-cultural aspect of kinship of the people can be intensively studied. The total work for both castes centres on the members of the family, of which eighty percent are the 'Kin'. The rituals for both the castes, beliefs and the associated Sastriya performance have been avoided. Only the role played by the participating kin and its function have been included. I have tried to find out how the basic facts of life like behavioural pattern, relationship, philosophy & personality are changing due to education and modernization and its acceptance in the society. Hence I have made a comparative analysis of the rural and urban on the one hand, and upper and lower castes on the other. It has helped me to find out the abolition of 'caste untouchbility' and 'the process of Cultural change to some extent. Both these areas of the study were influenced by the modern characteristic feature of the town so that the positional change in two castes can be analyzed.

Earlier scholars such as Irawati Karve, B. B. Goswami, Satadal Dasgupta, T. N. Madan and Ralph Nicholas have tried to throw light on the structural principle of the kinship System of the respective regions where they have worked. At the same time these scholars have seen the Kinship system as an aspect of the total culture in which the study of it helps to highlight the interrelationship and role specialization of the member of a corporate group. Of them I. Karve and T. N. Madan have tried to build up a model of concentration of certain type of kinship system in certain areas and then have tried to link it up with other dimensions of culture. In the year, 1960, Nicholas has studied the kinship system in Bengal and was very much concerned to understand intrinsic qualities of the Bengali Kinship System. My work which has been carried out here
has its own distinctive qualities because I have generated and then interpreted the data on Kinship terms and Kinship behaviour on two communities of Bengal; interestingly one i.e. the Brahman, are occupying the topmost rank in the regional hierarchy and the other, the Bagdi are placed down below. In this specific context my endeavour has been to assess how far their relative position in the caste order has anything to do with the type of the kinship terms and behaviour per se.

I have drawn to the interesting aspect with the contention that the former belong to the Great tradition whereas the latter to the Little tradition of regional culture. Hence my expectation had been (when I undertook the study first) that this specific feature would be expressed through differential nature of the Kinship System followed by these two communities. I have therefore tried to examine my empirical data in terms of following hypothesis.

Hypotheses:

i) Caste status does not influence the kinship system of any community; by and large it depends upon the Linguistic affinity of the communities and the total cultural milieu in which they are located.

ii) Kinship terms, may differ in term of rural and urban setting of the groups.

iii) Though the respective positions in the regional hierarchy will not affect the kinship terms used, but they will surely reflect upon the kinship behaviour and the role played by different kin in any corporate group.

iv) The cultural background of specific communities specially the knowledge of the sanskritic norms and values will have an impact
on the kinship structure of a community.

**Area of Work** :

For the present study, the area of work constitutes BARASAT of North 24 Parganas and JAYNAGAR of South 24 Parganas of West Bengal. The two Bengali Hindu castes i.e. the BRAHMAN of Barasat (urban) and Jaynagar; and the BAGDI of Jaynagar (multicaste village) have been selected. These two areas possess urban features but still places continued to be rural by schedule.

**Methodology Used** :

In this study I have used the methods and techniques which are applicable to the Social Cultural Anthropology. To me method means the broad framework of collecting data from the field and systematic procedure for processing those data. Both textual as well as contextual information are used in processing the data. Here the method used is direct intensive techniques like interview, participation observation & genealogical study (M. Duverger, 1964). In writing I followed structural and functional analysis.

I started the work with textual facts and tried to observe the same in the field. This helped me to comprehend the diverse problems and subject matter of my study and in using the different types of techniques each with its own values.

Since my method was direct observation I started the work in three different steps :

1) I prepared a list of people to be questioned of the age group 15 to 60 years.
2) Prepared open and closed questionnaire (enquiry).

3) Finally, I used those results of enquiry. (Processing of the data).

A census schedule was prepared. Then an extensive field work was carried from March to May (1990), November to January (1990-91), June to August (1991), January to March (1992), December to April (1992-93) January to April (1994) and July to September (1994).

I have prepared three Maps showing the main concentration of Bagdi and Brahman of those area. However detail information was collected from families, covering the total aspect of my work, in the following way:

1) As a background of study general information regarding their origin, position in the hierarchical division of caste, the social and other inter and intra caste relation were collected from the text and by memoir interview from the aged persons under study.

2) Data regarding the history of the area, and the names were collected from the text and verified by interview method from the most aged person under study.

3) Data on other information regarding the description of the area was collected by direct observation and the census report.

4) Information regarding the classification of kin and kiship terminology were collected by applying genealogical technique and by personal observation.

5) Other data regarding the individual role relationship was collected by genealogy and interviewed with open questionnaire method.
6) Regular and occasional socio-religious functional aspect was collected by complete case history method and by interviewing three generations which are supplemented by personal observation.

After a long stay, I was able to establish a close relationship with the people in the field and began to take part in a way in their daily life in order to look forward to achieve more information. By personal involvement in some cases in the family marriage, birth, death and festival I was able to collect information regarding the participation of kin which helped me to peep deep into the problem.