CHAPTER - 3

COMPONENTS OF KINSHIP TERMS

3.0. Introduction

Every act of behaviour is considered as a reflection of cultural traits (Tyler, 1913; Berelson, 1967; Lalitha Bai, 1977). Linguistic units or utterances when become more than mere a chain of harmoniously linked sound waves with basic grammatical functions, are treated as significant extralinguistic units reflecting the social, psychological and historical characteristics of the concerned community. Some stock of language is particularistic in its mode of functions as reflectors of social, psychological and logical manifestations of the human ability in conceiving the world thus revealing man as a social animal. The terminology of kinship deserves special attention in this respect in influencing the life and culture of the people. Thus language becomes not only a part of culture but also an instrument for learning it, using it and also transmitting it from generation to generation. Singer (1968) attributed pattern theory of culture created by individuals and groups and interacts with them as well as with environments. These units of patterns of interactions of biology and psychology are the starting points of cultural pattern configurations.

Kinship and related terms have been viewed sociologically, anthropologically and psychologically. The signi-
ficance of kin terms as manifestations of social, psychological, biological, kinological (anthropological), and historical aspects have been pointed out by various scholars like Murdock (1960), Eggan (1968), Lalitha Bai (1977) etc. The kin terms have been also viewed as single-faced phenomenon by various scholars (Vide also 14).

3.1. Competence as a cyclic phenomenon in linguistic behaviour

The concept of linguistic competence (Chomsky, 1965) is inadequate in that speech events in a social vacuum have no matured value. The harmonious functioning of the linguistic competence and the communicative competence are essential for the smooth functioning of the social life between the members of the community. The individual through the various stages of the acquisition of terms acquires related behaviour and develops connected emotions. In a series of discrimination and generalisation processes the individual, in the conceptual space, arranges the kins and designate them with suitable terms, within the limits of the communal rules, which in turn to some extent is controlled by the economic, social and political factors of larger social organisations.

3.2. The multi-componental structure of kinship terms

Human behaviour is said to be based on biological factors but only part of it is biologically determined (Berelson, 1967: 15). Terminological behaviour of kinship deserves special attention in this connection. The concept
of kinship is built on the two fundamental biological aspects—the sex category—functioning mainly on the procreative aspects and relative age in the distinction of lineal order of filials—envisioned in descent. These biological factors quite often become toys in the hands of the cultural patterning of the specific communities which is more specifically manifested in the terminology of kinship where the neutralisation of relative age in terminology and the layering of the pseudo features in the kinological features, as genetic fatherhood being submerged or ignored under sociological fatherhood as per the whims of the communities (as among the Todas) mar the significance of the biological importance of kinship and also terms. Thus the biological status of the married/unmarried, parent/child, relative age, generation, male/female predominance at the onset acts as cohesive force in the structural formation of kinship and related terms. In many cases the biological criteria are heavily dependent on the ecological factors, past and present. This complex nature of kinship, which is reflected on the terminology in a sufficiently perceivable measure in different societies led the scholars to arrive at conclusions from different angles.

3.3. Components of kinship terms

3.3.1. The link component

The link component as the label indicates deals with the various formations of kin chains by the linking process giving
rise to distinct kin relations finally designated by the respective terms. With the basic four kin relations and two sex categories, eight cardinal kin categories in this component provides skeletal framework of the kinship terminological structure.

It is on this skeletal framework all other features of kinological structure of interdisciplinary character are layered. The componental features however should not be considered as compartmentalised and most often are found with an overlapping nature. For example, the term /bappu:su/ 'F' in KG indicates the cardinal kin, head of the family, a status marked person, most respected kin /-u:s/ synchronically considered as an honorific suffix but diachronically tracing back to the remote ancestor /pappos/ 'grand father' of the IE family of languages exemplify how the single term becomes a multicomponental phenomenon.

3.3.2. The kinological component

The kinological component deals with the basic features of kinship contributing to the smallest integrated group, bound by the ties of marriage and descent in family, occupation and property. The biologically formed compact group with its own rules of descent, inheritance, residence/ adoption, preferential marriage groups and modes, generation relative age all

1. Vide Chapter.10 for definition and further details.
reflect on the terminology. In a single community terms and concepts tend to differ and resemble each other (Vide Chapter 6).

3.3.3. The sociological component

Within the set up of the kingroup, social values are determined in terms of language of kinship, which are mirrored in the larger social organisations. The mutual interference of kinological and larger social organisations, the changing structure of the kinship organisation and the terminology forms the central core of this component.

3.3.4. The psychological component

Every act of behaviour is envisaged as a psychological phenomenon. This component deals with how the individual perceives the kinship structure of his group and reacts to the terminology in the acquisition of roles, relations, terms and emotions by the process of discriminations and generalisations and thus validate how thought or concepts mould and control language behaviour of vice versa charging a cyclic mechanism in the concept formations of kinship.

3.3.5. The historical component

This component deals with how the terminology of kinship can be utilised in the reconstruction of social organisations synchronically as well as diachronically.
Schematic Diagram Showing the Three Planar Triangular Prism of Kinship Terms
3.3.6. The Linguistic component

This component deals with the anatomical study of terminology of kinship and how it correlates with extra linguistic features. Even an intonation may change the kin relation (Spear, 1972) or a slight phonological change as nasal to nasalisation as in KG /maːyi/ 'MBW and /maːyi/ 'Sp.M' as contrastive units in the isolation of kin terms.

The extra linguistic study of kin terms in the multi-component outlook is still in its infancy.

3.4. The individual as speaker and hearer in verbal behaviour: special reference to the kinship terms

The individual in the conceptual space of interactional set up acts as binding nodes of speaker and hearer at either end of a speech event, with linguistic and extralinguistic parameters interrelated. Sapir (1953:17)/Bhat (1982:91) opines that non-linguistic concepts are prior to verbal output and language is the instrument that make possible the product. The verbal behaviour of the speaker in sound waves accompanied by extralinguistic features makes identical imprints on the perceptual space of the hearer's mind (taken for granted the hearer and speaker are native speakers of the language and specifically interacting two kins, largely in the interactional set up). A schematic diagram of the triangular prism of the kin terms, cultural disciplines and the individual with their subcategories is with three planes (vide the diagram 3.4.1).