

Kinship and Gender in South and Southeast Asia: patterns and Contrasts /by Leela Dube. 1994. 45p. (9<sup>th</sup> J.P. Naik Memorial Lecture, 1994 ).

## **Kinship and Gender in South and Southeast Asia: Patterns and Contrasts**

I am honoured to have been asked to deliver the Ninth J.P. Naik Memorial Lecture. My sense of gratitude to Naik Sahab has a twofold immediacy today. I worked closely with him. To many of us it is painful to put the words 'the late' before his name. So much dynamism, energy and vitality cannot just wither away. His example and inspiration survive with us. Naik Sahab was a thinker and a doer: reflection became meaningful when it led to action. The debts that we owe him are many and in diverse fields; but for women with a cause he will always occupy a special place. I salute the legacy of J.P. Naik. He is much more than a memory, not mere sepia-tinted nostalgia. Second, this presentation is based on a manuscript which had its beginnings in the comparative project on 'Women's Work and Family Strategies' and was conceived of and written to provide a background for grasping the differences between South and Southeast Asia. It gave me the opportunity to travel across the two regions, explore relevant literature and meet scholars and common people. I am beholden to Vina Mazumdar and Hanna Papanek, the two directors of the project. I also thank Lotika, Kumud, Malavika and Narayan for their help. I gratefully remember a number of people spread over South and Southeast Asia. The information and insights provided by them have been invaluable.

### **I**

We have now begun to question the a priori assumption of the universality of male dominance and gender asymmetry. There is a realization that gender relations are constructed differently in different cultures. But we need to understand the nature of cultural diversity and its relationship with women's situation. A key area of cultural diversity is kinship, which subsumes marriage and family organization. Kinship systems are an important context within which gender relations are located. Gender studies often leave out a direct consideration of kinship, perhaps because it is often thought irrelevant or in some ways an immutable, unchangeable given. It may also seem to be couched in arcane and difficult language. In point of fact it is very close to our lives and very relevant for understanding women's situation.<sup>1</sup>

It is not from the esoteric angle that we should look at kinship. Kinship needs to be seen as providing the organizing principles for group placement and social identity, inheritance and resource distribution, socialization, post-marital residence and women's relationship to space, the formation of basic kin groups, marriage and conjugal relations, authority and power, and rights over children. The very notion of entitlement to various kinds of resources including food, health and nutrition, and the obligations and responsibilities of members of the group in the business of living, can be understood by keeping in view the fact that it is the kinship system which provides the language for all these and gives them legitimacy.

Kinship systems are neither innocuous nor immutable, and they are not self-sustaining. Given that they operate through material relations but tend to express themselves more effectively through values and ideology, and that they often seem to be supported or mitigated by religion and reinforced through ritual and social ceremony, we need to assess the assumptions that underlie the behaviour and speech of the people. I would argue that not only in traditional legal systems and in customary law but also in the content and character of the new laws that have been framed ostensibly to favour women, one can discern the unmistakable stamp of kinship ideology and kinship organization.<sup>2</sup>

Differences in kinship systems and family structures account for some critical differences among societies in the ways in which gender operates. Many kinds of gender disparities and parities in the societies with which we are concerned are explained at least in part by their kinship systems. I wish to maintain that we need an awareness of the reach of the principles of kinship into human life and of the possible role of kinship in areas which ostensibly have nothing to do with it. This is specially important for South and Southeast Asia, where kinship is a very strong force. I do not claim that any association made by me between a particular situation or phenomenon and a kinship and family pattern is inevitable. I merely plead

that the connections and associations that seem obvious to me be regarded as worthy of serious consideration.

By comparing and contrasting a variety of patterns and configurations we gain the capacity to question the notions of the 'naturalness' of gender differences and of specific social patterns, of the fairness of a social order, of the tacit belief in the immutability of a kinship system, and to indicate the dangers involved in letting many customary practices and rituals survive for the sake of retaining one's cultural identity. As Papanek says, 'notions of entitlement are both learned and taught'.<sup>3</sup> This means that they can also be unlearned. But to unlearn such notions it is necessary first to go to their roots, to the principles of one's own kinship system, and place them in a comparative perspective. Only then will we be able to disabuse our minds of the idea of the unchangeability or change-resistance of our system and devise effective ways of changing it. The task is not easy, but it is worth doing. Here the linkages between kinship, religion, economy and polity must not be ignored: they are hopelessly intertwined and intermeshed.

Asia harbours a variety of kinship systems of three principal types: patrilineal, matrilineal and bilateral. South Asia is predominantly patrilineal, with two important pockets of matrilineality in the south-west and the north-east<sup>4</sup> of the subcontinent and significantly bilateral Sri Lanka. Southeast Asia, is predominantly bilateral, in which both parents are relevant for reckoning kinship, with a significant presence of matrilineality among the Minangkabau of West Sumatra<sup>5</sup> and the people of Negri Sembilan in Malaysia, as well as some patrilineal communities. South and Southeast Asia comprise countries from Afghanistan in the west to the Philippines in the east. Today I shall look at and contrast aspects of family and kinship from the point of view of gender among some populations of Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, Nepal, Pakistan, the Philippines and Thailand. My perspective will be explicitly comparative. Each of these countries is characterized by internal heterogeneity. I shall focus my attention on the patrilineal Hindus of Nepal and India, the Muslims of Bangladesh, India and Pakistan, Malay Muslims, the bilateral Javanese and the matrilineal Minangkabau of Indonesia, who too follow Islam, the Catholics of the Philippines, and the Buddhist Thai. I have left out most tribal populations of both regions and mostly ignored the cognatic but patronymic as well as the largely patrilineal Indian Christian communities of the west coast and peninsular India.

While contrasting patrilineal and bilateral kinship systems we should keep in mind that there is no uniform, undifferentiated pattern either of patrilineality or of bilaterality. This applied also to matrilineality. The comparisons therefore take up only broad features and mention a few specific peculiarities rooted in religion or in the past.

## II

The basic differences in the statuses of male and female children between patrilineal societies on the one hand and matrilineal as well as bilateral societies on the other are in the nature of their membership of descent groups and familial and kinship units. Under patrilineality both boys and girls take their social identity from the father and are placed in his lineage, *khandan/ kutumb* and family. But while a son is a permanent member of these units, a daughter is viewed as a transient or impermanent member. A son has the potential to continue the patriline but a daughter enters the family only for a short sojourn. The cultural emphasis on marriage and the perceived inevitability of a girl's departure from her natal home on marriage are deeply entrenched. The possibility of intra-kin marriage, such as marriage between cross-cousins or between a maternal uncle and niece, available to Hindu communities in southern India, and between both cross and parallel cousins to most Muslim communities in the subcontinent, does not do away with the element of compulsion in regard to a daughter's exit. For a daughter, marriage implies loss of membership of her natal home, and in normal circumstances marriage is viewed as a must.

In matrilineal communities, on the other hand, children of both sexes acquire permanent membership of the mother's descent group, which consists of relatives connected through female links. They are believed to share common blood. A child thus derives its social identity from its mother. But while a sister is the perpetuator of the line and augments the lineage or descent group, e.g. the *taravad* among the Nayar of Kerala and the Lakshadweep Muslims, or the *kpoh* (womb) among the Khasi, a brother's children belong to his wife's lineage. The observability of the birth process rooted in nature thus has different meanings in

matrilineal and patrilineal societies. Membership of descent groups under matrilineality does not change at marriage. In bilateral societies a child is reckoned to be the child equally of both its parents. There is no attempt at underplaying the importance of either parent, but the mother's biological role and close relationship with the child tend to make her more important and to establish her rights over her children. Children of neither sex are made to feel that they are temporary or peripheral members of the group of birth. Social identity is derived from both parents and the ancestors of both in different directions are recognized as kin. There is a certain amount of choice in relating to different kin. The Javanese *trah* illustrates this well;<sup>6</sup> and in the Philippines, for instance, a loosely knit network of kin functions. Marriage does not obliterate the earlier identity: only new kin of the spouse are added. In these societies legitimate paternity does have significance, but a child born out of wedlock is not discarded. Even in Muslim Malaysia and Indonesia we do not witness the kind of fuss and outrage over a child born out of wedlock that is seen in the patrilineal communities of South Asia. In Thailand and the Philippines, children of unidentified paternity are often brought up by their maternal grandparents. Thailand seems to be more liberal in this respect, perhaps because Buddhism has few prescriptions and proscriptions relating to family matters.

Differences in group membership and social identity are closely connected with patterns of inheritance of property and resource contribution. In much of Hindu South Asia property is inherited by male heirs and transmitted through them. In the traditional conception daughters have only a right to maintenance and to a marriage – including gifts and goods required for setting up a household – in keeping with the status of the family. Only sons have coparcenary rights, meaning rights in ancestral property acquired at birth. In recent years in Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Karnataka and Maharashtra, laws have been introduced to give rights in ancestral land and property to daughters also, but their execution has been variable.

In northern, non-peninsular India, land is viewed as a male form of property, so even though entitled to a share in immovable property – either through the father's share of ancestral property or in his self-acquired property – a daughter does not usually get any. Only in recent surveys among the educated sections has a greater inclination been seen on the parents' part to give daughters shares in their property. There is a general feeling that if a daughter were to demand her share she would risk the loss of her customary cherished privileges of being invited to the natal home and receiving periodical gifts, as also of the support of her brothers should she need it. Insistence on legal rights would thus deprive her of a moral right which is part of our kinship system.

The notion that what is given to married daughters goes into another family is very strong. Interestingly, exactly opposite is the idea prevalent in the matrilineal Lakshadweep islands, where it is believed that men's gifting of property to their children leads to its fragmentation.<sup>7</sup> In patrilineal South Asia, except among some enlightened and educated people, the notion persists that daughters are entitled only to portable gifts and not to shares in property as such. The same idea is present in Nepal. Even in the south, where among a few communities daughters are given some land, it is not viewed as a share in the paternal or ancestral property. It is considered a gift. If a couple do not have a son, they might give their land to a daughter, and she along with her husband and children might live with her parents. This is easier in the south than in the north, where patrilineal kin always try to stake their claims to kin's property.

*Streedhana* has different implications in different areas and is now being replaced by dowry. In the deep south, women have a right over their *streedhana* and part of their dowries; but in the north the situation is very tricky. The absence or ineffectiveness of inheritance rights of daughters certainly gives an impetus to dowry, as does the caste system with the restrictions and compulsions that it places on marriage, leaving very little choice to boys or girls. In fact, patrilineality and caste make a deadly combination so far as women's situation is concerned. With the telescoping of small endogamous castes into larger marriageable groups (such as all Tamil Brahmin groups being considered as one connubial unit or all North Indian Brahmin castes as one connubial unit), and with greater emphasis on class, dowries have become very large; for there is competition between young women's parents to find a good match and on the part of young men's parents to get as much profit as possible out of the deal.<sup>8</sup>

Widows have some inheritance rights, but in the absence of provision for conjugal property a married woman is completely dependent on her husband unless she also earns *and* has control over her income.

In practice the patrilineal Muslims of South Asia have radically deviated from quranic rules of inheritance. A daughter is often completely deprived of a share in her father's property in the interest of keeping the patrimony intact. In Bangladesh a woman generally neither gets nor claims her legal right to paternal property. She would rather opt for *naiyor*, which means the right to periodical visits to her natal home, away from the strict code of conduct in the in-laws' house, the right to gifts on ceremonial occasions, and brothers' support in times of difficulty such as divorce, widowhood or illness. There is also a sense of impracticality attached to honouring a married daughter's right to her share in the immovable property of her natal group because of residence rules which take her away from her natal home. This is a very common feeling. In West Punjab and other areas of Pakistan too, a daughter's right to a stipulated share in land tends to go unhonoured unless she marries her father's brother's son. In communities in the subcontinent who live mainly by trade and commerce or salaried service, the practices and norms for daughters vary. Among Christians a daughter is entitled to a share equal to a son's, but there are regional variations. Among groups like Syrian and Goan Christians, who are essentially patrilineal and patrilocal, even the laws tend to ignore a daughter's right to a share. Dowry may be considered a substitute.<sup>9</sup>

In matrilineal communities a woman can use her group's resources, a part of which would then devolve on her children. A man too can use the resources of his group, but he has no right to give them over to his children, who belong to his wife's group. In Lakshadweep a man can only gift his individually earned property to his children. Among the Minangkabau of West Sumatra land is held corporately by the kin group. A woman has exclusive rights to specific pieces of land, which she cultivates with the help of her male and female kin and her husband. In bilateral Malaysia and Indonesia, *adat* or custom enjoins that property be divided equally among sons and daughters. There is often a greater tendency to follow *adat* than Islamic law. Only those more conscious of adhering to Islam and with considerable self-earned money wish to follow Islamic rules of division of property. In Java (Indonesia) the best rice lands are generally given to daughters, and a daughter who sets up an independent household may be given a new house with a garden plot and right of use over agricultural land. Her husband may cultivate this land as a sharecropper.

Gender parity and the absence of discrimination between brothers and sisters in the allocation of resources and in the transmission of property are characteristic features of Filipino and Thai cultures. Bilaterality is enshrined in these societies.

### III

This brings us to patterns of residence and rights over space. Residence has at least two connotations or references: household or domestic group and locality or vicinage. The ideal-typical household in large parts of Hindu India and Nepal, legitimized by religion, is the patrilineal patrilocal joint family. Its actual frequency varies across socio-economic levels, caste groups, occupations and regions.

Diversity of occupations, migration and professional requirements such as transfers and distance between place of work and residence often contribute to the breaking up of the joint family household. Economic viability and women's education also seem to justify separate living. Complex joint families with brothers and their wives and children living together have decreased in number, but researches show that lineal and partial joint families (or what are called supplementary nuclear families) are still common.

Despite the absence of a joint household, close male patrikin and their wives and children are viewed as belonging to one 'family'. Often many patrilineally related households live in clusters of houses (though some units may be away) and share many responsibilities and obligations. Besides uniting in rituals and ceremonies, they may cultivate land together. Thus even a nuclear family is embedded in a larger patrilineal familial entity. What is called a supplemented nuclear family generally has a widowed mother or father of the man, and his dependent younger brothers and sisters, all living together. Thus most people have at least some experience of a partially joint family.

Importantly, a girl is always socialized under the shadow of an imaginary mother-in-law. A bride enters her new home as an outsider who has to be incorporated into the family. She is looked upon as a dangerous being who is ostensibly auspicious but who has to be contained and controlled. Her presence is suspect in terms of the possibility of her disrupting the family. Respect avoidance practices which constrain women in several ways are aimed at turning an outsider into an insider without disruption and disputes among the members of a joint family. The main conflict is between the more incorporated women and the less incorporated ones: particularly between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law. The relationship of dominance might be reversed as time passes; or, depending upon the individual personalities and relative contributions of various members to the running of the family, a younger woman might have the upper hand almost from the beginning. It is a tussle for power as understood by the culture. However, to my mind, stereotypes regarding the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law owe much to the compulsory character of residence. Folk songs and wedding rituals performed mainly by women help them to express their resentment against the transfer of a girl to another family with her possibly precarious condition in the in-laws' house and thus act as an emotional outlet. They also have the effect of perpetuating certain stereotypes. But I should add that increasing stress on conjugality has tended to impart greater freedom and influence to daughters-in-law, particularly among educated people. It is therefore necessary now to consider the personal equations that develop between a parent-in-law and a daughter-in-law.

An important implication of residence in the patrilineal, patrilocal communities of South Asia is a woman's loss of rights in her natal home and acquisition of no rights over space as such. Her living in the new home is in a way conditional depending on her 'proper' behaviour, efficiency in household work, amicable relationships, service to elders, husband's pleasure, the gifts that she brings, and perhaps her earnings. It is not uncommon for a woman to be driven out of the affinal home for serious as well as trivial reasons. This applies to a nuclear household also. Significantly, what a woman earns while living in that house is regarded as belonging to the conjugal family. In Chhattisgarh a man claims the wife's wages saying, 'In whose house were you living and whose rice were you eating when you were earning these wages?' A Bangladeshi villager may claim his children thus: 'When you came to this house you had no children; you got them in this house. Therefore you have no right to take them with you'.<sup>10</sup> Neolocal residence actually means virilocal, i.e. the husband's residence. Even if the house belongs to the woman she must take extra care not to let her husband feel bad about it and is specially praised for such behaviour. The law which gives only limited right of occupation to a widow in her husband's house compared to sons really has its roots in our kinship system. This can also explain why, when unmarried women work and support their parents or younger siblings, it usually traps them in a situation where marriage does not remain an option at all. A married woman has no moral right to use her earnings to support her parents or siblings. Whatever she can do is by manipulation, pleasing her husband and in-laws, or by flouting norms. Or she may try to disguise her support within the accepted patterns of exchange of gifts.

Another feature indicating rigidity in ideas about residence is the way a resident son-in-law is viewed. The epithets used are clearly insulting: he is variously called a pariah dog, an ass to be loaded heavily, or a lazy, good-for-nothing fellow. The parents of an only daughter find it difficult to persuade their son-in-law to live with them. Such an arrangement is not entirely absent, particularly in southern India where intra-kin marriage is practised. On the whole, however, it is looked down upon. Moreover, many parents of daughters are themselves apprehensive that a resident son-in-law may turn into a tyrant and an exploiter in their old age. Among matrilineal societies too there are epithets for a son-in-law who has come to live in his wife's house, but they are used more in jest and sometimes indicate a peripheral status. Where there is an established custom of uxorilocal residence, a husband may not be able to become an autocrat but he is not belittled.

Among the matrilineal Minangkabau, traditionally houses and land have been held corporately by the kin group. Women have exclusive rights over the long-houses. On marriage a man moves into the house shared by his wife with her female kin and their husbands. These long-houses contain a number of rice-pot (consumption) units or conjugal units. The membership of these rice-pot families is not fixed but is a matter of choice. Often an unmarried sister, mother or other close relatives of the wife may be included.

In Lakshadweep a man lives with his matrilineal kin (such as his mother, sisters and their children, brothers and even mother's mother, her sisters, and so on) while his wife lives with her matrilineal kin; he is a nightly visitor to his wife's home. Only a few men move over to live with their wives; and a marriage always begins with the visiting pattern. Children belong to women. Houses too belong to women.

They are constructed and divided in reference to women, who are their main occupants and who rear their children there.

Bilateral Southeast Asia presents another contrast to patrilineal South Asia in respect of marital residence. Except among some groups like the Atjehnese and people in north and north-eastern Thailand, where matrilocality is a standard practice, a fundamental principle governing residence in the region is that of option or choice. There is no cultural compulsion concerning the perpetuation of a descent line or the continuity of a family over generations. A couple may live with or near the wife's or the husband's parents. Residence may be at the wife's house or close to it in the first few years of marriage. It is not unusual for couple to begin married life with one set up parents and later move to the other set, or to establish a household of their own. But there is a tendency to live close to relatives of at least one partner, preferably the wife. Reliance on the solidarity between female kind results in a greater inclination towards uxori-local residence. Men often sell their rights in parental property to their sister and move to their wives' houses. That parents look forward to being cared for by their daughters in old age is true generally of these Southeast Asian populations. This gives daughters immediate as well as deferred value. A well-known Javanese anthropologist, Koentjaraningrat, says about his society that it is but logical that parents should prefer to live with their own daughters rather than with a daughter-in-law.<sup>11</sup>

It is also emphasized by many observers of Southeast Asian societies that there is a certain openness of the household for the kin of both spouses. Again, that couples tend to locate themselves according to where income and housing are available. Expediency and convenience play an important part in their choice of residence. In these societies, then, girls do not grow up with a sense of inferior status relative to their brothers, of the inevitability of change of residence at marriage, of the loss of rights in the natal home, and of a lack of control over their own lives. The implications of marriage here are not what they are for women in South Asia. There is nothing remotely resembling a change of 'ownership' of a woman at marriage.

An important aspect of residence in Southeast Asia is the flexibility of a household's composition and boundaries. A basically nuclear household may have as members old, young or recently divorced relatives who contribute to it their labour or resources and find shelter and sustenance in it. The practices of adoption and taking in foster children are very common. It may be recalled that Islam has no provision for adoption. Nevertheless, foster children are commonly found in Java and Malaysia, though they may not be able to get any ancestral land from their foster parents. In Thailand too, children can move into kin's houses easily. The practices of adoption and fostering children tend to make divorce much less problematic and free of stress.

McKinley<sup>12</sup> emphasizes the categorical nature of the Malay sibling relationship. Sibling ties are expressed in ordinary conversation, folk songs, kinship terminology, birth rituals, and in the advice given to children. A Malay saying goes:  
Water when slashed  
Will not be severed.  
Part a chicken's feathers  
and they come right back together.

It appears that the sibling relationship can absorb much conflict. Requests among siblings for the adoption of children are common. These may not all lead anywhere, but certainly there is a sense of mutual obligation. At the same time the network of kin in these bilateral societies is egocentric: and there is thus greater scope for activating and deactivating relationships.

#### IV

Southeast Asian women are known for their vital economic roles. Besides being wives and mothers, they have always engaged in income-earning activities. The undertaken of a wide range of tasks has contributed to their economic independence and a large measure of autonomy and power. This is true of most Thai, Malaysian, Indonesian and Filipino women. In societies like the Atjehnese, where men are away from home for much of the time, women manage both agricultural and family affairs.

In general, women are integral to the peasant economy. Speaking of Malaysia and Indonesia, Manderson<sup>13</sup> emphasizes that women alone are responsible for establishing and tending nurseries, transplanting seedlings, weeding, harvesting, and winnowing and thrashing the paddy. She mentions women's role in the cultivation of other crops such as rubber and in the production of copra. Women are almost entirely responsible for the commercial production of vegetables, for domestic animals and for silviculture. The Javanese household is a woman's domain, where her control over strategic resources is near complete. She also takes the decisions in household matters.

Women in many parts of South Asia also contribute substantially to productive activities, but they are themselves under the control - and culturally conceived ownership - of their husbands and affinal kin, have no rights over space, and hardly have any recognized ownership and control of resources. Southeast Asian women retain control over what they produce or earn. It appears that besides rules of inheritance and the approved practice of a woman seeking the support of her parents and kin even after marriage, the institutionalization of conjugal property in the Southeast Asian region also encourages women's control over resources. All this is in sharp contrast to South Asian women's situation.

All over Southeast Asia, women are known for their important presence in trading. They trade surpluses and make and sell food, clothes, and a variety of other items. The embroidery and batik work of this region are famous. Women's presence is overwhelming in rural and urban markets. This role has in several places been carried over into the modern economy. In Thailand, for example, women own businesses and are deeply involved in management.

That Southeast Asian women engaged in all manner of income-earning activities is certainly related to their relative freedom of association, their ability to migrate (often leaving children behind), the support of their kin, their hold over resources and their rights over space. Such activities are in fact necessary, for women often bear alone the burden of rearing their children and looking after their siblings and parents. Women's economic contribution cannot be seen as being responsible for those structural features of kinship that favour them. These features do seem to be conducive to women's active participation in the economy, but they do not fully explain it. We can agree, though, that this contribution, the near-parity with men that is given to them in bilateral societies, and the residence pattern there, all combine to give women a distinct value.

Throughout Southeast Asia women are thought to be 'good with money'<sup>14</sup> and generally superior to men in financial management and business dealings. What a woman actually gains from these qualities depends upon her resources and the class to which she belongs. Many women are at least assured of the regular income that is necessary to meet their families' needs. About the power and autonomy that they might derive from this, Ann Stoler<sup>15</sup> observes about a part of Java that while among poor households women's earnings give them a position of considerable importance within the household, for the wealthier women their incomes provide a material basis for acquiring social power.

Some of the features of residence that I have discussed may help explain Southeast Asian women's strong position in the domestic sphere. Women's control over finances and their authority within the household have been stressed in different ways in various ethnographic studies.<sup>16</sup> Matrilocality has also been associated with the region by several authors. In uxorilocal residence a daughter's economic contribution is clearly recognized. She brings in adult male labour at marriage and creates still more labour through her reproductive ability. Put differently, she does what a son is expected to do in patrilineal, patri-virilocal systems. It should be no surprise, then, that traditions ascribe a special importance to females. One custom among the northern and central Thai concerns the duration of the post-partum ritual period. Should this be shorter than a month, it is thought likely that the child will leave its home. By making it last a month or more for a girl child, parents hope to ensure that she will stay on to care for them in their old age and to

look after the domestic spirits. For a boy, conversely, the ritual period is made short to encourage him to move to another house when he is married and of the proper age.<sup>17</sup> Condominas<sup>18</sup> writes of the cult of protector territorial spirits among the Thai people. There are different categories of spirits, and the care of those of the domestic sphere lies with women. Uxorilocal or neolocal residence within the territory are therefore preferred. Most religions assign a distinctly inferior position to women; but men's headship may in fact be nominal. As housewife and mother a woman wields direct control over the household economy. She is seen as a physically and mentally strong person who can do hard labour and endure the pain of childbirth. Her place in the business of living and in maintaining kind relationships is beyond dispute.

## V

Before taking up the question of conjugal relations I shall briefly speak of female sexuality. South and Southeast Asia differ widely in their attitudes to female sexuality and in their view of women's reproductive power. There is a marked contrast the two in the management of female sexuality due to the combined influence of ideological and institutional factors.

Since placement in groups is essentially a function of paternity in South Asia, women's sexuality needs to be rigidly controlled. Virginity at first marriage is a value cherished in both Hinduism and Islam. Concern about it takes a variety of forms: pre-pubertal mock marriage among the Newar in Nepal,<sup>19</sup> child marriage or pre-pubertal marriage with delayed consummation prevalent among Hindus in Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh, the widespread practice of marrying off a girl almost immediately after puberty, and ritualizing the onset of puberty as in Nepal<sup>20</sup> and in southern India and less so in eastern and western India. Puberty is a point at which severe control have to be established over a girl, which last until her marriage. The period between pubescence and marriage is looked upon as a liminal one, when girls need protection from their own desires and from the opposite sex.

Women in South Asia need to be guarded after marriage as well. Both *nikah* and Hindu marriage are supposed to establish a man's control over a woman's body and being. Woman's sexuality tends to be equated with her reproductive power. Linked to this is the notion that woman's purity is fragile. The presence of caste as a factor defining status, and the bounded nature of caste along with woman's role in biological reproduction which, with the processes of gestation and lactation, makes motherhood irrepudiable and thus puts the onus of boundary maintenance of caste on women, make the notion of female purity stronger among Hindus than among Muslims. However, the idea of exclusive ownership of a woman's body and being makes patrilineal Muslims also very jealous about guarding women's sexuality. The concept of *jutha*, 'leftovers' polluted by having been used by another, is prevalent among both Hindus and Muslims.

The principle of protection is basic to considerations of female sexuality. The honour of males vests in that of their women. Pakistani brothers' vigilance over the honour of their sisters is well known. In the subcontinent brothers have been known to kill a sister guilty of illicit love or of wanting to marry on her own, particularly out of caste, community, or status group. This responsibility for protection gives males the right to exercise power over the females in their charge and to dictate every facet of their-lives and behaviour. A roper demeanour is essential for remaining safe and above reproach. There is a remarkable contrast between male and female sexuality as expressed in the saying, 'Whatever can happen to buttermilk? Only milk can go bad'. The provision of an escort for maintaining *izzat* is common. Unescorted females are considered fair game. This is well expressed in the saying 'A standing cot and a standing girl may be laid down by whosoever wishes'. The perennial fear of temptation and misbehaviour on the part of women and of sexual assaults on them is expressed in the imposition of controls over their physical movement and on their association with males. The major mechanisms for imposition of controls are segregation, seclusion, and restrictions on movement, and on association with the opposite sex. These affect their opportunities for education, employment, extra-domestic work, medical treatment, and exposure



to the outside world, factors that could make them self-reliant. Efforts are made to keep them occupied with feminine skills so that their minds do not stray.

A special kind of male control over female sexuality rooted in patrilineal ideology and group solidarity may be called corporate control. In Bangladeshi villages, rather than men of the family, village elders may decide what work women should do and where, for the *izzat* of the village is involved in women's work and movement. Another kind of corporate control relates to rights of access to a woman's sexuality. The notion of common patrilineal blood in which agnates, particularly brothers, can supplant one another makes a woman who is married to one brother accessible to other brothers. Khasa fraternal polyandry and the sharing of a woman among Jat brothers, often surreptitiously, are good examples. Another uncommon kind of right over a woman's sexuality involves its use by her husband for earning money. Besides individual cases of men forcing their wives to sleep with other men, the Doms of Uttarakhand are known to send their wives for prostitution in order to repay debts, mainly incurred for bride-price. The children born to these women belong to their husbands.

The complete unacceptability of illegitimate children born to unattached women is reflected in India's large number of orphanages. Social workers estimate that over 85 per cent of the babies who arrive at orphanages are illegitimate. Finally, rape is seen as an affront to *men's* honour. The violation of women's sexuality is one of the most potent ways to demonstrate superiority over their menfolk. Women thus constantly suffer in caste and communal conflicts and in landlord-tenant-labourer fights.

In Southeast Asia female sexuality is not placed under such severe restrictions. The notions of protection of women and strict control over them seem alien to the bilateral ethos. The onset of puberty is not marked. Marriage, even *nikah*, does not establish complete control over a woman's body and being in Malaysia and Indonesia. Islamic influence has caused these societies to exercise some restraint on young girls, but as Wazir Jahan Karim<sup>21</sup> says about Malaysia, both sexes seem to be subject to more or less the same code of sexual conduct. And once they are married, women are much more free. In the Philippines, despite the notions of machismo and feminismo taken from Spanish culture, women are considered quite capable of looking after themselves. Young girls are watched, but the ideas of control, strict chaperoning and men's honour being vested in women's sexuality are not strong.

Prostitution, generally garbed in different roles, is common due to poverty. It is not approved of but is looked upon as a means of making a living. A woman who engages in it is not made a permanent outcast. She may leave this calling for a 'proper' family life. Thailand has come to be known for the commercialization of sex. A less extreme system of gender relations, where a child's social identity does not invariably depend on known paternity, may have contributed at least to some extent to the commercial exploitation of sex. There is also an obligation on daughters of supporting siblings and parents, but it is not impossible for these women to leave this profession to get married. The notion of easily sullied female sexuality and a sharp distinction between 'virtuous' women and 'bad' ones do not seem to obtain. Related to this is the traditional near absence of segregation and seclusion in Southeast Asia in spite of Islam.

Wherever there is *parda* among Hindus, it is meant to maintain harmony in the family by avoiding the chance of the covetous eyes of other male members, to sustain the authority and status of elders, and to protect women's sexuality from men. Though not seclusion or *parda*, segregation is a common phenomenon even in the southern region of India.

Segregation and seclusion among Muslim women in South Asia have religious sanction and are rooted in patrilineal ideology: a woman is *fitna*, from whom men, who are thought extremely vulnerable to women's charms, need to be protected. But women among the Minangkabau have not been constrained in this way, nor the women of Lakshadweep. In bilateral Muslim societies too women also free of seclusion and have freedom of movement. Recent trends demanding conformity with Islamic injunctions have introduced a kind of cloak for women, but it is not as constraining as the *burqa*, and even today women, particularly those brought up in Malay tradition, are not convinced that it is in keeping with Quranic injunctions. A tussle is going on.

Another area of contrast between patrilineal South Asia and bilateral Southeast Asia pertains to conjugal relations and the character of marriage. Marriage in Hindu South Asia has a sacred character: the rituals emphasize the giving away of the bride to a worthy groom, and along with complementarity (which does not, however, indicate equality), the asymmetrical relationship between the spouses is strongly expressed through various rituals and linguistic and behavioural expressions. Belief in the inviolability and indissolubility of Hindu marriage is strong: divorce and remarriage are today allowed by law, but they are serious matters, particularly for the higher castes.

Among those castes which always allowed divorce and remarriage, people may still follow customary practices of remarriage such as presenting bangles or vermilion to the woman, covering her with a sheet, or giving her a nose ring. A clear distinction is made between the first marriage, solemnized with full rituals, and secondary unions, which are of lower worth. While a woman may have a wedding with full rituals only once, a man may marry thus any number of times.

The married state is eulogized. Widowhood is dreaded, not only because of the crisis of support but as being inauspicious and involving deprivation of various kinds such as restrictions on wearing bright colours, jewellery and flowers, and generally on making oneself sexually attractive. *Sati*, the immolation of a woman on her dead husband's pyre, is often viewed as an aspect of revivalism, but it needs to be noted that veneration of *sati* has existed through the centuries among all caste levels: in many regions a newly married couple customarily visits *asati* platform to ask for the long life of the husband and for progeny and prosperity.

Both widows and divorcees with children find it difficult to remarry unless customarily they are expected or allowed to remarry someone from the deceased husband's family or lineage. Among those groups who have commonly practised remarriage, a mother often has to leave her children behind. An unrelated man may not be willing to play a father's role towards a widow's children or, more importantly, the previous husband's family may not allow the woman to take away her children, who are their 'blood'. However, there is another aspect to a widow's remarriage with her deceased husband's brother or patrilineal parallel cousin. Where this is compulsory (as traditionally among the jats in northern India), the woman has no choice but to get married even to a little boy and wait for him to grow up to be a man. A woman's labour is important for her affinal family. The first marriage establishes complete rights of the affinal family over the incoming woman.

Among the Parbatiyas of Nepal and the Hindus of India, the character of conjugal relations is one of grave inequality. This is expressed both in rituals and in social interaction. Since dowry is an issue in itself, it is not possible to take it up here. But it is worth noting that dowry exists in South Asia, not in Southeast Asia. At the lower socio-economic levels, conjugal relations may not be so unequal in terms of norms, values and ideology; but they are often characterized by physical violence. 'Do I have to take anybody's permission to beat my own wife?' goes a Tamil proverb. 'Whom to complain to if battered by rain and beaten by a husband?' is a Marathi saying. Physical violence is not uncommon at the higher socioeconomic levels also.

Polygamy is not a cognizable offence. If the previous wife is without any financial support she may not complain, for she cannot deprive her children of the father's support. The massive People of India project tells us that there are many caste groups which do not forbid polygamy. In fact, the custom of remarrying a deceased husband's younger brother, unmarried or married, may often lead to polygynous unions.

In respect of conjugal relations there is a sharp contrast between South Asian and Southeast Asian Muslims. Among the patrilineal Muslims of South Asia the relationship between the spouses is one of superiority and inferiority. The husband is looked upon as the provider and supporter. Deference, obedience and service on the part of the wife constitute important parts of marriage. *Nikah*, which involves *mahr*, a specific payment, establishes a man's rights over his wife's body, particularly on her private parts. In the event of his wife's misbehaviour a husband is entitled by religion to inflict punishment on her. The wife may not refuse him sexual access. There are cases reported from Pakistan, for example, of a husband

burning his wife to death if she refuses to have sex. This is accepted as an inviolable right in Muslim South Asia.

Both wife and children belong to the man. There is a clear transfer of authority at marriage. A woman's right to divorce is limited: but a man can divorce his wife without assigning any reason. A wife can expect maintenance only during the *iddat* period, and she can take her children with her only as stipulated by law: until the age of seven in the case of a son and puberty in the case of a daughter. Divorce carries with it social stigma for Muslim women in Bangladesh, Pakistan and India, particularly at the upper and middle socio-economic levels. Besides, both divorced women and widows tend to face considerable hardship for want of support and because they are not equipped with education and training and live under constraints on physical movement and association with outsiders. Remarriage very often means leaving the children behind with the previous husband's family. Statistics in Bangladesh show considerably more widows than widowers who have not remarried, although the difference is not as great as among the Hindus of India. Polygamy is allowed and women are almost helpless in such situations. Some legal reforms brought in through women's organized efforts have tried to impose certain curbs and conditions in the event of a husband's ill-treatment, irresponsible divorce or polygyny,<sup>22</sup> but if they are to be effective, women need to know about them and have some support from kin or from organizations.

Marriage, divorce and remarriage are radically different in the matrilineal and bilateral societies of South and Southeast Asia. Among Muslims they are basically governed by the *sharia*, but in many respects people are guided by *adat*. On the whole there is no stigma attached to divorce, and remarriage is common: indeed, it is encouraged. In matrilineal communities including the Lakshadweep islands, *mahr* does not establish a man's rights over his children. Among the bilateral Javanese and Malays, despite what the law says, children may either go with the mother or, if they are old enough, decide for themselves with whom they wish to go. While the essentials of religious injunctions are observed, the nature of conjugal relations is entirely different here. *Nikah* does not establish real rights over a woman's body and being. Conjugal relations are not built upon gender asymmetry and the wife's subservience. Polygyny is allowed by religion and law, but it is generally not tolerated by the first wife for long.

Particularly in matrilineal societies, the idea of a woman rendering personal services to her husband is almost nonexistent. Among the bilateral Javanese a conjugal pair forms the nucleus of the family but, as mentioned earlier, there is a certain flexibility in the constitution of the household. Children can move from one family to another, being brought up by kin. This has important implications for conjugal relations and divorce. Divorce does not necessarily cause a serious disruption in the lives of the persons concerned. A Javanese woman is in full command over the domestic domain and is the main figure of authority for children. She generally has an independent income. She is supposed to show respect to her husband, but on the whole the relationship is one of equality. There may be some formal deference shown to the husband, for he is usually older, and differences in education, formal position and class may have some effect, but conjugal relations are not based on the wife's inferior status. The Javanese do not believe in continuing a marriage in the face of constant conflict. In rural areas divorce is very common. Women seem to exercise considerable choice in their entry into and exit from marriages. They can count on the support of their kin and on remarriage, and asserting rights over children is easy. They may even initiate *talaq* informally.

Among the Malays too, divorce is simple and may be initiated by the wife. The marital bond is weak, particularly in the first, few years of marriage. The household is basically supposed to include a conjugal pair but has a network of supportive kin, with women maintaining close links with their kin. Besides being a housewife, a Malay woman generally also earns some income. A husband is viewed as the provider, perhaps due to Islamic influence, but this does not make the woman feel dependent on him. She goes about her business without asking his permission. *Talaq* is the most common form of divorce. Although formally pronounced by the husband, it is not really viewed as unilateral. A woman can show her unwillingness to continue with a marriage, and Malay cultural values severely discredit a man who holds his wife against her will. Moreover, it is a common practice to put conditions into a marriage contract the contravention of which automatically frees a woman from the marital bond. These conditions include physical violence, the husband's failure to provide for the conjugal family, and, interestingly, keeping or taking the wife away from her kin. The contrast between the two regions is more than obvious here. In both Malaysia and Indonesia, women are fighting with some success against the laws that govern divorce, polygamy,

maintenance, etc., but the situation in these respects is certainly not grave when we compare it with what obtains in South Asia.

Among the Thai, marriage has a pragmatic and experimental character. Elopement can establish a marital tie without any ceremony. There are certain ideas of the inferiority of women because of their bodily processes. These notions are clearly derived from Buddhism, but there is a tremendous difference between the normative and the actual. The conjugal relationship is not characterized by much asymmetry. Divorce is not considered a serious matter. A woman need not give up her children even when she remarries. It is true that men are often irresponsible and less committed to marriage, and double standards do prevail. In spite of new laws against the keeping of minor wives, the practice still exists. But one can say that except under poverty, Thai women are in a strong position. Poverty brings in another dimension: a woman often has to carry the burden of living and bringing up children without the help of a man. A man may move around and enter two or three relationships at a time. But perhaps in terms of personal autonomy and freedom from oppression or social stigma, a Thai woman should be thought of as being in a far better situation than a poor woman in South Asia.

In the Philippines, in spite of the Spanish and Catholic influence because of which only annulment of marriage is permitted, not divorce, and though double standards of morality prevail, the bilateral ethos is maintained. A woman has a strong position in the financial affairs of the household. She takes both domestic and extra-domestic decisions. Filipino conjugal relations show an egalitarian ethos: authority is diffused. As Jeanne Illo says, the question of who is the head of the family looks more or less meaningless.

Broadly speaking, in all these societies authority is not concentrated in male hands. The division of about is somewhat flexible: many jobs can be interchanged if the need arises. At the same time men are blamed for being irresponsible and less committed to family and marriage. Their chances of making a living, holding jobs and positions, and achieving status and power are far more than women's. In this respect their entitlements too are clearly greater. Man-woman relations may also depend upon these features; and with the borrowing of ideas regarding men's and women's roles and rights and gender relations from the wider world, Southeast Asian women may have to make a special effort to hold on to the strong points in their cultures.

## VII

Bilaterality seems to enshrine the principle of flexibility; but its usefulness for human happiness needs to be assessed carefully. What is the balance of gains and losses? This is an important question to be answered while comparing the implications of different kinship systems for the situation of women.

Besides providing a background for analysing the roots of differences in gender relations and women's situation as illustrated by comparative data on literacy, education, nutrition, health, employment, migration, and vital statistics in the populations of South and Southeast Asia, my presentation poses a few fundamental questions: Is stable marriage absolutely essential for the continuity of the 'family'? At whose cost is this stability usually maintained? Is divorce always a disaster for the children of a marriage? Is the nuclear family, with rigid boundaries, good for human relationships? Or should there be room for openness, supportive kin and friendship networks? Is the nuclear family even favourable to women and to men? Does the family need to be abolished for the feminist cause? Should children be a possession of parents or of the mother, as often happens in a nuclear family? Is authority a prerequisite for men's having a sense of responsibility towards wife and children? Can the protection of women and control over them, particularly in relation to their sexuality, be delinked?

### Notes

1. I have used the device of endnotes to provide necessary references, to clarify and substantiate a few points made in the lecture, and to speak briefly of important issues like dowry and female infanticide, which were not part of the lecture as delivered. I thank Mukul Dube for editing this revised text.

2. This can be seen in legal reforms in various countries under consideration: in their limitations and in the assumptions underlying them, as also in the failure or partial success of the implementation of new laws.

3. Hanna Papanek, 'Socialization for Inequality: Entitlements, the Value of Women and Domestic Hierarchies', unpublished, 1991.

4. The south-west has had the well-known Nayar, the Tiya, Muslim Mappillas, and many other castes and tribal groups. The inhabitants of the Lakshadweep islands, off the south-west coast, are descendants of migrants from the same region. Many groups in Kerala have seen drastic changes in their social organization due to legal reforms, changes in the economy and polity, education, new avenues of employment, and exposure to Western culture as well as to the mainstream culture of India. However, tribal groups and the Lakshadweep islanders, who have special protection as Scheduled Tribes, as well as the Mappillas, have to a large extent retained their basic matrilineal patterns. In the north-east live well-known matrilineal tribes such as the Khasi, the Garo, and the Lalung. They too have seen changes, but matriliney is very much alive there.

5. Keebet von Benda-Beckmann, *The Broken Stairways to Consensus: Village justice and State Courts in Minangkabau*, Foris Publications, 1984.

6. Sairin Sjafrri, *Javanese Trah: Kin-based Social Organization*, Gadjah Mada University Press, 1982.

7. Leeta Dube, 'In the Mother's Line', unpublished manuscript; 'Conflict and Compromise: Devolution and Disposal of Property in a Matrilineal Muslim Society', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 29, 21, 1994.

8. The problem of dowry is complicated and needs more extended treatment than is possible here. Dowry and its various forms and manifestations in South Asia are a function of patrihneal, patri-virilocal kinship, women's dependence, and caste and group endogamy, but with great emphasis on class, concern about guarding female sexuality, and marriage by negotiation. The growth of consumerism, the increasing possibility of sons establishing separate households and not being dependable any more, and the resultant keenness of parents to recover the investment made in their sons' education through dowry, all these are important. In addition, daughters are conscious that dowry is -the only means of obtaining some material goods and cash from the parental family. A comparison with Southeast Asia is most illuminating. Dowry has further devalued women. Increasing son preference, female foeticide and the neglect of female infants are closely related to the menace of dowry.

Female infanticide forcefully reflects the patrifocal, hierarchical and oppressive character of Indian patrilineality. It used to be practised in large parts of India among caste groups at the middle and upper levels. The British used legal and punitive measures to stop it, but it persists to this day. In jaisalmer district of Rajasthan, for example, every year as many as 300 female infants are put to death. The Kallar in Tamil Nadu have come into the news because of their practice of female infanticide. Factors like hypergamy, low status of bride-givers and dowry, which is on the increase, seem to be responsible for the devaluation of women, leading to a denial of life to infant girls. It is not only that daughters are not of any future use for the natal family; they can ruin the family's reputation by going astray. In northern India, the Rajput and jat were known for practising female infanticide.

Several methods have been used for killing newborn infants: suffocating the baby by pressing the afterbirth over its face, putting a few grains of paddy into its mouth, smearing opium on the mother's nipples, feeding the baby an extract of poisonous oleander berries or the poisonous milk of wild plants, and so on. New technology, i.e. amniocentesis, is being abused for sex determination and purposive female foeticide. Between 1978 and 1983 around 78,000 female fetuses were aborted in India after sex determination tests. In 1986-87 the number of such induced abortions was between thirty and forty thousand. The Acts passed against sex determination tests have not been effective. Amniocentesis carries a risk to the mother's life, but it has become quite inexpensive and within the reach even of working-class people.

9. The case of Mary Roy of the Syrian Christian community has attracted wide attention. Alice Jacob, 'Equal Inheritance to Indian Christian Women of Kerala', *Journal of the Indian Law Institute*, 28, 1986; M.J. Joseph, 'Gendered justice', *Economic and Political Weekly*, 28, 50, 1993; Rowena Robinson, 'Conversion and Catholicism in South Goa, India', University of Cambridge Ph.D. Thesis, 1994.

10. K.M.A. Aziz and Clarence Maloney, *Life Stages, Gender and Fertility in Bangladesh*, International Centre for Diarrhoeal Disease Research Monograph No.3, 1985.

11. Koentaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, Oxford University Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985.

12. Robert H. McKinley, 'A Knife Cutting Water: Child Transfers and Siblingship among Urban Malays', University of Michigan Ph.D. Thesis, 1975.

13. Lenore Manderson, ed., *Women's Work and Women's Roles: Economics and Everyday Life in Indonesia, Malaysia and Singapore*, Australian National University, 1983.

14. Hanna Papanek and Laurel Schwede, 'Women Are Good with Money: Earning and Managing in an Indonesian City', in Daisy Dwyer and Judith Bruce, eds. *A Home Divided: Women and Income in the Third World*, Stanford University Press, 1988.

15. Ann Stoler, 'Class Structure and Female Autonomy in Rural Java', in Wellesley Editorial Committee, ed., *Women and National Development: The Complexities of Change*, University of Chicago Press, 1977.

16. A.G. Dewey, *Peasant Marketing in Java*, The Free Press, 1962; Judith Djmour, *Malay Kinship and Marriage in Singapore*, University of London, The Athlone Press, 1959; Hildred Geertz, *The Javanese Family: A Study of Kinship and Socialization*, The Free Press of Glencoe, 1961; Mary R. Hollnsteiner, 'Modernization, Changing Roles of Women and

Expectations from Development in Southeast Asia', in Geoffrey B. Hainsworth et al., eds., *Southeast Asia: Women, Changing Social Structure and Cultural Continuity*, University of Ottawa Press, 1981; Jeanne Frances Illo and Jaime B. Polo, *Fishers, Traders, Farmers, Wives: The Life Stories of Ten Women in a Fishing Village*, *Women's Work and Family Strategies Monograph 1*, Ateneo de Manila University, 1990; R.R. Jay, *Javanese Villagers: Social Relations in Rural Modjokuto*, M.I.T. Press, 1969; F.L. Jocano, *The Filipino Family: Two Kinship Systems*, University of the Philippines Institute of Mass Communication, 1972; Wazir Jahan Karim, 'The Status of Malay Women in Malaysia: From Culture to Islam and Industrialization', *International Journal of Sociology of the Family*, 17,1, 1987; Koenqaraningrat, *Javanese Culture*, Oxford University Press and Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 1985; M.F.R. Maneevone, 'The Socialization of the Rural Thai Child in Family and School', Claremont Graduate School Ph.D. Thesis, 1974; Phillips, Herbert, *Thai Peasant Personality*, University of California Press, 1965; Steven Piker, *Peasant Community in Changing Thailand*, Arizona State University Anthropological Research Paper No.30, 1983; Sulamith Heins Potter, *Family Life in a Northern Thai Village: A Study in the Structural Significance of Women*, University of California Press, 1977; Heather Strange, *Rural Malay Women in Tradition and Transition*, Praeger, 1981; Nancy Tanner, 'Matrifocality in Indonesia and Africa and among Black Americans', in M. Rosaldo and L. Lamphere, eds., *Women, Culture and Society*, Stanford University Press, 1974; Barbara E. Ward, ed., *Women- in the New Asia. The Changing Social Roles of men and Women in Southeast Asia*, Unesco, 1963.

17. Richard Davis, 'Muang Matrifocality', *Journal of the Siam Society*, 61, 2, 1973; Jane R. Hanks, 'Maternity and Its Rituals in Bang Chen', Cornell University Southeast Asia Program Data Paper No.51, 1963.

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20. Lynn Bennett, *Dangerous Wives and Sacred Sisters: Social and Symbolic Roles of High-Caste Women in Nepal*, Columbia University Press, 1983.

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22. Fareeda Shaheed, 'Legal Systems, Islam and Women in Pakistan', *Ethnic Studies Report*, 3, 1, 1985; M.A. Kashem Shaikh, 'Marriage Dissolution in a Rural Area of Bangladesh', Australian National University M.A. thesis, 1982; Latifa Akanda and Ishrat Shamirn, *Women and Violence: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Violence against Women in Bangladesh*, Women for Women, 1985; Salma Sobhan, *Legal Status of Women: Bangladesh*, Bangladesh Institute of Law and International Affairs, 1978.