1

Exploring the Links: Gender Issues in Marriage and Migration

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Transnational family life is a theme that receives considerable media attention worldwide. Much of it is negative. There are tales of hapless girls and women trafficked across international borders for marriage and/or sex work; of young men who use the proceeds of their dowries to finance emigration—never to be heard of again; of serial grooms who enjoy a few nights' intimacy and vanish with the bride's jewellery; of 'Mail-Order Brides' whose love lasts as long as it takes to ensure permanent residency in desired destinations; of immigrant grooms who fail in the husband-provider role and vent their frustration on their wives and children; of cowed victims of domestic violence who suffer in silence rather than compromise the migration strategies of other family members; of visa and immigration rackets involving 'fake' marriages; of flagrant abuses of human dignity by over-zealous immigration officials seeking to discriminate between 'real' and mercenary marriages; and of international legal battles to recover children 'abducted' by non-custodial parents. Similarly, within national boundaries, the nexus of marriage and migration is acknowledged primarily as a factor contributing to the victimisation of poor and marginalised women in contexts of uneven social and economic development.

Yet this is not the whole story. It is also evident that migration may encourage the rescripting of gender roles within the family and offer women economic security and escape from subjection and persecution, as well as enhanced autonomy and respect in both the family and community. In particular, women's '*marriage migration*'—that is, migration within or as a result of marriage—may often be the most efficient and

socially acceptable means available to disadvantaged women to achieve a measure of social and economic mobility (see Del Rosario 1994; Fan and Huang 1998; Fan and Li 2002). Clearly, and without discounting the ubiquity of the abuses just mentioned, social scientific attention to the intersection of issues of marriage and migration needs to go beyond 'victimisation' to a more balanced and context-sensitive consideration of changing dynamics in the nexus of marriage and migration.

The chapters in this volume seek to bring a gender-sensitive perspective to bear on aspects of marriage and migration in intra- and transnational contexts. In particular they consider: (1) how, given specific rules of marriage and (post-marital) residence, the institution of marriage *itself* may entail women's migration; (2) how marriage can be used as an individual and family strategy to facilitate migration and, conversely, how migration may become a strategy to enable a desired marriage; (3) the fluid boundaries between matchmaking and trafficking in the context of migration; (4) the political economy of marriage transactions; (5) the impact of intra- and transnational migration on the institution of marriage, family relations, and kinship networks; and (6) the impact of state laws and immigration procedures on marriage and on family relations.

While most of the chapters here concern marriage in the context of *transnational* migration—which is also the major thrust of the social science literature on marriage and migration—we consider it important, given the reality of uneven development *within* countries in the Asian region, to emphasise the overlap and commonality of issues in both intra- and international contexts (cf. Fan and Li 2002: 619, 621).

The contributors to this volume come from a variety of disciplinary backgrounds—mostly from sociology and social anthropology—and several of them have also been engaged as social activists with the issues that they write about. Unlike many of the earlier, demographically focused migration studies, most of them have based their papers on ethnographic fieldwork or interviews and primary, micro-level data. This has enabled a more nuanced understanding of the imbrication of marriage and migration in a variety of socio-economic and political circumstances. Drawing their inspiration eclectically from family studies, gender studies, migration studies and political economy, probably few of them would care or dare to locate themselves theoretically in *kinship studies*, that dauntingly arcane sub-field of the discipline of anthropology. All the same, we believe that the engagement with migration studies helps to stretch kinship studies in productive new directions, as indeed

the engagement with gender studies had done earlier. Conversely, and building on the rapidly expanding literature on gender and migration, we see that the understanding of migration processes and settlement patterns stands to benefit from a serious engagement with family and kinship studies.[1] Equally important, we are convinced that the comparative dimension introduced by juxtaposing case studies from the Asian region as a whole will pose a further challenge to Euro-centrism in family studies and generate new insights in regional kinship studies as well. The importance of the comparative perspective is a theme that we will revert to in due course.

I. Rethinking Marriage Migration

According to current estimates of global migration, women and girls comprised nearly 49 per cent of global migrants in 2000, and an overwhelming preponderance of migrants in specific migration streams—family members, domestic workers and caregivers, sex-workers, etc. (Zlotnik 2003).[2] Yet, until relatively recently, the archetypal migrant in demographic thinking was assumed to be male, with women seen as entering migration flows primarily as 'dependents' and subjects of 'family reunification'—as 'passive', 'tied', or merely 'associative' movers.[3] Women's *marriage migration* was seen as a social institution determined merely by kinship and custom and to this extent outside the realm of political economy and the operation of modern market forces. Presuming the economic role and agency of marriage migrants to be self-evidently inconsequential, married women (and their children) were routinely excluded from consideration in otherwise reputable migration studies.[4]

While seeking to make women 'visible' in migration studies, as in other arenas of social life,[5] feminist scholars have been ambivalent in their acknowledgement and interpretation of the phenomenon of women's marriage migration. On the one hand, they have challenged the denigration of women's economic roles embedded in their categorisation as 'marriage migrants', and sought to focus instead on the historical and present reality of women's independent work participation and work-related migration. Others, for reasons connected with the theorising of bargaining power within patriarchal frameworks, have endorsed the

supposed passive and secondary role of women as migrants, observing that typically it is 'the woman who bridges the distance [rather] than the man because the man's occupation is considered more important' (Fan and Li 2002: 620). 'Patriarchy within marriage and the larger society', in this reading, is realised in the greater power of the husband, the undervaluation of women's work and careers relative to men's and the implicit norm of the male breadwinner/woman homemaker.

A number of factors have contributed to qualifying this routine polarisation of economics and modernity *versus* marriage and tradition as contradictory motivations for women's migration. First, in the very process of elaborating the economic dimensions of migrant women's activities, feminist scholars have come to recognise the impossibility, empirically speaking, of making a meaningful distinction between 'marriage' or 'family migration' on the one hand, and 'labour migration' on the other.[6] Given women's role in family subsistence production, 'wives' are typically also 'workers', though their 'work' may not be adequately acknowledged as such. Fan and Li have demonstrated, in the case of marriage migration in China's Guangdong province (ibid.), that labour migration may itself often result in marriage migration as young migrant workers find their spouses among their workmates; in turn, women's marriage migration may enable the further out-migration of male workers, leaving their wives—immigrants from even poorer rural localities—to manage the farm, the household and childcare. Another example is that of Filipina contract migrants to Canada (see McKay 2003). Many women who initially migrate as paid workers in the domestic and home care sectors in due course marry Canadian men, not least because they hope that marriage will be a route out of unskilled work. However, since part of the attraction these Asian brides hold for their husbands is their presumed domesticity, they may remain engaged in the same sort of work as before, but now as unpaid housewives.

Second, the new scale and visibility of independent female labour migration and the well-advertised global traffic in wives, sex workers and domestic workers have challenged the assumption that men migrate for work and women simply follow.[7] In pointing to the 'care deficit' that has emerged in the developed world as a result of shifts in marriage and familial structures and women's increased engagement in paid work, Hochschild (1995) had suggested that the deficit would be overcome in due course through a combination of gendered sharing at home, new work schedules and public care institutions. Less than a decade later, however, it appeared that the gap was being filled by

the international migration of female domestic workers and/or wives, creating a 'global care chain' and transferring the care deficit to the developing world (Ehrenreich and Hochschild 2003). In effect, it is argued, the recent so-called 'feminisation of migration' in Asia involves the 'systematic extraction' of the reproductive labour of domestic workers and caregivers from the poorer countries of the region (particularly the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka) through the 'internationalisation of householding' and marriage (Del Rosario 1994; Ito 2003; Ochiai 2006; Oshikawa 2006).[8]

This transnational care work not only sustains the social reproduction of middle class families in the economically advanced countries (including those in East and Southeast Asia), but is also crucial to maintaining the economic competitiveness of the receiving countries. The immigration policies of many states in the developed world are thus constrained to perform a fine balancing act between twin economic anxieties—on the one hand, the care deficit and paucity of low-paid labour to meet the demand; and on the other, domestic unemployment and a growing financial strain on public welfare facilities as a result of liberalised immigration. Reciprocally, the remittances of migrant women workers go to support the social reproductive labour of paid careers or family members who remain at home and—at a macro-level—contribute to mitigating economic crises in the source countries. These intermeshing processes highlight, in a manner critical for both political economy and family studies, the deep connections between migration, marriage, and householding.

We should be careful, therefore, not to throw out the baby with the bathwater. While conceding that the reality of women's labour migration has been obscured by the perception of women's migration as essentially secondary and associative, it is also crucial that we recognise the social and institutional character of marriage *in itself*, as well as its role in ensuring the reproduction of community. Indeed, this is the balance that this volume seeks to restore. As the empirical case studies presented here indicate, aspects of marriage systems underwrite migration, contributing in significant ways to labour flexibility and economic growth in destination countries as well as livelihoods and status strategies in the places of origin. In its turn, migration may (*i*) liberalise or exacerbate features of the traditional system of kinship and marriage;[9] (*ii*) transform the gendered division of labour in the family, the marital equation, and the relations between generations; (*iii*) complicate the relations of intermarrying families of 'wife-givers' and 'wife-takers';

(*iv*) modulate normal life-course trajectories; or simply (*v*) bring to the surface taken-for-granted aspects of marriage and family life which were hitherto obscured. Critical as they are to the life experiences of both migrants and those who stay behind, these dynamic social phenomena are of interest in and of themselves, and not merely in their relation to women's roles as workers or transnational caregivers.

II. Marriage Rules: Patrilocality and Territorial Exogamy

In anthropology, rules of post-marital residence, which prescribe which (if either) spouse will move on marriage, are an important feature distinguishing one type of kinship system from another. A newly married couple may set up house together (neolocal residence), as is the common norm/practice in the West today; the wife may move to live with her husband or with his paternal kin (virilocal or patrivirilocal residence respectively);[10] or a man may move to live with his wife (uxorilocal residence).[11] Among these several types, the rule of patri(viri)locality entails a woman's movement upon marriage—a *migration* of sorts.[12] Moreover, in such societies, marriage rules might also specify marriage outside a particular kin grouping (such as the patrilineage or clan) and certain principles of *territorial exogamy*, that is ensuring a spouse from beyond circumscribed spatial boundaries (the village, for instance). As a result of these 'kinship' rules of residence and exogamy, operating separately or together, territorial dislocation, at times over a considerable distance, has been integral to the life trajectories of young women in many parts of Asia. In both China and India, for instance, where the rule of patri(viri)local marriage is predominant, marriage for women entailed a new home and work environment, and possibly even different types of work, structured by new people, relationships, and authorities to submit to.[13] The incomer was expected to follow the local mores and ways of doing things rather than those of her natal family or locality, and it would take time for her to be accepted and incorporated as an insider, if ever. Even as she made her home with her husband, she rarely forsook the idea of a home left behind. In effect, and simply by virtue of her marriage, she was the epitome of the permanent migrant discussed

in the literature on population movements, diasporas and ethnicity, and labour flows.

Rules of post-marital residence do not generally find a place in discussions of the bargaining that decides which partner migrates and which partner follows—perhaps because—from a Western perspective at least—neolocality is assumed as axiomatic. Nor, given the ubiquity of the 'male breadwinner' model, are such rules deemed relevant in understanding the disavowal of women's work participation embedded in the category of 'marriage migration'. Statistically speaking, however, in societies where patri(viri)locality is the rule, women's 'marriage migration' has usually constituted a large proportion of total migration and the overwhelming bulk of female migration. The gendered implications of this residence rule become even sharper when, as frequently happens, the rule of patrivirilocal residence combines with kinship rules of patrilineal descent, inheritance and succession. The result is a *patriarchal* kinship system in the proper anthropological sense of the term—that is, a kinship system that structurally affirms and enables the authority of senior men over both women and junior men in the family (see Kandiyoti 1988; Uberoi 1995).[14]

At this point it might be remarked that the gendered nature of migration on marriage has not been a focus of attention in traditional kinship studies either. Here, notions of blood relationship, the descent principle and prescriptive rules of marriage have been privileged over the commonplaces of residence and connectedness—in the process, it must be said, leaving women's experiences of family life more or less outside the frame. Patri(viri)locality was seen as simply one type in a formidable checklist of post-marital residence rules and the rule of territorial exogamy as a sort of spatial equivalent to or extension of genealogical rules of lineage or clan exogamy, both rules contributing to the smooth functioning of a patriarchal kinship system (see earlier section).

In recent years, however, a number of feminist scholars have identified the kinship rules of patrilocal residence and territorial exogamy as *themselves* critical factors in determining the political economy of gender relations in societies characterised by patrilineal kinship organisation.[15] In particular, they have pointed to three implications of these rules that may adversely affect women's autonomy of action, their 'bargaining' position in the family, and their 'fall back' position in case of widowhood or marital breakdown (see Agarwal 1997). The *first* is in relation to women's inheritance rights as daughters, especially in respect

to property in agricultural land, which is a critical productive resource throughout rural Asia. Since land is a non-portable asset, a daughter's inheritance rights in land, even when legally recognised by the state, are difficult to assert against the claims of male agnates if a woman is required to move away from her natal locality upon marriage. Or, in the obverse, the rule of territorial exogamy and the out-migration of daughters may be violently asserted so as to prevent daughters from inheriting land (Chowdhry 2007: esp. Ch. 7). *Second*, the presumption that in-marrying wives will be unfamiliar with local customs and the family traditions of their husbands weakens the say young women have in matters within their marital family, while suspicions regarding their loyalty and contribution to the place/home to which they have 'migrated' curtail their rights within it, especially rights to property (Palriwala 1996). *Third*, the security or vulnerability of women after marriage and the constraints and potentialities of their agency are critically related to the proximity (or otherwise) of effective support networks, in particular, networks of natal kin. Indeed, a number of articles in this volume confirm that the geographical location of natal kin is an important key to women's (and men's) experiences of marriage, and also of separation, divorce and widowhood.

Contemporary social processes, including rural-urban, inter-regional and international migration, have contributed substantially to enlarging the distance between the natal and the marital homes for ever-increasing numbers of women worldwide. As Delia Davin's chapter (this volume) on marriage and migration in China indicates, this may be a double-edged process. On the one hand, long-distance marriage migration, like long-distance labour migration, may enable individual women to fulfil their social and material aspirations for a better life and to escape the constraints of family surveillance and community pressure. At the same time, with the disruption of traditional marriage networks, the reordering of marriage preferences and the growth of commercial marriage brokerage services, a migrant woman seeking a more comfortable life through marriage with a man from a more prosperous background may end up in a very vulnerable position in her new home, totally isolated from her natal kin and familiar environment (see Section VI).

III. Marriage for Mobility

Migration—or, to be more precise, voluntary migration[16]—is typically motivated by the desire for upward social mobility and better economic opportunity. Likewise, in many societies across the globe, marriage continues to be central to the materialities and intangibles of life strategies, and to the desires of women, men and their respective families for a better life. As regional and international economic disparities widen, and as the global development discourse designates some cultures as modern and others as backward, global and national hierarchies of place are mapped by spatial economies and flows of labour migrants seeking opportunities for themselves and their families on a national and world canvas (see Del Rosario 1994; Fan and Li 2002; Piper and Roces 2003). Marriage migration tends to parallel the flows of labour migration as the differential social evaluations of women and men combine with culturally embedded notions of 'hypergamy'[17] to channel the direction of marriage and generate streams of brides to desired destinations. Indeed, given the residential restrictions of various governments (China's hukou [household registration] system, for instance, or ration cards and voter registration in India), visa and immigration regimes, citizenship stipulations and entitlements, and rules of professional accreditation, marriage may appear to be a relatively efficient means of ensuring permanent migration to favoured destinations (cf. Fan and Huang 1998; Fan and Li 2002)—especially, but not only, for women and, through them, for other members of their families (see McKay 2003). Women and men may accept spouses who, though otherwise not very eligible, are well-located (Fan and Li 2002).

In most societies, marriage provides an important arena for the achievement, consolidation and affirmation of upward social mobility, and for enhancing a family's 'social capital' in both the short and the long run (cf. Bourdieu 1977: 70). Historically, the Tamil Brahman community of South India was particularly agile and well placed in seizing the opportunity for social and economic improvement through higher, technical and professional education. U. Kalpagam's chapter (this volume) shows how Tamil Brahman families seek to enhance their status in their own community and bank 'social capital' for the

future by arranging the marriages of their children with partners studying or working in North America. They call it 'America *varan*', the American 'boon/marriage alliance'. Grooms are ranked in terms of the likelihood (or otherwise) of their achieving permanent settlement abroad. Brides are selected to fit the traditional requirements of wives of breadwinner husbands—beautiful, domesticated and familiar with the ritual and culinary mores of 'home'—of the right sub-caste and sectarian affiliation, and with matched horoscopes. Simultaneously, their educational qualifications and training are carefully scrutinised in the light of the grooms' anticipated career options and visa statuses. The amount of dowry to be given[18] and the lavishness of the wedding ceremonies are finely calibrated.

In the serious business of status mobility and international migration, traditional Tamil Brahman matchmaking preferences (such as cross-cousin or uncle-niece marriage) are set aside,[19] even as kin and other local networks are tapped for information on eligible migrant partners. Paradoxically, and perhaps to counter the new uncertainties, horoscope matching remains an abiding priority, a service now provided by new agencies and ways born of the times. In the competition for the American 'boon', the bride's kin must duly supplicate before the groom's, reiterating—indeed, perhaps exaggerating—gender asymmetries and the traditional hierarchical superiority of bride-takers over bride-givers.

The concerns of parents are not only tied to their local status priorities, which are of course extremely important for them. They also hope that marrying their sons or daughters to *émigré* partners will ensure continuity in the mobility process and enable other family members to migrate—whether for education, work or marriage. The interlocking of mobility, migration and marriage strategies is illustrated in a number of chapters in this volume, including Kalpagam's chapter (just referred to) on transnational Tamil Brahman marriages, Charsley's chapter on the migration of Pakistani grooms to the UK and Ester Gallo's case study of the transnational marriages of Malayali women migrants in Italy. As Gallo details, the original 'pioneer' migrants, women of the Syrian Christian community from Kerala, India, had gone to Italy in the late 1960s and early 1970s with the intention of becoming nuns, their decisions spurred not only by piety but by the inability of their relatively humble families to ensure them 'good' marriages and handsome dowries. Some of the women subsequently left their convents, took up employment of various kinds, and eventually got married (often in the early days to non-Malayali men). Materially comfortable and rehabilitated in the eyes of their families, they were then in a position

to sponsor the migration of their relatives (typically female, rather than male), to contribute substantially to the resources of their natal households, and to arrange the marriages of junior kin in Kerala and transnationally. There is surely much irony in the fact that women who had once migrated to avoid the ignominy of spinsterhood or the burden of dowry marriages now visibly and proudly engage in the 'work of kinship' and contribute in a major way to their own and their female relatives' dowries, bringing much prestige to their families as a result. In this sense, as Gallo remarks, marriage payments 'represent a relatively "traditional" framework through which families can express "modern" achievements in terms of educational, social or geographical mobility and access to consumer goods' (page 191).

In the case Gallo describes, and in others presented here, the implications of migration for gender and inter-generational relations are clearly mixed. While gender hierarchies in the conjugal tie are for the most part reasserted through the transnational traffic in wives, earning, migrant daughters may enjoy more freedom in selecting their own partners and spending their own income, and in continuing to provide financial and other support to their natal families, before and even after marriage,[20] as well as gain a say in the selection of spouses for female kin. The question of women's agency is an important preoccupation in feminist discussions on marriage *per se*, and in the literature on women's migration—whether for marriage, as workers or as providers for their families in conflict situations.[21] In the first place, taking the case of 'arranged marriage' (widely prevalent in countries of the Asian region), the discussions of Kalpagam, Gallo, Charsley and Xiang elucidate how marriage migration reflects not merely *individual* but especially *family* aspirations and mobility strategies. Second, given national and global economic disparities, a woman's marriage to a man in a desired location may appear to be compelled more by the structural constraints of her situation than by her willing exercise of choice and agency.

Teresita del Rosario's case studies (this volume) of Filipina-American Internet romances explicitly question the last conclusion. Undoubtedly, the US has a higher standard of living than the Philippines, but del Rosario's interviewees are by no means women in need of a 'ticket out of poverty'. They are mature, educated, professional and working women seeking 'romance on a global stage', to borrow the title of Nicole Constable's book (2003). Economic structures and differentials are thus only a partial and imperfect explanation for the asymmetrical flow of Internet-matched brides from the Philippines to North America. Equally important is what del Rosario calls, following Constable (ibid.:

Ch. 5), the 'cultural logic of desire'—the 'white love' that indexes post-colonial Philippines' long and admiring relationship with the United States. For the Filipinas, the new Internet technology provides the opportunity for romance beyond the constraining and often prurient gaze of family and community; unwelcome relationships can be terminated at the press of a button; and yet the family and community can be brought back in to approve and celebrate the final match. For the North American partners, there is a complementary 'cultural logic of desire', as many of them seek to restore, through their Filipina brides, the sense of 'family' that they believe the West has long since lost (cf. Constable 2003: esp. Ch. 4; Del Rosario 1994: 188–97, 208; McKay 2003). That this mismatch of desires may be subsequently played out in the conjugal relationship at the cost of the migrant wives may also be a reason for the denigration of women's exercise of agency in their choice of marriage partners that characterises so much of the literature on the so-called 'Mail-Order Bride' (MOB) phenomenon.[22]

The disparagement of women's agency in marriage migration in the public discourse and academic (especially feminist) literature on 'Mail-Order Brides' is predicated on a split between economic aspirations and status-enhancing strategies on the one hand, and love and romance on the other, as contradictory and distinct motivations for relationships (see Section VII). That is, it is assumed that becoming an MOB is an 'economic' strategy pursued perforce by very poor women in contravention of the proper moral and emotional bases of marriage (Constable 2003: 4–5; Del Rosario 1994: 3). True, the male-centredness and profit-making aspects of MOB matchmaking would seem to construct the wife as a mere 'commodity' (Del Rosario 1994: 119–20), to be picked off the shelf for the delectation of the Euro-American husband turned on by 'Asian babes'. Seen close-up, however, the MOB phenomenon is clearly much more complex, and the dividing line between women's exercise of agency, their cold-blooded self-seeking, and their exploitation by commercial interests more blurred.

IV. Commercially Negotiated Marriage

As noted, much of the academic and activist interrogation of transnational marriages has been predicated on the assumption that the introduction

of material calculations or commercial operations into the process of spouse-selection self-evidently impugns the authenticity of the marital relationship. It is taken as transforming marriage from a domestic arrangement in the domain of kinship to a form of human 'trafficking', within and across national boundaries. As a number of chapter in this volume illustrate (Davin/Lu/Blanchet), the gendered interpretation of commercial matchmaking is much complicated in the case of those societies where marriage transactions customarily take the form of 'bridewealth'/'bride price' (payment to the bride or to her kin in consideration of the marriage). China, many Muslim communities, and a number of caste groups in India are cases in point. In such instances, the marriage transaction can all too easily be construed as the 'sale' of a daughter (or the 'buying' of a wife); and sometimes that is what it is, especially in long-distance and cross-border, commercially-mediated marriages. A woman so bought may be further traded by her husband—to another man, into sex work or into other forms of servitude. Indeed, there is only a thin line separating mediated, commercial marriage arrangements, the abduction and 'trafficking' of women, and bonded labour.

Traditional 'arranged marriage', negotiated by parents and guardians, customarily relies on networks of neighbours and kin to suggest the matches or on local 'professional' matchmakers. Romantic marriage, by contrast, is dependent on the opportunities for personal interaction and emotional bonding between the two partners prior to the marriage, the 'choice' being made by the young couple themselves. Long-distance marriage migration, though sometimes arranged through international kinship networks among diasporic populations, is typically facilitated by *commercial intermediaries* of one type or another—including newspaper advertisements, introduction agencies and matchmaking services, purpose-specific tour companies, as well as, nowadays, Internet dating sites. Women, men and their families turn to these commercial resources for many and complex reasons: in last resort, when the local possibilities of marriage are fast diminishing, due perhaps to women-adverse sex ratios; because of economic and/or other disadvantages and social handicaps which cannot be concealed in the local context; on account of the inability to meet local demands in marriage prestations (dowry or bride price);[23] or because the local expectations of marriage are not to their liking.[24] Or they may 'risk' these relatively chancy arrangements simply to better their lifestyles (see Section III), or in the hope of finding romance. As with other types of labour and immigration brokerage,

there is often little regulation of these services, or redress for those who are cheated by them.

The importance of distinguishing various types and modalities of commercial matchmaking in relation to wife-'trafficking' as the limiting case is highlighted in Melody Lu's finely-textured ethnographic study (this volume) of the marriages of Taiwanese men with women from the Chinese mainland or Southeast Asia (the latter being mostly ethnic Chinese). Marriage migration has reached striking proportions in Taiwan since the 1990s, with some 27.4 per cent of marriages in 2002 being cross-border marriages. The proportions are even higher in those rural areas that have high female-adverse sex ratios (due to both son-preference and female out-migration to urban areas). In Taiwan, Lu emphasises, the traffic in wives is quite distinct from the traffic in women for domestic work and for sex work.[25] There are also differences in the procedures for acquiring brides from mainland China, as against Southeast Asia, on account of the different legal regimes under which the transactions take place (see Section VII). The modalities of marriage brokerage are also quite various. These range from commercial marriage bureaus (whose services include travel, introduction, engagement and marriage ceremonies, visa procurement, etc.), to individual marriage brokers and entrepreneurs, to relatively informal arrangements, often brokered by women who were themselves marriage migrants and who seek to recreate the kinship and extra-domestic networks they had lost by recruiting their own kinswomen and neighbours (cf. Davin, Gallo, this volume; Nakamutsu 2003). The boundaries between these types are fluid, and a combination of modalities is quite common.[26]

It is easy to assume that increasing global economic disparities will encourage and exacerbate the commercialisation of transnational marriage and the commoditisation of women in the process. Lu's account indicates the need for a more nuanced understanding of commercialised matchmaking, however. First, as Davin, del Rosario and others also demonstrate, material interest, considerations of social status and the search for love and emotional satisfaction may not be neatly demarcated, either for the women concerned or for their families.[27] Second, the demand for 'after-sales service'—a sort of guarantee of long-term and continued support to the marriage migrant even after her marriage—is not usually part of the package deal offered by the big commercial marriage agencies, but is common in the operations of local entrepreneur-brokers and informal, personalised brokerage arrangements. In this sense, Lu suggests, the latter

arrangements resemble traditional Chinese matchmaking forms (albeit extended to the Chinese diaspora) more than the lurid media image of international bride-'trafficking'.

Unlike the Taiwan case discussed by Lu, in other contexts the recruiting agents for long-distance marriage and sex work may overlap. Commercial sexual services (and domestic and care services) are often the easiest avenues of employment for migrant women, due to constraints they have experienced in accessing education and work opportunities. Furthermore, 'marriage' may often be just a bait to lure women from poor areas and in bad marriages into sex work in distant destinations, and to convince their families to part with them. Thérèse Blanchet's chapter (this volume) describes the generally pathetic condition of Bangladeshi girls sold as wives in Uttar Pradesh, often to very poor or elderly men who require both their labour and their reproductive services. In this case, the lines between forced or slave marriage, purchased wives, bride price marriage and a marriage made doubly oppressive by the combination of distance and 'sale' appear to be quite blurred.[28]

As already remarked (see Section II), under the kinship rule of patrivirilocal marriage, a young married woman in North India to a large extent loses her rights in her natal 'home'. The ties, however, are not completely severed. Where distances and costs of travel allow, she may frequently visit her natal family on one excuse or another, and she may enjoy the right of return in case of widowhood or marital breakdown. In the case of 'bought' wives, however, the ties of affinal reciprocity are not acknowledged, and the wife's isolation from her natal kin becomes complete. This is all the more so, as in the cases Blanchet describes, when the girls have suffered the stigma of being married to men of a different religion. Overall, it seems, it is not the 'purchase' aspect of these long-distance marriages *per se*, so much as their irrevocable nature—the virtual 'entrapment' of the women—that aligns these brokered arrangements with forms of human trafficking.

While the great distance can mean lack of protection for the women against abuse and violence, for the husbands it reduces their fear that the women might run away. For Bangladeshi women married to men of a different language, religion and country, the latter are additional obstacles to 'escape'. And, once they realise that they have been 'bought', they not only know that they will be forcibly prevented from leaving, but may even question their own right to do so. Moreover, exit from long-distance and transnational marriages is further complicated by

the issue of the care and custody of children, and of shifting them across international borders (see Singh, this volume). By contrast, Chinese women in long-distance brokered marriages may have better access to economic independence, due to the growing demand for women's non-household labour in the destination areas. They may also have somewhat better resources to call on (the All-China Women's Federation, for instance, and of late a growing number of Non-Governmental Organisations [NGOs] working for women's causes), and perhaps higher expectations of treatment in marriage than their often much younger South Asian counterparts. After all, China has experienced numerous campaigns to change the face of gender and family relations through five decades or more.

V. The Political Economy of Marriage Transactions

For those who associate marriage payments—whether bridewealth or dowry—with 'custom' and 'tradition', it may come as something of a surprise that these supposedly hoary practices, as well as conspicuous consumption and display on the occasion of marriage, may actually be *enhanced*, rather than discontinued, in the contemporary context of liberalisation and globalisation (see, e.g., Palriwala 2003; Siu 1993). Thus, in the case of China, where the quantum of bride price, of dowry, and the overall costs of marriage have escalated very sharply in the post-reforms period, we see that the demand for brides from interior provinces is in part encouraged by the inability of poorer men in more developed regions to raise the requisite bride price to acquire local wives (Davin, in this volume). Similarly, mainland and Southeast Asian brides were reputed to be a much 'cheaper' option for the rural Taiwanese men who undertook this relatively risky venture into the transnational marriage market (Lu, in this volume).

The chapters by Ranjana Sheel and Xiang Biao (this volume) illustrate the complex ways in which the Indian 'dowry system' is linked not only with transnational marriage migration, but also with the creation of a global labour force. In the first place, dowry payments constitute a fluid fund that can be used to directly finance the migration process. There are many tales of women who have been deserted immediately after marriage by husbands who use the proceeds of their marriages to

emigrate; or of women duped by non-resident bridegrooms, some of whom—in notorious cases—have made a business of marrying local women, collecting the dowries and disappearing soon thereafter.[29] While these may appear to be exceptions, against which due precautions can be taken, Xiang's chapter goes further to argue, more abstractly, that dowry payments actually play a substantial role in the reproduction of a flexible and globally competitive Indian Information Technology (IT) labour force.

For many Indian male migrants from the upwardly mobile Kamma and Reddy castes of Andhra Pradesh (the subjects of Xiang's case study in India and Australia), their dowries enable their IT education and subsequent emigration. In turn, their prestige as IT professionals and their earnings through migration-linked employment augment their value in the marriage market, pushing up the dowries given for their sisters and creating a snow-balling, imitation effect among less prosperous, lower caste and tribal groups. Often, the initial migration is through what is called a 'body-shop', a firm which moves IT labour to where it will be required, retaining it unpaid and dependent on savings or family support during idle periods ('benching'). The profits of mobile international capital rest on highly-trained, flexible, relatively cheap and mobile labour which, as Xiang's discussion suggests, is enabled through local practices: in this instance, the exorbitant dowries associated with caste-endogamous marriages and gender hierarchies which ensure that women will undertake paid and unpaid work to maintain families and, with their IT husbands, take the risks which capital is assumed to take. Thus, Xiang argues, the gender relations of marriage and migration ultimately subsidise global capital.

Where women are the migrant earners, however, the gender implications of the nexus between local dowry and global capital may take on a somewhat different meaning, as Gallo's study of Malayali women migrants in Italy (referred to earlier) indicates. The women's foreign earnings contribute to widening the field for spouse selection and enabling 'good' marriages for themselves and their female kin (cf. Gamburd 2002). Malayali women in Italy, many of them domestic workers and nurses, can now offer a visa sponsorship as dowry or choose their own partners in the light of the living conditions and employment opportunities in Italy, rather than acquiescing in their families' local status preoccupations in Kerala. Later cohorts of similar migrants, building on the experiences of their predecessors, may combine marriage and migration differently. However, while the new-found economic independence of women migrants has led to shifts in their models

of conjugality and possibly a renegotiation of gender roles within the household, their remittances also contribute actively to the perpetuation and exacerbation of the 'dowry system' and conspicuous consumption *per se*, adversely impacting the lives of other women and gender relations in the society as a whole. In other words, the gender 'accounting' in this case, as in cases of migrant female labour (e.g., Gamburd 2002), produces a rather mixed picture: good for some individuals, perhaps, but bad for others and for society; good in some aspects of a person's life, not in others.

Expectations of dowry and, even more, of conspicuous consumption at weddings, are also factors in marriages among the Indian diaspora. The often extravagant dowry 'earned' in India by a non-resident Indian groom can add substantially to a young man's working capital as he struggles to establish himself in a foreign locale; or it can be commuted for a match with a woman with highly portable and potentially remunerative qualifications—in nursing, for instance. Even for second generation immigrants, as Sheel (this volume) illustrates with material from British Columbia, Canada, the costs of a daughter's marriage may be unconscionably high. As lavish weddings in the Indian diaspora turn into aggressive displays of ethnic affluence and assertions of community identity, as well as of status claims *within* the community, women of the family tend to take a backseat in the proceedings, while daughters are burdened with the awesome responsibility of upholding family and community honour and a reinvented tradition of gender relations (see Thapan 2005a and 2005b).

VI. Stresses and Transformations in Family Relations

Migration impinges on the institution of marriage and transforms familial relations in a variety of ways. The various articles in this volume take up the challenge to detail and draw out the gender implications of these changes in different instances. Obviously, this is not an easy task, given the heterogeneous scenarios of marriage and migration. For instance, an interesting aspect of matchmaking on behalf of Pakistani male marriage migrants in the UK, described by Charsley in her chapter, is the increasing heed paid to the 'traditional'

claims of close kin in settling the marriages of their children, whether with partners from Pakistan or within the Pakistani diaspora. This contrasts with the situation of Tamil Brahmans, described by U. Kalpagam, who clearly consider a prospective groom's visa status as much more important than the traditional obligation to reinforce the relations of affinity between intermarrying local groups (cf. Dumont 1983).[30] Yet the intermarrying cousins and their families in Charsley's case study may rarely have met, and are as likely to be strangers to each other as the non-kin Tamilian affines.

Ethnic communities can only continue to exist *as such* via community-endogamous marriages, which may be within the locally settled community or—and this is sometimes the preferred option—with men or women of the place and community of origin. Endogamous marriages ensure the transmission of the community's values and culture to the younger generation. For South Asian migrants, marriage is both a channel of communicating and relating with 'home', an expression of obligations to those left behind, and a strategy of reproduction of community identity in diasporic settings.[31] The experience of racism, fears of deracination and of the loss of tradition, and stereotypes of the lack of 'family' in the host society and of the loose, locally brought-up daughters of early immigrants persuade many that a daughter-in-law/wife from back home is preferable (see Sinha-Kerkhoff 2005). In some cases, as Charsley describes here in a counter-example, migrant *husbands* may also be viewed as instruments for the transmission and reproduction of religious orthodoxy and normative cultural values. However, the young women and men themselves may prefer a second generation immigrant from their own community to ensure compatibility; or, more problematically, they may assert the right to select their own partners, even from outside the ethnic community. In consequence, inter-generational conflict in spousal selection, as between first and second generation migrants, has become increasingly visible. In many cases, well-publicised in the media, the insubordination of the younger generation, young women in particular, is visited with violent reprisal by male patrikin avenging the 'dishonour' to family and community (e.g., Das 1976; Kang 2003). Thus the younger immigrants, in particular, seem to be caught in a dilemma. On the one hand, their rejection of what is claimed as traditional marriage and familial practice by community elders may not be accepted by the state unless or until it comes to the point of violence (Bano 1999). On the other hand, though many young, South Asian women and men actively endorse the practice

of arranged marriage, the British immigration service appears to equate arranged marriage with 'forced' marriage and assumes the inevitability of inter-generational conflict on this account (Hall 2002: 63).

As the chapters here detail, migrants have changing and varied expectations of their new lives and their links with their places of origin, tied to marital and familial relations and obligations, and plural projects of modernity. Thus, migrant women may simultaneously desire to settle into the ways of being of their host societies, valuing their escape from the powers and authorities of the domestic domain and social life left behind; yet, along with their male compatriots, they may also yearn for the same kin and friends, and take pride in fulfilling their obligations to the family back home (Gallo, Mand, this volume; also Uberoi 1998). They may win respect in their natal families and communities for their ability to sponsor the migration of their near kin; at the same time they may feel used and exploited by their families, at home or in the diaspora (see Rozario 2005). They may achieve an improved standard of living and economic independence; or they may become dependants in the worst sense of the word, prisoners in their own homes, far from friends and relatives, and perhaps silent victims of domestic violence. In every case, their experiences are modulated by factors of caste, class, religion and race; by legal regimes and immigration procedures; by contingent events, such as '9/11' or more recently '7/7', provoking racist and anti-immigrant responses; by the upsurge of ethnic identity movements, whether among the diaspora or among the majority population in the country of settlement; and also, very importantly, by a woman's stage in her life-course.

Migration has the potential to transform the culturally normative sexual division of labour within the family. There is a growing literature describing the delicate reallocation of familial roles when married women migrate for work, leaving their husbands and children behind (Gamburd 2002; Ito 2003; Parrenas 2006). This may result in extra strain on the conjugal relationship, not least on account of the reversal of provider-dependent roles, as well as encourage the reinvention of 'joint family' arrangements to support childcare (e.g., Gamburd 2002; Thangarajah 2003). Shifts in normative divisions of labour are also evident in situations of male out-migration, where the women left behind must shoulder the grind of routine work and day-to-day management, though they may ultimately have little say in the major investment of repatriated resources (Gulati 1993; Naveed-I-Rahat 1990). An important outcome of migration in many cases is the doubling, if

not tripling, of the migrant woman's burden—as paid worker, parent and wife, and providing daughter. In counterpoint are the cases where couples and families migrate and professionally trained women have to put their own careers on hold to support their husbands' entry into the job market on an uneven playing field (Kalpagam, this volume); or work at menial or 'grey-market' jobs to enable their husbands to requalify themselves for employment in competitive new locales (Abraham, Gallo, this volume).[32] Thus, gendered-racist work regimes in the place of destination may combine with cultural norms from 'home' to reverse emerging shifts in the gender patterns in paid work. The inability of sons and husbands to fulfil their normative role as breadwinners can have harsh consequences for their families and themselves (see Xiang, Charsley, Abraham, this volume). In any case, norms of material support and caregiving—especially for children and the elderly—are being constantly re-negotiated in the context of migration, both within the migrant community and vis-à-vis the families left behind (Singh 2006), producing thereby new norms of domestic life.

As mentioned earlier, diasporic communities often seek brides from the home country, assuming that these women will be more docile, or trusting that this will assure the reproduction of community identity in foreign lands. However, in some cases, as with recent Pakistani marriage migrants to the UK, *male* migrants may seek to emigrate by contracting marriages with the daughters of earlier migrants in their destination countries (Ballard 1990: 237, 242; Charsley, this volume).[33] These men may then experience the social and emotional difficulties which are usually the lot of in-marrying women in patrilineally-structured societies—the burden of asymmetrical 'adjustment'. Their difficulties are compounded and reinforced by the idea that they are following a familial trajectory—that of the *ghar damad* or resident/in-married son-in-law—which is derided and belittled in their own cultures. Minimally, they may feel that their 'masculinity' has been seriously compromised by their inability to take on the normative male 'provider' role in societies which recognise their race but not their qualifications, pushing skilled and qualified workers into menial and manual occupations, if not into long-term unemployment. Sadly, as Charsley details, reassertions of masculinity may be at the cost of the male migrants' wives, their children and their marriages (see also Abraham, this volume; Das Gupta 2006).

Kanwal Mand's chapter in this volume, focusing on the experience of widowhood, separation and divorce for 'twice-migrant' Sikh women—immigrants from Tanzania to the UK—is a timely reminder

of the importance of taking a 'life course' approach to issues of gender and family. Her case studies illustrate how migration can be a means for women to escape the inauspicious mark and dependency of widowhood, difficult in-laws or bad marriages, or obscure socially disapproved exits from such marriages (such as through long-term separation without divorce). Mand also describes, however, the social embarrassment and family tensions that result from the inversion of traditional kinship norms when an elderly widow is constrained to take up residence with her married daughter and her family. In the North Indian kinship system into which she has been socialised, a senior woman is expected to rely on her sons for support in her old age (they are, after all, the normal heirs to the paternal estate), and not on her married daughters (see Note 20). In the case that Mand presents, even the woman's unpaid duties as grandmother, enabling her daughter to go out to work, and the affection of her grandchildren, can hardly redeem her fractured self-esteem.

In many cases, the dynamics of new contexts and the distances from kin and community put conjugal and inter-generational relationships under very severe, even intolerable, strain. Migrant couples are more dependent on their own resources, emotional, social and economic, with little of the buffer which family and kin can provide. For the Chinese, Indonesian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi and Indian brides in foreign lands, whose experiences are recounted here, increased marriage distance has often meant the loss of the protection of the social and kinship relations, which are normally mobilised in spouse selection (see Section IV). The periodic and customary visits home—recognised as holidays from the in-laws—become rare if not impossible and are mourned by the married, migrant daughter and her parents left behind. While this may be a case of 'more so', rather than a qualitative shift from conditions in their societies of origin, a newly married migrant woman may nonetheless be doubly isolated and vulnerable to abuse—akin to the trafficked wife, in fact—with little hope of remedy (Abraham, Blanchet, Davin, Lu, this volume). At the same time, she may be unaware of her commonality with victims of domestic violence in the host society, or unwilling or unable to avail of the welfare services that she requires (Abraham, this volume; also Kang 2003).

An assumption often made in migration literature and popular discourse is that migrant women from poor or backward countries will necessarily experience emancipation through their settlement in countries with apparently more liberal social values, or through their participation in paid work in the destination countries. This, as Mirjana

Morokvasic (1984) argues in an early article on the theme, is often an unwarranted assumption that ignores the likelihood of women's participation in paid work in their home countries, prior to migration. It also discounts the double burden of housework and paid work in the new situation, the experience of racism in the host societies, and the new social controls often imposed on women in a migrant-'enclave' situation (cf. Abraham 1998; Dossa 2005). However, with the displacement of migration, the tensions, fault-lines and contradictions in cultural and social practices tend to come readily to the surface.[34] The domestic violence which Abraham discusses, the vulnerabilities of old or widowed women which Mand focuses on, the custody conflicts after separation or divorce which Singh discusses, or the psychological stress for uxorilocal husbands in a patrivirilocal community (Charsley), are not phenomena and experiences exclusive to the migration context, but their effects may certainly be exacerbated on account of migration.

VII. Immigration Rules, State Laws and Marriage

Critical to the nexus of gender, migration and marriage are state laws, ideologies and practices in which economic, racialised and ethnocentric impulses interweave with patriarchal norms of gender and family of both the majority and immigrant communities. International conventions, such as the 1975 ILO Convention No. 143 and Article 8 of the European Convention of the Rights of Man, have recognised the right of family reunion on humanitarian and integration grounds, based on an assumption of the family as the natural and fundamental unit of society (see Jastram 2003; Sassen 1999: 128–29, 132). The governments of destination countries are, however, alert to the fact that procedures of family 'sponsorship' may be a means of entry for what they deem to be purely 'economic' migration, opening a door to floods of immigrants. Individual states therefore seek to limit the right of family reunion through their immigration rules and procedures—for instance, by prescribing conditions for the sponsor, such as 'adequate' income and housing. Ethnocentric definitions of family membership and of 'genuine' marriage and assumptions regarding the dependency of wives also shape these procedures.[35]

As a special case of 'family reunion', marriage migration has been a significant concern of both migrant communities and of the state in the destination countries.[36] In consequence, much effort is spent (with sometimes comical, sometimes traumatic consequences) on devising legal definitions and administrative procedures to determine whether or not a marriage is 'genuine' (see, Gell 1994: 376–80). Such tests of 'genuine' marriage tend to express the cultural values of the host society, which typically presume that individual free choice and romantic love, in dichotomous opposition to pragmatic family-building strategies and economic calculation, are the basis of a genuine conjugal relationship.[37] Alternatively, as with the cat-and-mouse games played out between would-be immigrants and the immigration authorities of destination countries (see, e.g., Ballard 1990; Gell 1994), immigration rules and procedures may purport to operationalise the perceived 'traditional' gender, marriage and family norms of the migrant's own community. The notorious 'virginity tests' administered to South Asian brides by British immigration officials between 1979 and 1982 were a much-publicised example of this misplaced zeal, an attempt to curb opportunistic marriage migration by application of the culturalist assumption that 'genuine' South Asian brides making arranged marriages would necessarily be virgins (Hall 2002; Wilson 1978).[38] Incoming South Asian husbands are another example, such marriages being viewed with particular suspicion on the grounds that they represented a departure from 'tradition' (Hall 2002: 64–65).

As emerges from a number of the chapters in this volume, particularly Margaret Abraham's analysis of domestic violence in the South Asian diaspora in the US, visa regulations meant to keep out illegal immigrants, residence permits, notions of the conjugal contract in which the dependency of wives and the altruism of husbands are assumed, the conception of genuine marriage as based on affection/sexual attraction, the assumption of the normalcy of the nuclear rather than the extended family, stereotypes of backward cultures and fears of terrorist infiltration from the East, act against all Asian migrants, but have specifically gendered impacts on wives and on the women of migrant communities. In particular, the wife on a 'dependent' visa is often constrained to stay in an abusive relationship and remain house bound for fear of deportation (Abraham 1998: 231–33; Morokvasic 1984: 891).

With international migration and the creation of minority enclaves, laws relating to family and the personal sphere frequently become the

site of conflict between 'community' and individual rights (Bano 1999: 166). A number of immigrant women's groups have struggled—even (or especially) against the leaders of their own communities[39]—to win recognition of the problem of spousal abuse within immigrant communities in the US and to enact laws for the protection of victims of domestic violence. Under the circumstances, as Margaret Abraham notes (this volume), it is both sad and ironic that success in these efforts came at a time of heightened anti-immigrant sentiment in the US following '9/11', threatening to undo the hard-earned gains of decades of struggle.

Migration and international immigration have made more sharply evident a range of familial and marital issues, not necessarily born of migration, in which existing state practice may be counter-productive and legislative action is urgently required (see Section VI). Kirti Singh's chapter in this volume points to one such area. She highlights the traumas which the end of marriage may entail for children when one parent (typically the father) forcibly abducts the child to another place or another country. This can happen where either one spouse (oftentimes the wife, given the rule of patrivirilocality) or the couple are migrants. Especially in the case of those countries which are not signatories to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction (1980)—and India is a case in point—legally restoring the abducted child to the custodial parent and to his/her country of habitual residence may be a time-consuming, expensive and sometimes infructuous process. Studies have indicated the possible dire consequences for the well-being of the child concerned. The importance of implementing international legal instruments to deal effectively with cases of parental child abduction, as well as with marriage, divorce and forms of marriage transactions,[40] has become increasingly urgent as migration flows and distances increase.

VIII. Marriage Migration in Comparative Perspective

Read together, the chapters in this volume enable insights from the *comparative* experience of Asian peoples' intra- and international migration—both similarities and differences—particularly in gender terms. Not only are Asian women and men much on the move, but

the significance of the institution of marriage in its cultural and social forms, economic and status strategies, and gendered agency is a theme that traverses the many different contexts of Asian migration. There are several issues here that deserve social scientific attention and warrant further empirical investigation. First, it is evident that the institution of marriage, despite varied and flexible practices, continues to be deeply gendered and invested with immense cultural value across much of Asia. As such, it is critical in the playing out of a host of local and global, economic, social and political processes.

Second, these processes come together in the lives of individuals and families in linking their aspirations for marriage and social mobility. In this, the dynamics of the local and international marriage and labour markets interlock, both moderating and moderated by local kinship and marriage practices and norms. The opposing trends in marriage practices described in two chapters in this volume (Charsley, Kalpagam) illuminate this: the norm of intra-kin marriage in designating the proper spouse is revived in a community with a long history of migration, where it enables men to migrate (Pakistanis), but it is given the go-by in the mobility strategies of a group who have taken to international migration relatively recently and where opportunities for male professionals stimulate the migration process (Tamil Brahmans).

Strategies of matchmaking become a third important issue in a comparative sociological context. A number of chapters in this volume examine the effects of gendered opportunities and state regulations on modalities of matchmaking and marriage migration. It would be worthwhile to examine more rigorously what differences, if any, the contrast between the patrilineal systems of South and East Asia and the more bilateral systems of Southeast Asia make in the gendered interweaving of labour and marriage migration and matchmaking practices.

This leads us to a fourth issue on which the comparison is compelling: namely, the transfer of resources effected through marriage (whether bride price or dowry). Supposedly 'traditional' practices, such as bride price and dowry payments as well as conspicuous consumption and 'ethnic' display on the occasion of marriage, may actually be *enhanced*, and not discontinued, in the context of migration. Not only do families and communities continue to make status claims through substantial marriage payments and opulent festivities in their new environments but, as noted in the discussion of Sheel's chapter, ethnic marriages have become an extremely important focus of community and ethnic

identity vis-à-vis both the migrant and the host communities. Moreover, marriage payments may serve as a fluid fund enabling migration, or may be generated by the migration of family members (men and also women).

A fifth and related issue pertains to the relationship between types of marriage payment and women's status in society. Feminist social scientists in India have traced a malign nexus between female-adverse sex ratios, low levels of female education and employment, women's disadvantaged property rights and high or enhanced rates of dowry (see Agarwal 1994). According to received wisdom, *dowry* in South Asia is a form of enticement or compensation paid in a tight marriage market to the husband and his family for taking on an 'unproductive' woman; conversely, *bride price* is interpreted as a positive valuation of women's productive capacity and a form of compensation to the woman's family for the loss of her productive labour. Given these assumptions, the long-term decline in bride price practices in various communities and regions and the increase and expansion of the 'dowry system' are read as indicative of women's low and declining status in the South Asian context (e.g., Miller 1980, 1989; Srinivas 1984; Tambiah 1973).

The comparative perspective offered in this collection of papers commends a refinement of these assumptions regarding the relation of marriage payments and women's status. For instance, China—like India—*also* has a notably adverse female-to-male sex ratio, a preference for patrivirilocality, growing regional economic disparities, a prosperous overseas community and a tight marriage market. In China, however, these features are combined with a high female work participation rate and the predominance of bride price, the rate for which has grown astronomically as a result of the expansion of the commodity economy, overall economic prosperity and the increasing demand for women's non-household labour (Han and Eades 1995).[41] In order to circumvent this, poorer men in the more prosperous areas are 'importing' wives. Though the latter may welcome escape to more prosperous destinations, and their families benefit from the bride price payment at the same time, the 'bought' woman traded to a distant destination may find that she is worse off, socially isolated and with a bad bargain in her husband (see Section IV).

As with bride price in China, dowry in India has also grown astronomically as the effects of liberalisation unfold (Palriwala 2003). On the other hand, hefty marriage payments and adverse sex ratios seem not to be an issue in the more bilateral societies in other parts of

Asia. In the latter, the marital bond is also accepted as more fragile. This contrast commends further analysis of the gendered consequences of the complex of marriage transactions between families—whether dowry *or* bride price—and their imbrication with patrilineal descent, patrivirilocal residence rules and lifelong marriage in the context of existing and growing socio-economic inequalities.

Last, is the question of the constraints and opportunities for women's exercise of agency in decisions concerning migration, marriage and the family. The areas and forms in which women and men exercise agency are limited by political-economic processes, by historical and symbolic determinations and by cultural constructions of gender, sexuality, class, race and ethnicity. Women may be constrained to just make the best of what their situations offer. They exercise agency in choosing and finding the means to migrate; in delaying, rejecting, ensuring or escaping marriage through migration; and in dealing with or moulding new forms of familial relationships. In the process, as is well illustrated in the existing literature on the marriage-migration nexus, they may easily jump from the frying pan into the fire. Nonetheless, as the various chapters in this volume confirm, 'victimhood' is by no means the whole story.

As in the broader feminist literature, the chapters included here use the concept of women's agency in many and diverse ways. These range from passive on active resistance, to the exercise of choice, to the ability to work for change in current family norms and kinship structures.[42] While we do not claim that this volume is the last word on the subject, it certainly points to the need for further empirical and nuanced studies of the intersection of marriage and migration in Asia from both a gender-sensitive and a comparative intra-Asian perspective.

Notes

1 A relevant example is Roger Ballard's comparison of the contrasting migration and settlement patterns of two Punjabi communities—Moslems from Mirpur district, Pakistan, and Sikhs from Jullundur, Indian Punjab. Ballard argues, *inter alia*, that the kinship preference of Mirpuris for cross- and parallel-cousin marriage (mediated by changing UK labour market requirements and immigration controls) explains the Mirpuris' relatively slow rate of family reunion in Britain—as compared to the Punjabi Sikhs who have a taboo on marriage with close relatives (Ballard 1990: 240; cf. Gell 1994).

2 Asian countries are both receivers and senders of increasingly large numbers of female migrants, depending on features of both the receiving and sending countries (Asis 2003; Gulati 2006; Ito 2003; Lim and Oishi 1996).

3 See for instance Boyd and Grieco (2003); Morokvasic (1984); Thapan (this volume); Youssef et al. (1979); Zlotnik (2003).

4 For instance, to take a random example, Oberai and Singh's well-known early study of migration in the Indian Punjab defined 'out-migrants' and 'in-migrants' so as to exclude from consideration both children below the age of 12 years and women who had out-migrated/in-migrated 'for marriage' (Oberai and Singh 1983: 11).

5 One area recently opened up by scholars, feminists in particular, is the social, cultural and political history of colonialism traced through the stories of European women who emigrated to the colonies—whether as wives or as single women in search of husbands ('fishing fleets'). Both their absence and their presence were significant in the creation and stabilisation of colonial regimes. Even as they made new spaces for themselves, however, these European women became participants in the subjection of the colonised and in bringing their gendered models of home and marriage to these societies. See, e.g., Alavi (1999); Ballhatchet (1980); Ghose (1998); MacMillan (1996); Stoler (2002).

6 See, among other references, Joshi (2003); Karlekar (1995); Piper (1999); Piper and Roces (2003) and Sen (2004).

7 There is a growing literature on this theme. See, e.g., Agrawal (2006); Arya and Roy (2006); Gulati (1993, 2006); Ito (2003); Jeffreys (2006); Karlekar (1995); Lim and Oishi (1996); Lingam (1998); Morokvasic (1984) and Stalker (2000). For a longer historical perspective on women's labour migration in South Asia, see Sen (2004).

8 This further exemplifies Sassen's argument that migrations do not just happen, but are patterned productions wherein the 'economic, political and social conditions in the receiving countries set the parameters for immigration flows' in ways which do not allow emigration regions to catch up (Sassen 1999: 155, 136–37, 140).

9 See Boyd and Grieco (2003); also Gardner and Osella (2003: xiii–xiv) who, citing Ann Whitehead, make the point that 'spatial disruption challenges and relativises existing social relations. Even if this is not always the intended effect, the exposure to new places, ideas and practices which migrants experience often seems to lead to a questioning of existing forms of hierarchy or a reinvention of the self's place within the social order.'

10 The terms patrivirilocal and virilocal are commonly, if somewhat inaccurately, collapsed under the term 'patrilocal residence'.

11 Several of these definitions of residence types are subject to dispute and many more types have been distinguished, but this is not a question which need detain us further here.

12 Of course, the kinship rule of patrivirilocal residence does not entail migration if the woman's natal and marital families live in close proximity, as would be the likely case in societies where the patrilateral parallel cousin is the preferred spouse.

13 While the 'marriage distance' in India and China was traditionally quite small (say, within 25 km radius), except among the elite (cf. Gould 1960), it would indeed be a 'migration' from the psycho-social perspective of the women involved. For a summary tabulation of marriage distance from South Asian ethnographies, see Agarwal (1994: esp. 325–35, Table A8.1, 379–89) and Libbee (1980). For China see,

e.g., Fan and Li 2002: 622; Han and Eades 1995: 846ff; Lavely and Ren 1992; Selden 1993 and Zhang 2000.

14 On the whole, the kinship systems of Southeast Asia are much more bilateral in their rules of inheritance and descent than those of both East Asia and South Asia (excluding Sri Lanka), features associated with residence patterns and gender relations that are less harsh on women (see Dube 1997).

15 See, for instance, in the South Asian case, Agarwal (1994: esp. Ch. 8); Kolenda (1987: Ch. 1); Palriwala (1991). According to some scholars, efforts at improving women's access to productive resources in rural China have foundered on account of the continued hold of the rule of patri(viri)local post-marital residence (Smith 2000: 290).

16 For a discussion problematising the conventional distinction between voluntary and forced migration, see Behera (2006) and Manchanda (2006).

17 'Hypergamy', in anthropological parlance, refers to women marrying 'up' in the social hierarchy; it is contrasted with 'isogamy', the marriage of social equals, and with 'hypogamy', where women marry down. In the Indian context, hypergamy refers to the marriage of a woman with a man of higher caste status, but there are also overlapping, territorially-based hierarchies of direction and of place, arising from the fact that—among Hindus in North India in particular—daughters must not be given in marriage to the kinship groups or local communities from whom brides have been taken. In the context of Hindu culture, the ideology of *kanyadān* (the 'gift of the virgin') ensures that, even with the marriage of status equals, the bride-takers assume superior status in relation to their bride-givers (see, e.g., Trautmann 1981: 377ff). Fan and Li (2002) use the term 'spatial hypergamy' for the marriage migration of women from backward provinces and counties of China to the relatively well-off Guangdong province.

18 U. Kalpagam's Tamil informants actually deny giving 'dowry' as such, but confirm that the securing of an 'America *varan*' match will require substantial gifts to the bride and groom in addition to opulent ceremonies.

19. On the other hand, Charsley's paper on Pakistani marriage migration to the UK reports an increase in kin marriage. See also Ballard (1990).

20 In general, in the South Asian system of asymmetrical exchange (see note 17), a married woman's parents are expected only to *give*, and never to *receive*, gifts and hospitality from their daughter's conjugal family. See Mand (this volume) for a discussion of this issue in the context of elderly women's life-choices.

21 See Behera (2006: 43–47); Constable (2003: esp. Ch. 6); Piper and Roces (2003: 8–15).

22 The term is conventionally specialised to refer to the service agency-mediated marriage of a non-Western woman with a Western man. See Del Rosario 1994: Ch. 1.

23 This is illustrated in the chapters in this volume on China (Davin) and Taiwan (Lu), and also in the case of Bangladeshi women married in Uttar Pradesh, India (Blanchet). See also Kaur (2004), who gives details of two distinct sets of marriage networks through which brides from poor areas of Assam and West Bengal/Bihar escape dowry and marry 'less eligible' men in the women-deficient but economically better-off regions of Haryana and UP respectively.

24 Filipinas, for instance, have a poor opinion of Filipino men as 'husband-material'—they are thought to be promiscuous and irresponsible compared to American men. Conversely, American men see Filipinas as feminine, caring, domesticated and loving, and American women as unattractively assertive (Constable 2003; del

Rosario, this volume). Nakamutsu, in her study of immigrant Filipina brides who had arrived in Japan through marriage brokers (2003), also points to a multiplicity of motivations on the part of the migrant women: desire to escape from an unpleasant or difficult situation at work or at home; hopes for a better life, in particular a stable marriage, children, family and love; the pleasure of being 'chosen' in preference to other candidates; and a sense of adventure.

25 See Agrawal 2006 (also Ito 2003) for a discussion on domestic work and sex work as two major occupational categories for migrant women.

26 For instance, in one of the cases discussed by Lu, an Indonesian marriage migrant brokers a further marriage between one of her husband's kinsmen and her own relatives, but utilises the services of a local Indonesian marriage broker/entrepreneur to complete the paper work. See also Kaur (2004).

27 Of course, women or men who immigrate as workers, domestic or otherwise, may ultimately marry locally. See also McKay (2003).

28. While outside agencies considered all these women as having been 'trafficked', local communities apparently reserved this term for women transported for commercial sex work. Ravinder Kaur (2004: 2598) also asserts the analytical distinction between trafficking, buying of brides and bride price marriages.

29. The problems of marriage between diasporic Indians and partners from the homeland have recently been taken up at the official level by the Ministry of Overseas Indian Affairs of the Government of India, with recommendations for legal remedies in addition to counselling and intervention by social welfare agencies, to prevent the abuse of women and the exploitation of their families by Indian grooms resident abroad. See items posted on the official MOIA Website, e.g., 'Report on National Consultation on Marriages to Overseas Indians' (http://moia.gov.in/showinfo1.asp?linkid=320); 'NRI Marriages' (http://moia.gov.in/shoifo1.asp?linkid=131); 'Report on the Workshop Regarding "Problems Relating to NRI Marriages and Suggested Measures" in Chandigarh on 20th and 21st June 2006' (http://moia.gov.in/shoinfo1.asp?linkid=317); and press items, 'Govt Will Provide Legal Help to Women Left in the Lurch Abroad' (*Times of India* 30/12/06); 'Marriage is Talking Point of PIO Meeting' (*Times of India* 8/01/07); 'Marry-and-Dump NRIs May Face Indian Law' (*Times of India* 9/01/07). The interactive columns of the official website (http://moia.gov.in./dfmainviews.asp?tid=1), however, carry many strongly worded complaints of the exploitation of foreign-resident grooms by greedy and manipulative affines and general dismay at the measures being planned by the Ministry to protect Indian women married to NRI grooms.

30 As noted earlier, however, 'tradition' is not altogether rejected for, even in their feverish search for American grooms, the Tamil Brahmans take pains to ensure the horoscopic compatibility of a match.

31 See Charsley, Sheel, Abraham, Gallo, this volume; Sinha-Kerkhoff, Rayaprol and Gedalof in Thapan (2005a); also Ballard (1990) and Gell (1994) for various elaborations of this theme.

32 See Dossa (2005) for an especially compelling example of a professionally trained Iranian woman caring for a brain-damaged daughter.

33 Ballard (1990) also emphasises the reciprocal aspect of the arrangement: the social obligation of the emigrant to arrange the marriage of his sons/daughters to the children of his own siblings left behind in Pakistan. Such an arrangement reinforces familial

ties and enables kin to benefit from the spatial and economic mobility experienced by the emigrant, whose original emigration had likely been the outcome of collective investment by the kin group.

34 Ålund (1999: 150) analyses the dynamics of this process: 'What is usually not recognised is that cultures are formed within the frameworks of both pre- and post-migratory antagonisms and related to emergent struggles in the pre-political contexts of everyday life, as well as in wider public arenas.'

35 Hall (2002: 57) points out that in the 1970s the wife and children of a man deported from the UK were also deported, but not the husband of a deported woman. Moreover, prior to the 1981 British Nationality Act, a woman could not pass on her British citizenship to her children. A specific handicap is that faced by gay women and men seeking to immigrate under provisions for family reunion to countries, such as the USA, where lesbian and gay relationships are not acknowledged legally (see Das Gupta 2006), though in some other cases being gay may be a ground to obtain asylum (Germany, the Netherlands, etc.).

36 The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration, reporting to the UK House of Commons in 1978, fuelled public suspicion of arranged marriage between UK residents and partners from the home country, noting that, 'Male fiancés are prospective heads of families: their settlement or marriage results in both primary and secondary immigration.' The Report expressed the hope that, 'in the long term, as families become more fully assimilated in the United Kingdom and adopt Western mores, *attitudes may change and arranged marriages decrease*' (quoted in Gell 1994: 365, emphasis added).

37 See Cohn (2001); Del Rosario (1994: 278); Gedalof (2005); Gell (1994); Giddens (1992); Hall (2002: 63)). In her study of Mail-Order Brides, Nicole Constable (2003: 64–67, 82–86) also discerns such assumptions in Western feminist critiques of Asian family life, especially of the institution of arranged marriage and the phenomenon of Mail-Order Brides.

38 Another curious example, reminiscent of British colonial interpretations of Indian customary law, is the requirement by British and Canadian immigration authorities of evidence of 'social' and 'community' recognition of the marriage (as in a wedding reception, photographed and videotaped), in addition to the material evidence of its legal regularisation (see Gell 1994: 367–68; also Hall 2002; Sheel, this volume).

39 Bano (1999) points to the non-recognition of the individual's 'right to dissent' where the argument for the rights of a 'community' to its own practice in the private sphere presupposes the internal homogeneity of the immigrant community represented by 'community leaders' recognised by the state. See among a large number of studies of family violence in the South Asian diaspora, Abraham (1998); Bannerji (2000: Ch. 5); Bhattacharjee (1992); Das Gupta (2006: esp. 109–58); Kang (2003); Southall Black Sisters (1992); Wilson (1978).

40 See 'Cross-border Marriage Disputes: Child Suffers Most, say Jurists', *The Tribune* (Chandigarh), 7 May 2006.

41 As in India, where bride price and dowry were both practised (see Vatuk 1975), the predominance of bride price in China does not exclude dowry, a portion of which may be what Goody (1973) has termed 'indirect dowry', that is, items funded out of the bride price payments which then become part of the 'conjugal fund'. On dowry and bride price transactions in relation to social structure and status claims, see,

for China, Han and Eades (1995: 842–43); Siu (1993); Whyte (1993); and for India, Parry (1979); Van der Veen (1972).

42 See, e.g., the *Indian Journal of Gender Studies* Special Issue on *Feminism and the Politics of Resistance* (Volume 7, Number 2, 2000), edited by Rajeswari Sunder Rajan; also Kabeer (2000: esp. Chs. 2 and 10).

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SECTION II
MARRIAGE AS MIGRATION