MARRIAGE: CHOICE OR DESTINY?
THE CASE OF INDO-FIJIAN WOMEN IN SUVA

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This paper forms part of a wider study for a thesis dealing with the subordination of Indian women in Suva, Fiji. In this paper the inevitability of marriage for Indo-Fijian women is located in the particular economic and ideological conditions of existence. The paper also explores the extent to which any change in these conditions leads to a transformation of the institutional arrangement. I argue that women's absence from and/or marginal position in the economic sphere, together with the prevailing gender ideology, makes marriage inevitable for Indo-Fijian women, thus ensuring their continued subordination. These conditions of existence ensure firstly, that marriage must be entered and secondly, that traditional arranged marriages remain predominant.

Recent feminist literature (Barrett 1980, Barrett and McKintosh 1982, Young, Wolkawitz and McCullach 1981) rejects economic determinism as an adequate explanation for women's subordination (Branson and Miller 1984:1) and instead explains women's subordination as being relatively independent from the "general operations of the capitalist mode of production" (Barrett 1980:10). Barrett rejects the idea that superstructural aspects are merely the reflection of the economic base and thus argues for a "radical reprioritising of ideology in which questions of gender divisions can apparently be situated" (Barrett 1980:30-31). She claims that neither the economy nor the ideology is enough on its own to explain women's subordination and hence, the need to address "the relations between the economic and ideological processes of women's subordination" (Barrett 1980:40).

In light of this recent feminist theorising, I aim to explore here the extent to which the economy and or the ideology influences the inevitability of marriage for Indo-Fijian women in Suva. Initially, I propose to do this by locating the particular conditions of existence, that is, the economic, political and ideological arrangements necessary for the production, maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage among Indians in Suva. The conditions of existence referred to here are those social and material features which facilitate the production, maintenance and reproduction of any institutional arrangement. I will also explore the extent to which any change
in these conditions of existence leads to a transformation of the institutional arrangements.

General trends

The question of whether one desires marriage is not an issue contemplated by Indo-Fijian women. As in many parts of India (Sharma 1980, Jacobson 1977, Jeffrey 1979) marriage is taken for granted, among both Hindus and Muslims. According to the 1976 Census of the Population in Fiji, less than 2 per cent of Indo-Fijian females between the ages of 30-34 were unmarried. Half the total number of Indo-Fijian women in Fiji are married by the age of 19.5 years and the majority of their marriages occur within a relatively short age span.

Whether the individual has an 'arranged marriage', an 'arranged love marriage' or a 'love marriage' is influenced by a number of factors such as education, class background, participation in the labour market and the degree of internalisation of the prevailing gender ideology. My research indicates that among Indo-Fijians arranged marriages are the dominant form, and preferences for one form or another follow definite patterns.

It is more common for a woman with little and/or no paid employment to have an arranged marriage. A number of reasons can be advanced to account for this factor. A woman who does not spend much time outside the home has few or no male contacts besides her immediate and extended kin. Therefore her access to males restricts her chances of striking up liaisons independently of her parents and relatives. The prevailing gender ideology confines women to the home and restricts their movements outside. For example, it is believed that girls of marriageable age should not be allowed to go out of the home alone. Among Indo-Fijians, cultural practices such as the seclusion of women, demands of high standards of female modesty, restrictions on women's spatial mobility and interactions with unrelated males, ensures the continuance of 'arranged' marriages. Indeed, it could be argued these cultural practices are important mechanisms through which the system of 'arranged' marriages is maintained and reproduced.

Secondly, compliance with parental choice or wishes is more likely when the individual is economically dependent on the family. A woman's capacity to resist or object to an unpopular marriage partner is extremely limited when economic independence is unavailable and the prevailing gender ideology demands submission. The threat of physical violence, banishment from the parental home, being 'left on the shelf' and the possible questioning of their
morals act as powerful mechanisms to ensure compliance. Finally, any single woman without an appropriate niche is a likely candidate for an arranged marriage. A woman who is not at school and not in the paid workforce becomes the target for numerous marriage negotiations.

On the other hand, 'love' marriage or 'arranged love' marriage tend to be more common among women who are educated and in paid employment. The obvious reasons for this are their access to non-traditional ideas about marriage, the opportunity to interact socially with males as a result of their participation in the world outside the home and their greater capacity to resist arranged marriages. In addition, there is a general acceptance by the Indo-Fijian community of 'love' and 'arranged love' marriages occurring among this category of women.

However, the apparent free choice of marriage partners that many working women command is extremely limited. 'Free choice' exists within clearly defined constraints. A woman can choose her own marriage partner as long as he is of the same race, religion, ethnic and class background. Among Indo-Fijians the parameters within which one must fall in love are clearly defined, and rigorously pursued.

Economic Conditions of Existence

What are the particular economic arrangements which help sustain, reinforce and make inevitable the institution of marriage for Indo-Fijian women in Suva? The low rate of participation in the paid work force and the inadequate income of Indo-Fijian women preclude the possibility of economic independence. Having no separate or only minimal income, they are totally dependent as unmarried women on their fathers, as married women on their husbands, and as widows on their sons. Because Indo-Fijian women are in a perpetual state of economic dependency, marriage is the only option available.

These women also have no control over the form of marriage. Economic dependency means that avenues of resistance are closed because any deviation from prescribed 'norms' could result in being left without any means of economic support.

The low rates of Indo-Fijian women's participation in the paid work force is firstly the result of the structure of the Fiji economy and secondly the ideological practice of Indo-Fijians. The structure of the Fiji economy does not allow for substantial participation in the work force by women of any
While Fiji's economy generated increased employment opportunities for women during the ten year period 1966-1976, the present participation of women in paid employment is still minimal (Report on the Census of the Population 1976). Women constitute only 17.1 percent of those 'economically active', compared with 84.1 percent of males (Census of the Population, Volume III 1976: 16) although the 1984 Annual Employment Survey does record an increase to 21.8 percent.

The Fiji economy relies predominantly on the sugar and tourist industries. Until recently, the latter industry has been growing and generating greater employment opportunities for women (Census of the Population Volume II 1976: 50). However Indo-Fijian women do not have access to these opportunities as the tourist industry is predominantly serviced by native Fijians. All the 'up front' positions such as barmaids, waitresses, housemaids and tour guides, are held by Fijian women (Bolabola and Slatter 1984). This is in the tourist promoters' image of Fiji as an island paradise inhabited by native Fijians. The tendency of the tourist industry to employ on the basis of ethnicity and gender leads to the virtual exclusion of Indo-Fijian women (Samy 1975: 206).

An exception is within the retail sector of the tourist industry which has generated greater employment opportunities for Indo-Fijian women (Agar et al. 1984: 29), particularly as sales assistants in family owned duty free shops. However, these employment opportunities have done little to increase Indo-Fijian women's economic independence. As the majority are family members of shop owners, Indo-Fijian women employed in this sector either receive no or minimal monetary remuneration (Agar et al. 1984: 106).

Indo-Fijian males, on the other hand, have had more success in capitalising on tourism. The taxi drivers, street hawkers, duty free shop owners and chief cooks at the hotels are Indo-Fijian males and some have entered the industry at the very top levels, either as owners or managers of hotels. The exclusion of Indo-Fijian women from a major growth area further delays the possibility of their economic independence.

High rates of unemployment also entrench Indo-Fijian women's dependency. Women experience greater difficulty in acquiring jobs than do men, as the age old myth of women as homemakers is conveniently invoked to take the pressure off the shrinking job market. Women are thus given only 'secondary status' in the labour market. In a recent report commissioned by the Fiji Government (The Fiji Employment and Development Mission Report), women are explicitly viewed as problematic for the labour market. On the one hand, the report claims women could "supply labour for growth", while, on the
other they could "swamp the labour market" (Narsey 1985: 14). The report goes on to "question whether the net social and economic effects" of the greater involvement of women in the labour market would be "positive" (Narsey 1985: 16). Women are not only given 'secondary status' in the labour market but the problems of unemployment among women scarcely receive attention.

While unemployment rates for all females are greater than for males of all ethnic categories (12.8 percent and 5.5 percent respectively), the highest levels of female unemployment were recorded among Indo-Fijian women and other Pacific island women (Agar et al. 1984: 41-42). This does not take into account the 'hidden unemployed', that is, those women who might classify themselves as looking for work if they thought job opportunities existed. If these categories are further refined, then the highest levels of unemployment are found among female school leavers (Census of the Population Volume III 1976: 24). For an Indo-Fijian female school leaver, unemployment is the first and surest step to an arranged marriage.

Job creation programmes are aimed only at males, and measures for generating greater employment opportunities for women are visibly absent. Papers delivered at the 1985 National Economic Summit in Suva did not even address the issue of female unemployment and none of the proposed measures for generating employment could be said to apply directly to women.

Finally, in examining Indo-Fijian women's employment opportunities in the Fiji economy, the structural limitations of a wide range of occupations need to be considered. The gender differentiation employed in the labour market means that a number of trade and managerial occupations are simply closed to women because of cultural stereotypes. This factor further contributes to the overall shrinking number of jobs accessible to Indo-Fijian women in the Fijian economy.

Coupled with the structural limitations inhibiting greater participation of women in the work force, there are also cultural limitations. A number of my informants maintain their parents have definite ideas about which occupations are considered appropriate or inappropriate for Indo-Fijian women. The major organising principle used in defining the 'appropriateness' of jobs can be broadly located within the general principles of 'purdah practices'. Women's entry into the work force is affected by what could be termed an ideology of seclusion and the segregation of the sexes. Occupations which are commonly mentioned as being unsuitable are waitress, barmaid and air-hostess. The reasons given relate to cultural notions of protecting the purity of unmarried females, keeping contact between unrelated males and females to a minimum and the need to keep women physically and socially inconspicuous. For
example, the nature of barmaid and waitress work entails contact with large numbers of unrelated males and air-hostessing often requires overnight stopovers. In some instances, parents identified only one or two occupations, such as bank clerks, stenographer/typists, as being suitable and so if their daughters are unable to get these particular jobs then they will not be allowed to work at all. By classifying certain occupations as culturally 'appropriate' and others as culturally 'inappropriate', Indo-Fijians restrict women's chances for participating in paid employment and achieving economic independence. For Indo-Fijian women a labour market already restricted due to structural factors becomes further restricted as a result of cultural factors.

In addition to Indo-Fijian women's low participation rates in the work force, a second aspect of the particular economic conditions of existence that needs to be addressed, is the major areas of concentration of those Indo-Fijian women who do participate in the labour market. This enables some assessment of their potential to achieve economic independence. Indo-Fijian women in Suva who are in the work force tend to be concentrated in the service industries working as stenographer/typists, clerks, shop assistants, housemaids, school teachers, and nurses (although the majority of nurses are ethnic Fijian) (Agar et al. 1984: 32). These are all areas of work not highly renowned for their high income. More importantly, Fiji does not have an equal pay act (Agar et al. 1984: 246).

A small but growing number of Indo-Fijian women are also entering the manufacturing sector, particularly as tailors in small family-owned garment factories. Moreover Indian women's participation in the manufacturing sector is largely confined to the garment industry which operates under 'sweat shop' conditions with extremely low wages even by Fiji standards (Fiji Times 14.6.84). Even the rather conservative report of the Fiji and Employment Development Mission acknowledged the low or below subsistence rates of pay in this industry although it argued that minimum wages are not the solution. Garment industry workers are still not covered by any wages regulation and recent attempts to impose a minimum wage failed as the manufacturers argued large scale layoffs would result from the imposition of a minimum wage. Consequently, the Government withdrew the order. The garment industry has been considered a growing industry that would generate more employment opportunities for Indo-Fijian women. However this industry's potential as the 'saviour' of Indo-Fijian women cannot be relied on as the pittance the women receive hardly meets basic economic needs.

Similarly in the service sector, where Indo-Fijian women are concentrated, the income is not enough to achieve economic independence. School teaching is the only occupation with a concentration of Indo-Fijian
women (Census of the Population Volume III, 1976:57), where the income, if carefully stretched, could enable a person to achieve economic independence. Lower wages can be attributed to women's secondary status in the labour market. This is the widespread belief that women only work until they are married or to supplement their husbands' income. It is assumed that women do not need incomes sufficient to provide economic autonomy.

Not only are Indo-Fijian women outside the labour market in a perpetual state of economic dependency but even those within the labour market remain dependent because of their inadequate income. For both groups marriage is virtually inevitable. Nevertheless this does not imply that no difference exists between those in the labour market and those outside it. Indeed in the case of the former, some choice in the form of marriage is available while for the majority of the latter, no choice is available. Those women who earn an income generally contribute to household expenses and this gives them greater confidence to confront and resist parental choice of marriage partners.

In the case of Indo-Fijian women in Suva, the economic conditions of existence necessary for the continuation of marriage as an institution can be located in the lack of job opportunities and low income. A change in this condition of existence should bring about some transformation of the institution of marriage. This poses the question of whether the provision of sufficient job opportunities and higher income will transform marriage as an institution in Fiji? There have been some changes in instances where there has been a slight alteration of the economic conditions of existence. When this has brought transformations in the form of marriage it has not necessarily changed marriage as an institution per se. Highly educated Indo-Fijian women with access to economic independence have the economic resources not to marry if they wish. In Suva, such women are resisting arranged marriage and interference by parents in the choice of marriage partner, but are not rejecting the institution of marriage. Instead marriage is transformed to 'love marriage'.

Like those who are economically dependent, most Indo-Fijian women who have economic autonomy also see marriage as inevitable. Despite their economic independence, there exists a powerful and potent familial ideology that stresses the need for women to enter the institution of marriage. The power and persuasiveness of this familial ideology must not be underestimated. This seems to indicate that the provision of jobs and an adequate income will not automatically lead to the elimination of women's subordination. The inevitability of marriage can be located not only in the economic sphere but also in the ideological sphere, and thus the subordination of women through
the institution of marriage needs also to be analysed within the realms of ideology.

**Ideological Conditions of Existence**

In this section, the particular religious ideologies which facilitate the production, maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage amongst Indo-Fijians in Suva will be examined. It is through religious ideology that Indo-Fijian women's subordinate position in the public world of economics and politics and the private world of home and the family is maintained, reinforced and legitimised. As shown in the previous section, marriage is inevitable for all Indo-Fijian women not simply as a result of their economic dependence but, as the case of highly educated Indo-Fijian women demonstrates, also as a result of the processes in which men and women are represented differently - created and recreated as "gendered human subjects" (Barrett 1980: 40). Marriage for Indo-Fijian women in Suva must be explained not only in relation to the economic sphere, but also the ideological sphere, as the 'everyday ideological practices' which reproduce the institution of marriage have their basis in Sanskritic Hinduism and Islam.

In response to the question "Why did you marry?" or "Why do you wish to marry?", the common reply is "Because everyone gets married". "We're Hindustani and it's our tradition". The 'Hindustani tradition' here refers to a synthesis of all things which originated from the subcontinent of India as opposed to stressing the regional variations, Bengalis, Biharis or even the different religious denominations, Hindu or Muslim. This is not to imply that no separation exists between Hindus and Muslims. On the contrary, religious endogamy is usually practised in marriage. However, the prevailing gender ideology is one of 'Indianness' as opposed to regional variation or religious differences. The rules and code of conduct governing Indo-Fijian women's behaviour has a commonality which crosses regional and religious differentiation. It is within this context of the 'Hindustani tradition' that Indo-Fijian women in Suva account for marriage. They do not explain marriage in terms of religion but in terms of their common link with the subcontinent of India.

It is under the guise of the desire to maintain Indian tradition that Indo-Fijian women's unequal position in all spheres of life is maintained and reinforced. More specifically, in relation to the focus of this discussion, the institution of marriage is perpetuated and justified by the 'Indian tradition' or culture. The roots or origins of this tradition can be found both in Sanskritic
Hinduism and Islam, the two major religions practised by Indo-Fijians. While the religious ideology can be located as having its origins in Hinduism and Islam, the transformation of the religious ideas into secular practice becomes the commonly taken for granted everyday traditions of Indian culture. Therefore, while the analysis which follows deals separately with the way Hindu and Muslim ideology positively encourages and sanctions marriages, I wish to stress that this separation occurs only at the level of sacred texts, not at the level of everyday ideological practice as both Hindu and Muslim ideologies are enmeshed into the everyday practice of Indian culture.

**Marriage and Hinduism**

An estimated 80 percent of Indo-Fijians in Fiji are Hindus with the majority belonging to the Sanatan Dharm sect (Census of the Population, Volume III, 1976:1). The Hinduism which exists in Fiji is not so much an adaptation of the Hinduism which exists in India but more a resettlement (Wilson 1979:88). Hinduism as practised in Fiji is no less intense or outside the textual tradition than that in India and it can be said that the particular variant of Hinduism practised in Fiji is only as different as the differences which exist in the way Hinduism is practised in different parts of India (Wilson 1979:89). Because the Hinduism practised in Fiji is essentially the same as in India (in as much as anyone can claim the presence of a unified Hinduism), the analysis undertaken here will be of Hinduism as it is presented in the sacred texts. That is the 'great tradition'.

For Hindus, to be unmarried is to be unholy (Kapadia 1955). Marriage and the procreation of children are both positive duties (Basham 1974: 167) and a sacrament (Kapadia 1955). It is only through marriage that a woman can achieve religious salvation and fulfil her dharma (Mies 1980:50). The analysis of marriage as a necessity in Hinduism is often centered around the issue of marriage being a sacrament and hence its desirability for men and necessity for women (Kapadia 1955, Altekar 1938, Srinivas 1976). A further explanation for the necessity of marriage which is often ignored is the control of women's sexuality.

In Hindu cosmology, woman has a dual character, she is all that is 'good' and all that is 'bad'. As such, the Hindu woman can be simultaneously viewed in a series of oppositions, "pure/impure, sinister/benign, creative/ destructive, ally/opponent, goddess/witch" (Allen 1982:1). In addition, this duality "gives rise to a large number of well known Hindu female stereotypes such as pure virgin, voluptuous temptress, obedient wife, honoured mother, dreaded widow, impure menstruating women, powerful sexual partner" (Allen 1982:1).
These contradictory images of women are encompassed in a "myriad of manifestations" of the Hindu goddess who has simultaneously 'terrifying destructive forms' and 'gentle nurturing forms' (Bennett 1983:261). For example, on the one hand the goddess Kali (the Black One) controls her own sexuality and is 'potentially destructive and malevolent' and on the other, the goddess Lakshmi (the goddess of wealth) has transferred control of her sexuality to men and is 'fertile and benevolent' (Wadley 1977:114). Since the most dangerous aspect of a woman lies in her sexuality, it is this which men must control if women's power is to be neutralised. If, however, women transfer control of sexuality to their husbands, then the dangerous aspect of their character is neutralised (Wadley 1977:119). Hence it is only through marriage that the duality of women's character is neutralised and they can fulfil their most important role, that of the wife.

All the benevolent goddesses in the Hindu pantheon are those who are properly married and who have transferred control of their sexuality (Power/Nature) to their husband (Wadley 1977:118) and thus shed the dark side of their character. This transfer of sexuality from wives to husbands adds to the overall strength of the husband and secondly, enables women to perform their proper duties and roles (good behaviour, dutiful, controlled) as wives (Wadley 1977:120).

As well as ridding them of the evil aspects of their character, marriage allows women to realise their most important role, that of wife. According to Wadley "the wifely role is preeminent in Hinduism" (1977:124). The Hindu law books, the Dharma Sastras (the Rules of Right Conduct) and written and oral mythologies, both in Sanskrit and the vernacular, all provide concrete and explicit guidelines for Hindu women's roles as wives (Wadley 1977:120). In the process of pursuing and achieving religious salvation, a woman must lose her identity and "merge her individuality with that of her husband" (Kapadia 1955:169). The lengths to which a wife must go in her duty to serve her husband is a constant theme in Hindu texts, popular literature and folk practices. The characters of Sita and Savitri are held up as the ideal models of a dutiful wife. These themes appear not only as law in the sacred Hindu texts but are constantly reiterated in popular literature and oral traditions.

Therefore, for women marriage is inevitable if they are to acquire religious salvation, neutralise the inherently evil aspects of their character and realise their most important role, that of the wife. This Hindu ideology transmitted through the male dominated sacred texts, popular literature and the folk and oral traditions "often created and propagated by women" (Wadley 1977:125) ensure the maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage.
Muslims constitute approximately 15 percent of the Indo-Fijian population in Fiji (Census of the Population, Volume III, 1976:2). The majority of Muslims belong to the Sunni sect while a sizeable minority belong to the Ahmadiya sect. In the last ten years, the world Islamic revival has made its impact on Fiji. Many more Muslims than previously now pray five times a day, go to jumma, religiously observe Ramadan, teach their children to pray and in general conduct their lives in response to the guidelines set up by the Koran and the Hadith. This revival has meant that a great number of Muslims now have greater knowledge of the Koran and the teachings of Mohammed. While women are now more aware of the dictates of Islam regarding their behaviour and their dress, no great rush to adopt purdah is evident. Nevertheless, even among women, knowledge of the Koran is now greater than ever before and the practice of Islam more staunch.

"The curse of God be upon those women who remain unmarried and say they will never marry" (Mohammed). As in Hinduism, marriage in Islam is both encouraged and highly desirable. However, while marriage is a religious sacrament in Hinduism, it is a civil contract in Islam which either party can terminate at any time, at least in theory. Apart from this particular difference, a number of similarities exist. In Islam, as in Hinduism, marriage is encouraged and required of women in order to control their sexuality and to enable them to realise their most important roles; that of wife, child-rearer and homemaker.

The civil nature of marriage however does not mean that marriage is optional. The institution of marriage is highly recommended for both males and females. Both unmarried males and females pose a threat to the social order of Islam. In Mohammed's scheme, humans inherently possess animalistic sexual urges which must be controlled for the benefit of community life and human social order (Minai 1981:12). The institution of marriage is recommended as the legitimate outlet for human sexual instinct (Madudi 1979, 93).

While marriage is advised for both sexes, the Islamic doctrines concentrate particularly on curbing women's sexuality. Women are regarded as too irresponsible to control themselves and thus fences had to be built around them, not only to curb their sexuality but also to ensure the legitimacy of heirs. The woman is allocated the role of temptress and so it is she who must be controlled and confined to prevent sexual anarchy.

The second major reason for the recommendation of marriage in Islam is
for the purpose of establishing the family and propagating the human race. It is in this sphere that women realise their major role in society. Childbearing and child-rearing are women's prime and unique roles in society and it is through these activities that women make a contribution to society. Both marriage and child-rearing are seen as the most important values in Islam (Ferdows and Ferdows 1983:61). It is through marriage that the natural sexual instincts of women can be controlled and channelled legitimately to fulfil the proper roles assigned to them in the Koran, as wife and child-rearer. By restricting sexual activity to marriage the animalistic sexual urge is directed towards more constructive purposes, the creation of the family and ordered community life. In this way, marriage is not only the "lawful way of satisfying the sexual desire but indeed it is also a social obligation" (Madudi 1979, 95). A person who declines to marry without a good reason is disloyal to the community, a parasite and robber (Madudi 1979, 95).

Penetration of Ideology

So far an analysis of the institution of marriage in both Hinduism and Islam has been undertaken to demonstrate that in both religious traditions marriage is encouraged and positively sanctioned. The question which now needs to be addressed is whether aspects of this tradition penetrate everyday life. What are the links between the ideals as presented in the sacred texts and everyday ideological practice? Sacred ideals and stereotyped female images are transformed, internalised and experienced through ritual, festive occasions, song, popular literature, folk tradition and Hindi films.

Hindu women participate in most of the important ceremonies both in the mandir (temple) and at home. Indeed, the responsibility for daily worship in the home lies with women. One corner of the house is usually set aside as the prayer corner where each day women offer worship and perform localised ritual for the well-being of their family and community. While women offer prayers to all the gods, Laxmi is the most favoured one especially among married women. Unmarried girls, on the other hand, offer prayers to Shiu as he is the god responsible for endowing unmarried girls with good husbands. In families where religion is practised with great fervour, women and girls also fast on the particular days assigned to their special gods.

One of the most important, popular and frequent outings for women in Suva are weddings. On these occasions, women have the opportunity to display their fine, expensive gold jewelry, new silk saris and participate with other women in ritual, song and dance. Marriage rituals play an important
part in familiarising and reinforcing the Sanskrit ideals of maleness and femaleness for Indo-Fijians. For example, all the songs relate to the bride's new role as wife and daughter-in-law with a heavy stress on her future submissive and subordinate role. Furthermore, the particular rituals that have to be performed by women at weddings relate to and symbolise the merging and submerging of the bride's identity with that of her husband and the transference of sexual control from father to husband and the celebration of being married. The underlying message in all of the female rituals is the importance and necessity of marriage for women. The celebration of their married status and the extolling of being married is reflected by only married women being permitted to perform these rituals. The deification of the bride and groom symbolised in many of the wedding rituals are further examples of the celebration of the married state.

In the wedding ceremony itself, where the kanyadan (gift of the virgin) ritual is performed, the bride (kanya) is formally given as a gift (dan) by the father to the husband. In the kanyadan the bride's parents offer the groom's family a large dough ball which contains some gold and money symbolising the handing over of their hague, that is, all their rights over property, including the rights over the bride. Implicit in this ritual is the transfer of ownership and control of the female from father to husband and from one agnatic group to another. More importantly, it is the transfer of control over the female's sexuality that is transmitted from father to husband in the kanyadan ritual as exemplified in the placing of sandhur (red vermillion powder) down the central parting of the bride's hair by the groom at the culmination of the wedding ceremony. As Bennett (1983) points out sandhur "symbolises the groom's sexual possession of the bride", and the fact that a sheet is placed over the couple during the performance of this ritual is indicative of the private "defloration" of the bride. The Hindu image of the ideal woman who has transferred control of her sexuality to males without struggle is reflected in the passive role of the bride and the active roles of her father and husband in the kanyadan.

The symbolic significance of marriage rituals is crucial for an understanding of the social construction of gender amongst Indo-Fijians in Suva. It is through the plethora of marriage rituals performed by women and the ritual specialist that ideal images of Indian womanhood "emanating from the great tradition" are "experienced, internalised and legitimated" (Miller and Branson 1984:8). The 'dynamic' nature of symbols means the symbols are "pregnant with meaning for men and women who interact by observing, transgressing and manipulating for private ends the norms and values that the symbol expresses" (Turner 1970:44).
In the case of the rituals described and analysed, both old and young, married and unmarried women explain the rituals within the same general framework of meanings that I attach to the symbols in my analysis. The only difference being that my analysis is an extension of the women's interpretation and is framed around a wider analysis of the "underlying ideological structures" of Hinduism that form "the basis for the construction of gender" (Miller and Branson 1984:6).

While the familiar "it is our custom" is the only explanation given for certain rituals, others are explained in great detail and with a high degree of sophistication, particularly those concerning women's dependent status, subordinate role and submission to husbands and mothers-in-law. It could be deduced that perhaps Indo-Fijian women only internalise those symbolic meanings that are familiar and recognisable and have a relevance to their everyday lives. Those marriage rituals that reflect the reality of women's everyday lives become the most potent for the "ideological construction of gender" and for "everyday ideological practice" (Miller and Branson 1984:6). These marriage rituals not only express reality but define, construct and interpret reality for the women (Fruzetti 1982:9). Furthermore, the "sanctified ideal images" of Indian womanhood that are experienced in marriage rituals, reinforce the "identification of secular practice with sacred ideals" (Miller and Branson 1984:4). Because the set of meanings women attach to certain marriage rituals closely resemble and reflect the ideal images in Sanskritic Hinduism, the symbolic significances of these rituals are not merely the esoteric knowledge of ritual specialists. It is through the everyday practice of these religious rituals that women become familiar and acquainted with the sacred texts. By observing, participating and experiencing these rituals, ideals of Indian womanhood are made tangible and real. The ideal images are internalised through popular literature, song, folk tales, myths and religious ritual, all of which are combined to form the concrete everyday practice of religion.

Compared with Hinduism, there are fewer religious activities for women in Islam. Muslim women can fast during the month of Ramandan, pray five times a day (at home rather than at the mosque) and participate in the major festivals. While women cannot pray at the mosque either for jumma or the festivals, their participation is nevertheless necessary. Women prepare all the food for the festive occasions and with men visit neighbours and relatives to exchange Id greetings. In recent years in Suva women have been attending prayer meetings at a different location from men at Id.

In addition, the ideal that every Muslim should read the Koran at least once has led to the emergence of a number of Muslim women's clubs in Suva
in the Zenana League. These have been set up primarily to teach women to read Arabic and subsequently the Koran. Their secondary but more important role is the direct transmission of Islamic ideology. At these clubs, women not only learn to read the Koran and perform the namaz (prayers), but also learn how Muslim women should dress, behave, raise children, interact with their husbands and in general live with izzat (honour). Through such clubs, Muslim women acquire and internalise the ideals as represented in the Koran and the Hadith.

Thus, it is through 'concrete practice' that the sacred texts of Islam and Hinduism are experienced and reproduced. For Indo-Fijian women in Fiji, the ideals as represented in these traditions provide the yardstick by which one thinks, acts and judges. It is through "concrete practice [that] these stereotypes come to life as models for behaviour and images against which to react. They are the basis for the interpretation of the role of women by both men and women" (Miller and Branson 1984:6).

Implications of the Economic-ideological Conditions of Existence

The economic and ideological conditions of existence ensure that power and control over women rest with males. The power and control that men have over women ensures the maintenance and reproduction of marriage as an institution. The important decisions regarding women's lives are all made by men, resulting in women having virtually no control over such things as their own marriage, or even when or whether to marry.

It is within the arena of the family that women experience much of this subordination and powerlessness. The greater authority and power of males is evident in their control of women's spatial movement, social interactions, behaviour, education, labour and sexuality. As Barrett argues (1980:186) "gender divisions of social production cannot be understood without reference to the organisation of the household and the ideology of familialism". Since it is "in an ideology of family life as distinct from concrete families that gender identity and its meaning is reproduced" (Barrett 1980:206), the family household system is the crucial arena in which women's subordination is ideologically constructed and reproduced.

In the Indo-Fijian context, it is the ideology of the family that generally confines women to the domestic realm and men to the public realm and that legitimates the deferential relations between males and females within the household. It is through the concrete everyday relations in the household that gender identity and subordination are constructed, experienced and reproduced.
While gender specific behaviour is recreated and reinforced within families, it is legitimised by a powerful and persuasive familial ideology that is derived from and endorsed by the religious traditions of Islam and Hinduism. The asymmetrical social power of males is constantly stressed and experienced in the everyday relations of family life. A familial ideology that stresses marriage, views women's primary role as wives and mothers, and supports notions of family respectability operate, in effect, to exclude women from the labour market, thus making them dependent on males and subject to their control. Hence, the capacity for women to participate in the labour market is constrained by the social relations in which they are embedded, that is, the family-based household.

While familial ideology is crucial for securing the subordination of women, other forces or influences in Suva such as education, employment, and western media provide some alternative constructs and may lead to the weakening of the ideological controls. In these instances, physical violence is used as a supplementary mechanism of control and familial ideology plays a crucial role in women's acceptance of men's right to control 'their' women by the use of the occasional danda (stick). Among Indo-Fijians in Suva, unlike certain other societies (Young and Harris 1982:470) where institutional violence (such as gang rape) is used to control women, it is the more casual individual violence against one woman by a man, which is used to control women. As Young and Harris go on to argue (1982:471) the use of physical violence as a mechanism of control does not necessarily disappear in societies where the ideological mechanisms of control dominate.

For women of marriageable age, the rejection of marriage per se, or the particular marriage partner chosen by parents could incur the use of physical violence. All my informants, whether they were schoolgirls of 16 years of age, working women of 20, or married of 30, explained their reluctance to resist in terms of the threat and use of physical violence by the particular male in control of them. This fear ensures both compliance to particular forms of marriage and the maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage.

The implications of the threat and use of physical violence for the continuation and reproduction of the institution of marriage are twofold. Firstly, the threat of physical violence ensures that girls of marriageable age comply with parental desires. That is, parents dictate the time of marriage, the type of marriage, and the particular marriage partner. Secondly, because the important decisions regarding women's lives are made by men and physical violence is an important mechanism of maintaining male control, then women seldom entertain the idea of resisting unpopular rules and regulations set down by the parents. For example, parental decisions either to deny their daughters
access to the labour market altogether or to allow them only restricted entry are unlikely to be questioned, resulting in women's continued economic dependence on males. The maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage is ensured.

Men, by relegating women to the private world of the home and the family, ensure their own control and superiority in the public world of economics and politics. Women's exclusion from this public world makes them dependent on men and thus subject to their control.

Conclusion

This paper has located the economic, and ideological conditions of existence for the production, maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage. I have argued that women's absence and/or marginal position in the economic sphere and the prevailing gender ideology make marriage inevitable for Indo-Fijian women, thus ensuring their continued subordination. The complex interrelationship between the economic and ideological conditions of existence ensure that marriages must be entered and that traditional arranged marriages remain predominant.

In some instances, one aspect is more dominant. In the case of Indo-Fijian women in Suva, a variation in the economic conditions of existence results in some transformation of the institution of marriage. The historical and cultural norm of traditional arranged marriages is replaced by love marriages, although these still are marriages. Women who have economic independence have a greater capacity to resist traditional arranged marriage and instead opt for love marriage. In this instance, a change in the form of marriage is evident, although no overall transformation of the institution occurs. None of the women who have economic independence choose to remain outside the institution of marriage. This points to the need, as Barrett argues, to address "the relations between the economic and ideological processes at work" (Barrett 1980:40), ensuring the production, maintenance and reproduction of the institution of marriage. Since the ideological and economic conditions of existence operate in tandem to ensure Indo-Fijian women enter the institution of marriage, one must conclude that for Indo-Fijian women, marriage is destiny and surely not choice.
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