

FOREWORD

At the turn of 1997 and 1998, there was a happy coincidence of a number of different initiatives, resulting in an international symposium on 'Changing patterns of family and kinship in South Asia' held at the University of Helsinki on the 6th of May, 1998, the papers of which are published in this volume.

We are grateful to Her Excellency the Ambassador of India in Finland, Srimati Kamlesh Kumar, and to Minister Tara Singh, presently Chargé d'Affaires at the Embassy of India in Helsinki, for financial support granted by the Government of India in conjunction with the celebration of the 50th anniversary of India's independence. We also wish to acknowledge the financial support of the Graduate School of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences and the Institute for Asian and African Studies of the University of Helsinki. The symposium was inaugurated by Srimati Kamlesh Kumar and Dr Jukka Siikala, Professor of Social Anthropology at the Department of Sociology at the University of Helsinki. In the evening, the participants had the opportunity to see and discuss three anthropological films directed in Bengal by Professors Ákos Östör and Lina Fruzzetti (*Serpent Mother*, 28 min; *Sons of Shiva*, 28 min; and *Seed & Earth*, 38 min). The symposium concluded with a delicious Indian dinner hosted by Srimati Kamlesh Kumar at her residence.

Although all other contributions to this symposium dealt with either classical or modern India, we did not want to exclude an interesting study made in Bangladesh (formerly East Bengal), as this neatly continues the theme taken up in several other papers concerned with West Bengal. Hence the use of 'South Asia' in the title of this book. The main credit for the symposium of course belongs to its participants, and we are very happy that so many scholars, younger and older, from Finland and abroad, were able to participate in it. Their papers have been kept more or less in the order in which they were presented, starting with classical South Asia and then moving to modern times.

DON HANDELMAN, who is Shaine Professor of Sociology and Anthropology at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem, analysed a Hindu myth dealing with the divine marriage of Siva and Parvati. His paper *Husband and wife and the game of dice: Śiva and Pārvatī fall apart* takes up a theme central to the new book Handelman has just published in collaboration with David Shulman in 1997: *God Inside Out: Śiva's Game of Dice* (New York: Oxford University Press).

VIRPI HÄMEEN-ANTTILA, M.A., teaches at the Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki. Her topic was the family and marriage in the works of Kalidāsa, the greatest poet writing in Sanskrit in classical India. The paper

is entitled 'For ever thou shalt love and she be fair': Kālidāsa's vision of the ideal marriage.

Docent KLAUS KARTTUNEN, also from the Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki, critically examines the Greek accounts of ancient Indian marriage in his paper *Mutual agreement or auction of brides*.

Professor LINA FRUZZETTI teaches at the Department of Anthropology, Brown University, Providence, Rhode Island and Professor ÁKOS ÖSTÖR at the Department of Anthropology, Wesleyan University, Middletown, Connecticut. Their joint paper *Hierarchy revisited* addresses the question of the extent to which a theory of hierarchy can advance the understanding of Indian society today. The paper draws from their extensive research on kinship in Bengali culture and comments on the debate of recent years concerning hierarchy and research on kinship in South Asia.

HELI UUSIKYLÄ's paper is based on her forthcoming doctoral dissertation on family planning in Bangladesh. Her paper entitled *The seeds in the container: Metaphors of conception and kinship in rural Bangladesh* aims to connect metaphors of kinship and gender to a broader understanding of the key ideas about fertility and social reproduction. She is a post-graduate student in Social Anthropology at Helsinki University and is currently working as a visiting scholar at Brown University.

MINNA SÄÄVÄLÄ, a Research Fellow in Social Anthropology at the University of Helsinki, examines discourses on the Hindu joint family as an ideological battleground and social practice in contemporary India. Her article *The 'Hindu joint family': Past and present* comments on the persisting debate about the Hindu joint family and draws from her field work in rural Andhra Pradesh.

SIRPA TENHUNEN's paper titled *Urban hierarchies in flux: Arranged intercaste marriages in Calcutta* examines the seemingly unconventional practice of arranged intercaste marriages in a working-class neighbourhood in Calcutta as well as the insights it offers into the nature of the intertwining between two sets of hierarchies: caste and class. She is an Academy of Finland Research Fellow in Social Anthropology at the University of Helsinki.

Professor G. GOPINATHAN is Head of the Department of Hindi at the University of Calicut in Kerala, India, but is presently teaching Hindi and Malayalam at the Institute for Asian and African Studies at the University of Helsinki. His paper *The process of rehumanisation initiated by Sri Narayana Guru and its impact on kinship and other social relationships in Kerala* examines the great reformer Sri Narayana Guru, who championed the cause of the Eezhavas and other lower castes in Kerala about a hundred years ago.

Dr MOHAN K. GAUTAM from the Kern Institute, University of Leiden, the Netherlands, is an expert on the Santal and Munda speaking tribals of eastern India. He examines the kinship and marriage systems of these tribes and the changes that have taken place in their culture during the past 50 years of India's independence. His article is titled *Santal-Munda kinship and family*.

Docent ANTTI PAKASLAHTI, M.D., Ph.D., from the Department of Psychiatry, University of Oulu, has spent a part of his childhood in India. His contribution on *Family-centered treatment of mental health problems at the Balaji temple in Rajasthan* is based on his field research in the traditional methods of treating psychiatric disorders in India.

ASKO PARPOLA, Professor of Indology at the Institute for Asian and African Studies, University of Helsinki, spoke on *Sāvitrī and resurrection*. The legend of Savitrī still exerts considerable influence in India by providing an ideal for many rural women. It goes back to the first millennium BC, but its forgotten roots are much older. The legend reflects a theme central to ancient Near eastern religions, 'sacred marriage' combined with 'the mystery of death and resurrection'. There are reasons for accepting it as additional evidence of Mesopotamian influence upon the Indus Civilization.

We trust that this wide-ranging volume will be a welcome addition to the extensive literature on family and kinship in South Asia. As the book would otherwise have remained rather slender, one of us, Asko Parpola, took heed of the publisher's permission and encouragement to enlarge his contribution. Being many times longer than the rest, it is placed after all the other papers.

Finally, it is our pleasure to thank Dr Gerard McAlester and Margot Stout Whiting, for the English-language editing of most of the contributions, and the editorial secretary, Petteri Koskikallio, for the good work they have done.

Helsinki, in December 1998,

Asko Parpola
Sirpa Tenhunen