

Finally, dealing with the issue of uniform civil law for all communities in India, the author unequivocally supports the existence of multiple laws. Finding support in the Indian tradition that "has all along refused to become a monotheistic, mono-focused, monocultural, centralized system of human organization", and that "nobody was perceived as an isolated, autonomous individual" (p. 346), he is surprised how Article 44 which requires the state to secure a uniform civil law, got into the Constitution. He believes in legal pluralism and is critical of those who under some sort of Western influence advocate uniformity of laws. For him, the strength of India lies in the diversity of its laws and legal system and any move to impose artificial uniformity may break it. He is satisfied that on balance the discussions on uniform civil law have led to the realization of dangers inherent in any hasty step in that direction. In the light of his wider research findings he concludes: "Our analysis of key issues in the recent genesis of Indian family laws shows convincingly that South Asian indigenous models of legal development, rather than Western blueprints, have been a useful tool in construing a uniquely modern system of legal regulation." (p. 409)

Whether one agrees or not with everything that the author says, one surely cannot help being provoked to re-examine one's views on law and legal systems. Any work that has this effect is worth reading. It is a must for everyone interested in law.

Mahendra P. Singh

MARGRIT PERNAU / IMTIAZ AHMAD / HELMUT REIFELD (eds), *Family and Gender. Changing Values in Germany and India*. New Delhi, London, Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 2003. 360 pages, Rs. 590. ISBN 0-7619-9618-4

The book provides an interesting analysis of family as an institution of socialization where the roles and responsibilities are assigned in accordance with the values and norms prevailing in the society. There are four sections, the first covering the social history of the family; the second concentrating on images and symbolic practices; the third analyzing the interaction between family and state; and the fourth emphasizing the fault lines of the family.

The joint family as a unique feature of Indian social organisation forms the focus for Imtiaz Ahmad's analysis of gender relations in the Indian context. In spite of its hierarchical structures, the different gendered expectations of its members, the oppressive arrangement within it, the family has been looked upon as a receptacle for family values and heritage coping with modernization while retaining its original flavour. In contrast, family in Europe has been analyzed as a combination of tradition and modernity. The persisting image of the three-generation household in Europe has been that of the family as a unit, a very private sphere where relationships are based on affection. Gunilla-Friederike Budde takes the readers through the aftermath of the two world wars which saw

the emergence of the 'strong woman' and the construction of the new model where men earned the family money and the woman the pin-money (p. 75). This led to men occupying a privileged position in the labour market. Reinforcing the role of motherhood and domesticating the mothers resulted in a heightened demand from relationships, single mothers, fewer children, women moving into regular paid employment and attempts made by the state to relieve the pressure of child rearing. The concept of childhood has been based on the projections, aspirations and longings of the adult (p. 85).

Vasanthi Raman traces the world of Indian childhood along the lines of caste, class, regions, communities and their gendered expressions. Indian and Western childhood are analysed as class-specific and nurtured along traditional gender lines, where the boy has a distinct advantage. The impact of colonialism saw the creation of a new breed of Indians with 'superior' Western knowledge and Western values and a movement for women's education. The childhood experience in India is still inextricably woven within the larger social fabric (pp. 95–105); the widening gender gap and the growing imbalance in the sex ratio all reflect a childhood that is no longer pleasurable. Children from the other world may be free from want, but the crumbling family edifice has its own effect. The first part of this book thus draws upon the relation between gender and family and analyses how family is constructed around culture and values of the society.

The second part of the book deals with images and symbolic practices. Chaturvedi Badrinath analyses *grhastha* (the householder) as the nucleus of social reality in the Mahabharata that advocates life in the family as the most important state for individual and society. The family and the many different kinds of relationships are based not on individual will and its changing content; rather, obligation and its unchanging form (p. 124) *saha* (togetherness) is seen as the essence and cornerstone of all relationships, devoid of individuality and its distinctive colours.

In contrast, the religious 'advice-literature' for women in German Catholicism and Indian Islam respectively is used to reinforce the image of woman as mother and highly feminized. The authority of the husband in Islam is reiterated and this authority extends not only to worldly affairs but even to the religious life of the wife. The question whether the woman's behavior was really modelled by these expectations or other factors is left open by Margrit Pernau. The images of masculinity are built on machismo, strength, power and aggression. Ute Frevert looks at the emergence of new icons of masculinity as a response to the breaking of male bastions by women and the growing dependence of the family on the additional income of the woman. With many male monopolies dissolving, the family is looked upon as the primary source of reinforcing notions of manliness. Female sexuality in Hindutva is expressed as *shakti* (power) as well as potential destructiveness. Women are expected to cultivate courage, a strong body and a determined character on the one hand and education and self-awareness on the

other. Katharina Poggendorf-Kakar analyses the re-invention of Rama as a warrior god and Durga as Bharat Mata as a social protest movement against Western influences and as a response to religious uprisings.

The essays in the third part of the book focus on how society and state shape the family in India and Germany. According to Nandini Azad, the state is a reluctant partner of change. It is only when reformists and women vocally advocated change that the state looked at issues affecting women. The state has failed to alter the position and condition of women in family and society. The different policies on health, education and land have all followed the welfare approach and failed in their implementation. The German state controls the upbringing of the child regardless of the institution of marriage. The support of the state is directed more towards the mother as caretaker and does not address her professional interests. In his article on state interest in Germany Helmut Reifeld analyses the state in its stand of non-interference in the private sphere of the family, yet wanting to take the responsibility for the upbringing of children, as an institution that is not fully committed.

State intervention in India through the 73rd and the 74th Amendments to the constitution in 1994 saw the increased presence of women in politics. Shail Mayaram presents case studies of women who do not qualify for classification as proxy candidates. The role of the family in initiating women into politics, corruption included, is amply demonstrated. The so-called empowerment of women cannot be bestowed by the state from above. Feminists are made, not born (p. 271).

The last part of this book focuses on the periphery of the family and investigates its fault lines. Nirmala Banerjee elucidates the economics of survival of women who live without their husbands or are widowed. She analyses the emerging trends from the available data and emphasizes the need to concentrate more on this category of women as it evinces significant signs of increased vulnerability, because of increased life expectancy, no access to resources or gendering.

In her essay on politics of gender and class in the industries Samita Sen explores the increased marginalisation of women in the organized sector, exclusion from predominately male trade unions and labelling as 'public women' (p. 313). For a vast majority of poor women, their work continues to be in the most vulnerable and insecure sectors. A majority of women still respond to 'family' imperatives regarding when and where to work (p. 320).

U. Vindhya bases her essay on violence against women in the family on a study conducted in Andhra Pradesh. She sketches the socio-demographic pattern of domestic violence and shows how the intertwined relationship of law, family and notions of privacy not only reinforce traditional views of the family but also hinder effective prosecution by the judiciary. This book, which was produced by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, takes the reader through important facets of the family and their interface, and provides a unique cross-cultural

panorama. The volume will be of special interest to the researcher and students in the field of gender studies, sociology, history, political science and culture studies.

Madhumita Sarkar

SVEN BRETTFELD, *Das singhalesische Nationalepos von König Dutthāgāmani Abhaya*. (Monographien zur Indischen Archäologie, Kunst und Philosophie, 13). Berlin: Dietrich Reimer, 2001. CXXVII, 276 pages, € 94.50. ISBN 3-496-02712-6

King Dutthagamani, who reigned around the second century B.C., is one of the most illustrious persons in the history of Sri Lanka, being famous for his heroism and generosity alike. He not only brought the whole island under his dominion after defeating the Tamil ruler Elara in a duel, he is also credited with the construction of two remarkable religious buildings, the multi-storeyed Lohapasada with its copper roofing, and the Mahathupa. Both his military prowess and his generosity towards the Buddhist *sangha* made him an ideal Buddhist ruler; and many Sinhalese today regard him as a model to be followed in the struggle to re-establish Sinhalese rule over the whole island. Legends and stories about his life and deeds, which seem to have come into existence soon after his death, exist in various versions. Perhaps best known is the "Dutthagamani epic" from the 6th century Sinhalese chronicle *Mahavamsa* (which is also the earliest known version in writing), but there are later records as well. One of these works, the 14th century *Rasavahini* by the monk Vedeha, is the subject of Bretfeld's dissertation.

Bretfeld has prepared a new edition of this text, for which purpose he has consulted no less than 14 manuscripts (including the printed version of the text), which he has arranged in a stemma (p. CXIX-CXX). Moreover, he carefully compared the information from the *Rasavahini* with other literary sources like the *Mahavamsa*, the *Sahassavatthupparakana* etc. His conclusion is that the first and diverging versions of the Dutthagamani epic had come into existence by the early centuries of the Christian era. The epic was obviously so popular that the compiler of the *Dipavamsa*, which is our earliest extant textual reference to the story, could restrict himself to the Pali memorial verses, taking it for granted that his audience would know the full story. Mahanama, the supposed author of the *Mahavamsa*, and Vedeha who composed the *Rasavahini*, both made more deliberate use of the full story, though with different predilections and for different purposes. Bretfeld traces all these traditions and moreover rounds up his survey with further fragments and versions of the Dutthagamani epic from sources other than Vedeha's.

Bretfeld is certainly to be commended for this solid study which is both pioneering and comprehensive in every respect. He draws our attention to the wealth of literary and historical records that exist beyond the 'classical' sources,