

New Women in Colonial Korea

A sourcebook

Compiled and translated with an
introduction by Hyaewool Choi

6 Politics of the body—chastity, birth control, and fashion

Editor's introduction

The influx of Western culture and material artifacts in the 1920s and 1930s had a significant impact on the ways in which the modern body was imagined, practiced, and challenged. Those who actively absorbed new and modern ideas from Japan and the West considered the body to be the domain of individual will, desire, and consciousness. This set them in stark contrast to adherents of the Confucian-prescribed norms that mandated strict compliance to social codes of chastity, purity, and modesty. To critics, women's bold challenge to the old norms was motivated by a dangerous desire to imitate anything foreign and modern. Debates about what constituted the ideal body emerged as a popular and sensational topic in the media.

Prominent women intellectuals such as Na Hyesök and Kim Wönju publicly challenged the ideology of chastity that had been imposed on women only for centuries. Na Hyesök argues that chastity is neither a moral obligation nor a law. It is merely the product of taste (Source 46). Her challenge to the old notion of chastity is not intended to promote careless, casual sex but rather to draw attention to the tyrannical nature of the man-made norms that had been used as a way to control and restrict a woman's body, treating it as the property of her husband. Her essay was written after she had gone through a highly public divorce brought about by an extramarital affair she had had with Ch'oe Rin in Paris. In the essay, she counts the affair as a necessary process for her growth into a mature person. She interprets her temptation and eventual submission to it as a force of nature. Na's colleague, Kim Wönju, further elaborates that "chastity gains its meaning only when one loves someone," interlocking chastity with modern love, rather than taking it as a separate, normative rule of morality that needs to be closely adhered to (Source 43). She concisely criticizes the oppressive nature of the traditional chastity norm as a biased convention that was imposed on women exclusively. Her challenge to the very idea of "purity" fundamentally shifts the discourse on the body away from the idea of the woman's body as a limited and fragile entity to something that was unlimited, resilient, and creative. The new discourse on chastity was joined by some male intellectuals such as Paek Ch'öl, who argues

that the morality that had been imposed on women was a socially and culturally constructed device of the patriarchal system to control women's bodies and minds (Source 47). This argument draws sharp attention to the very heart of the Confucian, patrilineal gender system, which places bodily "purity" and "chastity" at the pinnacle of ideal womanhood. One consistent theme embedded in the new discourse on chastity is the idea that the core element of chastity is not actually the body but rather true love and the individual pursuit of happiness. As Paek Ch'öl advocates for a new notion of chastity, contending that chastity exists only when love continues between man and woman, so chastity is irrelevant in the absence of love, and thus a woman who divorces and later remarries can still be chaste in her new relationship. Only true love and affectionate marriage can demand chastity (see also Sources 44 and 45).

Body politics also touched on the issue of birth control. Yun Söngsang pointedly challenges the widespread perception that birth control is a dangerous and sinful act that promotes promiscuity and destroys the family (Source 48). Quoting extensively from the work of Margaret Sanger, a well-known advocate of birth control, Yun delineates the strong desire that had characterized women of all ages from all lands for limits on the family that would permit "aspiration toward freedom" to "develop herself as an individual, apart from motherhood." Yun urges the public to pay more attention to raising "healthy children" rather than sheer numbers and also to women's health, which is so closely tied up with their reproductive choices. As shown in the interview with Chöng Sökt'ae, a German-educated medical doctor who lays out various methods of birth control, "scientific" knowledge about the female body and reproductive practices support the validity of the modern ways of family planning (Source 49).

Hair was also a focal point in defining modern "feminine beauty," and short hair often signified the Modern Girl and the New Woman (Sources 50 and 51). Many intellectuals participated in the debate about short hair. Its advocates see short hairstyles as the starting point for women's liberation and emphasize the benefits in terms of convenience, hygiene, time savings, and playfulness. In contrast, its opponents consider short hair to be a sign of vanity, Westernization, and the senseless pursuit of vogue.

Similarly, women's fashion also sparked much discussion. Yun Söngsang's essay on the style of the modern woman outlines not only what the general public imagines when it comes to women in vogue—wavy permed hair, colorful clothing, high heels, and sensual make-up—but also what the ideal modern woman should be concerned about (Source 52). She argues that fashion is an inevitable trend in any time and place, reflecting human nature to pursue something new and beautiful. What one should avoid, she further argues, is the blind pursuit of fashion trends that ruthless merchants slyly manipulate.

43 Kim Wönju: My view on chastity

["Na üi chöngjogwan," Chosön ilbo January 8, 1927]

The conventional view on chastity sees it as a material object. From this viewpoint, if a woman had sexual relations prior to marriage, her love is considered shabby, lacking purity and freshness. In other words, if she had a sexual relationship with a man even once, her chastity is already tainted. It is broken and thus useless, like a broken bowl that is made of precious jewels.

However, chastity is far from a fixed matter. Chastity gains its meaning only when one loves someone. If she is no longer in love with him, she is no longer obliged to keep her chastity for him. Just like the emotion of love, one can argue that chastity is fluid and always fresh. Chastity is not a moral concept imposed on a woman, but the ultimate expression of her emotions and passion for her lover. Chastity, which is the emotion of instinct, cannot be found without love. Even if a woman has had loving relationships with several partners, we can say that she has true chastity as long as she has a healthy spirit to create new life, washes away past memories, and is ready to devote her new and pure self to a new lover.

However, I think that love is not an easy matter. Before a woman says, "I love you," she has to think deeply over [what it means to love] and prepare herself. First, if a woman had a loving relationship in the past,¹ she should ask if there are any remnants of impure emotions from her past relationship. She should ask herself if she is a pure person with a new spirit and body, and also if there is even a tiny trace deep down in her mind of emotion for her former lover. After reflecting and feeling certain of her love toward her new lover, she can embrace him with the confidence that she is pure and chaste. If she seeks a new lover and life with even a speck of an impure thought, she will end up unfaithful to him and defiling her own life. Therefore, she should give up seeking a new lover if there is any hint of impurity within her mind.

Chastity is not a duty imposed on women only. Anyone who wastes her precious time on a sentimental view of life by focusing on unrequited love or a broken heart is narrow-minded and unable to create a new life. She also sins against herself because she is not being honest with herself. However, it is a different matter to take comfort in adoring and respecting a man as if he were a religious figure, as long as she does not abandon or destroy her life.

As I described above, chastity must be accompanied by love. At the same time, the idea of chastity should be fresh forever, as human passion is unlimited. Chastity is just like a boundless mind. One cannot argue that chastity is a limited emotion that can be tainted. Chastity can never be a virtue in itself. It is only the climax of a consciousness that invigorates a passionate love. We can say that people who try to live at the zenith of love consciousness throughout their lives (regardless of changing partners) have the right perspective on chastity. Therefore, when a man or woman with a past enters into a new relationship, but constantly feels their passion has been tainted by

the loss of their virginity, they insult their own integrity and passion. An experienced man or woman insults his or her integrity and passion by finding a new lover while agonizing over whether he or she is still chaste or tainted.

We should strive to have pride in our chastity and always preserve our virginity. Here, virginity does not mean the ridiculous habit of lowering one's face out of shyness in front of the opposite sex. It is about one's firm authority over chastity; in other words, it is a woman's claim that she possesses a new spirit and body that are pure and never diminishing. There are some women who tend to think that, once they have had a sexual relationship, their chastity is forever contaminated. They give up on their lives, ruthlessly engaging in sexual relationships because they believe their bodies are dirty. I think that they are under the influence of a trite, old concept of chastity.

We New Women and New Men are trying to bring to attention the new meaning of life, which is vastly different from the old institutions, traditions, and concepts. We rebel ardently against old sexual ethics that ignore our character and individuality. Although they seem out of date, the names of "Ibsen" and "Helen Keller" resonate with us. We need to reject old sexual norms and oppose the trite conception of chastity. Yet, it does not mean that we endorse the pursuit of careless sexual relationships out of curiosity and bodily desires. I think that we should make the utmost effort to keep our purity and try hard to establish new sexual morals.

I remember writing a piece on chastity in a woman's magazine a few years ago. At the time, I had not found a clear opinion on this topic; and I am still not satisfied with my view. In any case, I will continue to think about a new concept of chastity.

44 Roundtable: A debate on chastity

[*"Chisang chôngjo munje nonüi," Sin yösông 6, no. 3 (1932): 24-32*]

Yu Kwangyöl: On chastity for men ["Namja chôngjoron"]

When we speak of men's chastity, we need to make a distinction between men's virginity (*tongjông*) and chastity (*chôngjo*). Virginity means having no sexual relations before marriage. Chastity means maintaining fidelity to one's wife after marriage and abstaining from sexual interest in any other woman. We can see examples of the former among those who marry late and examples of the latter among married men. Married men can resolve their sexual urges with their wives and not get involved with other women if they have strong will; however, those who do not have strong wills can be tempted by other women. In contrast, unmarried men do not have wives to satisfy their urges, and so their virginity tends to be easily broken. I think it may be a reason why society tends to be more generous in cases of unmarried men losing their virginity than those of married men having affairs. Now, if we apply this logic

to women, violations of the conventions of either virginity or chastity are both treated as matters of chastity.

There are many people who do not think chastity is an important issue, but I think it would be better to consider it as a significant matter. A husband's chastity toward his wife and a wife's chastity toward her husband are like the trust maintained between friends. No matter how many changes occur, trust among friends is essential for a collective life in society.

Society requires women to be chaste. It should have the same requirement for men. From the standpoint of mutual trust and gender equality, it is not only plausible, but absolutely necessary, to demand chastity of both women and men. The present legal system permits divorce if a wife commits adultery, but it is not so if a husband commits adultery. In the future, a condition for divorce should be a violation of chastity for both the husband and wife. This new legal practice should overrule old customs, following scholarly and rational thinking.

In the view of morality and the law, only when men and women are chaste can they maintain peace in the family and obtain much greater happiness. However, whether the marriage was arranged or self-selected, a couple's life and pursuit of happiness are shackled by chastity if they no longer love each other, condemning them to pain and affliction. Facing the fetters of chastity, they should clearly opt for freedom. The only thing to note here is that men still have the economic power, and thus women suffer much more from these chastity-related matters. There should be a correct solution to this problem. Only after we find a solution can we deal with the issue of chastity correctly.

Sin Yôngch'öl, "Problems in the chastity of a wife" ["In ch'ö chôngjo munje"]?

"Chastity is a woman's life." Of course, this phrase comes from old feudal times. However, I do not want to talk about woman's chastity from the simple view of "a chaste woman does not serve two men." The issue of chastity matters because men and women are husbands and wives. It is wrong to impose chastity on women and expect chastity from the wives of other men. If women are told to remain chaste, men should be told the same thing. If wives are expected to stay chaste, the same should be expected of husbands. However, it is still true that people do not consider male chastity to be a relevant issue, while female chastity is required. A husband taking a concubine or having an affair is tolerated, even supported, but a wife surrendering chastity causes an uproar. She is never forgiven. There is a clear contradiction here. There has not yet been a man courageous enough to say that, as long as men are free to have affairs without any criticism, a woman should have the same freedom. Women should demand, "Husbands, if you expect chastity from your wife, you should follow that dictate for yourself."

Anyway, chastity! Women must carefully think through this huge moral issue. No matter how intelligent a woman may be, if she is not chaste and leads a scandalous life, regardless of the noble arguments she may make in her own

defense, her dignity will be imperiled. An unchaste wife will create many problems that will disrupt her family, have a negative impact on her children, and subsequently bring disorder to society. Her own life will be troubled. However, it is ridiculous to sacrifice her satisfaction in life to maintain chastity for a spouse she dislikes or an arranged marriage that has no firm basis. It is just like a situation in which a man, wanting to end his marriage but feeling sorry for his wife who resists divorce, remains chaste to his wife and lets her give birth to their children. This kind of life has no meaning for the married couple or their family. It is a tragedy in their lives. It would be better for them to get divorced. From the moment of divorce, their obligation to chastity disappears. Thus, after divorce, there is no reason to criticize the woman for having another husband or the man for living with another woman. And it is a totally different matter from the corruption of chastity.

Criticizing a couple's new life after divorce is based on the same corrupt ethics that condemned widows for remarrying in old times. Chastity is an important moral issue. Both wife and husband should be chaste, but, if they cannot be, they must cleanly sever their ties. That is the only solution.

45 Is it a sin to have sex during the engagement?

[*"Yakhon sidae e hösinham i choe ilkkä," Samch'ölli 7, no. 8 (1935): 181-185*]

No Ch'önmvöng: Let's keep chastity with utmost will ["Chöläe ro sungyöl ül chik'ija"]

I believe there should be a clear line between the period of engagement and marriage. However, these days, one notices the dreary phenomenon of this line being blurred and unclear. You asked me, "Is it wrong to have sex during the engagement?" I'd say it's wrong no matter what.

During the engagement, the relationship is about preparing for marriage, getting to know each other's character and tastes in more detail, and planning for the life to come. Doing anything more would be inappropriate. Even if one has prowess, it wouldn't be fun to reveal everything to the other person [during this period]. If one were no longer curious about the other person, wouldn't it be easier to become jaded and bored later? It would be better not to become a predictable person.

Being too intimate during the engagement may lead to a break-up before the wedding. Even if they marry, they can become bored, and other problems may arise, as shown by examples in the West where people have impure dating relationships. Being pure during the engagement lets one reflect on a past filled with beautiful and pure thoughts. I think that an engaged couple should refrain from an excessive relationship for each other's well-being.

Pak Indök: Hoping for an intelligent and pure relationship ["Iji chögin kkaekkaihan kyoje hüimang"]

Is it necessary to hold a wedding ceremony if a young woman has already had sex with her partner during the engagement? The wedding ceremony implies that she hasn't even thought about having sex before she has gone down the aisle. To be sure, there's no particular limit or boundary to the relationship during this period. Even if we find examples to follow from the world, I believe we should hold our own morals and customs as a standard. We should try to maintain the most beautiful and purest relationship informed by our intelligence and judgment, without contradicting our conscience. The question we're discussing matters most to women of the Korean intelligentsia. In particular, for those who have reached an age when it is appropriate for them to get engaged, I believe they have the needed intelligence (*chi*), sentiment (*chöng*), and will (*üi*). If they think their relationships are pure and beautiful, there's nothing more to be desired.

Ch'oe Sönbok (wife of Chu Yohan): There is no need to keep chastity ["Chöngjo chik'il p'iryo öpta"]

- If it's wrong to have sex before getting engaged, it's wrong to have sex after getting engaged. If it's fine to have sex after the engagement, it's logically fine to have sex before the engagement. After all, marriage is about having sex. Why does one have to make a man suffer because of a desperate need to be chaste during the engagement?
- During the engagement, it's acceptable for their arms to touch when an engaged couple are alone together. Yet, when they're in public, they should limit physical contact by being at least thirty centimeters (1-ch'ök 5-ch'on)³ apart from each other.

Pak Süngho: Having sex may lead to the risk of breaking up ["Hösin hamyön kyölhon p'ajong toel wihöm itta"]

The survey question, "Is it wrong to have sex during the engagement?" can also be understood as, "Is there any reason not to have sex during the engagement?" In other words, it implies that it may be fine to have sex. If that's the question that is being asked, I can't answer it because I absolutely reject the idea of doing so much as talking about sex during the engagement. However, if we set aside the implied assumption of the question, here is what I think regarding how far the engaged couple can go in their physical relationship.

First of all, I think the length of the engagement is an important matter. I think it should be as short as possible. The longer the engagement is, the closer the relationship becomes, and the more likely the couple are to have sex before their marriage. Therefore, one may be content with an engagement of one year

at the longest. Anything longer wouldn't be good—the shorter, the better. However, it's also a matter of degree and intensity [of the relationship]. I'm just saying that the degree shouldn't be excessive.

Next, parents must understand the character and behavior of their children. It isn't good to let them act freely; however, it isn't any better to tightly control their behavior. Even if parents respect the opinions of their children, parental supervision is inevitable because these children are still young and passionate. I think parents shouldn't give them too much time to interact during the engagement, but have them marry soon instead. To reiterate, those who have sex during their engagement are most likely to break up before marriage.

Chŏng Sŏkt'ae (M.D. degree from Germany): Change in body and destructive end ["*Yukh'e ūi pyŏnhwa wa p'agyŏng*"]

I'm a doctor. I want to answer the question from a medical point of view. In the case of a woman who has had sex with her fiancé, but her engagement is eventually nullified, we have to first investigate whether her body was seriously damaged.

Some physical changes occur when a virgin woman has sex. Her breasts enlarge, her buttocks become round, and her voice gets hoarse. However, these symptoms are only temporary. Once she returns to normal, her buttocks flatten, and any changes in her breasts are hardly visible. But is the man's semen buried deep in her blood forever and passed down to her descendants? This isn't so. The semen is dissolved in the blood and becomes traceless. So, medically speaking, if she was engaged to a man A and had sex with him, but eventually married a man B, her descendants would be entirely B's, without physical traces of A. Of course, it's a separate matter if she suffers emotional scars from her past experience.

A doctor at Kyushu University had a visit from a young New Woman for a medical consultation. She told him that she had had sex with her fiancé, but they had broken up before marriage. She now has a family with a different man. She came to see the doctor because she had been agonizing about confessing to her husband that she wasn't a virgin when they married. This is similar to this magazine's survey question. In this situation, the doctor contemplated the issue seriously and told her that her former lover's blood wasn't transmitted and didn't affect her children's genes. If her husband already had a clue about her past, it would be better for her to confess and seek forgiveness. However, if he didn't know, she shouldn't confess. Judging from male psychology, the doctor believed the confession would make her husband demand a divorce and lead to the destruction of her family. This is true. I agree with the doctor.

I've observed German cases while studying there for several years. In Germany, the typical engagement lasts one or two years. As it's a culturally advanced country, most people marry, and it's rare to see an engagement broken. Although social ethics tell people to keep their chastity during the

engagement, most people don't follow these dictates, and most women do have sex with their fiancé. I think it's still better for Korean women to keep their chastity. However, I think a kiss or hug is fine.

46 Na Hyesŏk: Starting a new life [excerpt]

["*Sin saenghwal e tŭlmyŏnsŏ*," *Samch'ŏlli* 7, no. 1 (1935): 70–81]

*Seduction*⁴

It was the snake's seduction and Eve's own curiosity that made her take the forbidden fruit, and God's punishment was severe. There is nothing like the combination of fear and exhilaration that one gets from seduction. The pleasure, restlessness, fear, and anxiety that seduction brought me were the same as curiosity would have brought. No matter what the impetus was, the widely flung open world made me mysteriously happy. How could I not have a sense of freedom as someone who had an unrestrained and serious mind? I was obviously lured and absolutely curious. We [Na Hyesŏk and Ch'oe Rin] discovered a rose in the midst of a stark and desolate road. The sweet intimacy enraptured us, like bees attracted to the fragrance of that rose.⁵ It didn't matter what the result might be. I surrendered myself to that experience as a necessary step for me to grow.

People mature in many different ways. Not a few people live in a happy environment, under conditions without worry or suffering. However, the majority of people are likely to succumb to difficult situations before they mature. Then, wouldn't it be all right if they tried to live with singular conviction, regardless of how they were crushed, deluded, or broken? Look at the stream water frozen in winter. How could such dirty water turn pure white and beautiful when it's frozen? It's because the water never lost its purity and beauty. This truth causes me think of a person who is making progress in her life. To her, the dirtier the water is, or the greater the temptation is, the more she can understand the complex and profound reality. More hardships might make her appear troubled on the outside, but she'll be able to live with an unfathomable emotional depth inside. And she just embraces such hardships as ordinary matters of life.

*Chastity*⁶

Chastity involves neither morals nor laws. It's merely taste. Just as we eat rice (*pab*) when we want to eat rice, and we eat rice cake (*ttoŭk*) when we want to eat rice cake, chastity depends on our will and practice. We shouldn't be constrained. Taste is kind of enigmatic. It can find goodness in evil and laughter in ugliness. Although we're bound by something external, our mind can be completely free, experiencing no suffering but only exhilaration and satisfaction. This state of mind is not about objectivity but subjectivity, not

unconsciousness but consciousness. In the end, our mind discovers artistic taste, and our behavior is colored by such taste. In the West, they've offered sex education at girls' schools since the early nineteenth century. People may say the culture in Paris is promiscuous, but the reason their culture doesn't look evil or ugly is because Parisians are already aware of sexual relationships and consider sex to be a matter of taste. They turn their actions into art.

Nonetheless, chastity is necessary for our personal integrity and the unity of life. We can freely regard chastity as a matter of taste, but we must recognize the pain that can be caused to others by a loose sense of chastity. Chastity is also vital to sustain our survival. Therefore, the more temptation one finds in society, the more caution one needs in order to guard against it. Those who are cautious and focused can achieve integrity in their conduct and spirit. Chastity was imposed only on women for centuries, but I think it should be applied to men, too.

In order to keep our chastity, we often suppress our natural playfulness, our irresistible passion, and our point of view. How ironic is that? Our real liberation begins with our liberation from chastity. I believe we have to see a reality in which sexual anarchy makes some people want to remain chaste. In Paris, where sexual anarchy prevails, there are men and women who are celibate. They do this after they have already experienced everything and choose to return to old-fashioned ways. Like Parisians, we need to experience everything and then choose whatever suits us best. This practice is more appropriate and not as dangerous.

If a stream of water is forced to go in one direction, it inevitably bursts into multiple directions. Even fierce waves of water are bound to disperse. This is nature. Who could possibly stop a force of nature?

47 Paek Ch'öl: A new view on chastity [excerpt]

["*Sin chŏngjoron*," *Yŏsŏng* 4, no. 3 (March 1939): 12–15]

What really is so-called chastity (*chŏngjo*)? Starting from this general question, what first comes to mind is what people have called "virginity" (*ch' ŏnyŏsŏng*). From time immemorial, virginity has been regarded as a sacred privilege for women, and men have eulogized it as a sacred domain. Virginity was symbolic of pure chastity, which a woman held on to until she married. If a woman had her virginity taken away by force, she was more than ready to commit suicide because her virginity was precious, and her life was worthless without it.

Yet, is virginity really as precious, sacred, and priceless as it has been? I think that we need to revisit the issue of virginity with a rational mind. In my view, eulogizing virginity is a kind of mysticism stemming from customs of the old past. I cannot see it as anything other than sentimentalism because there is no substantial reason or scientific basis to support it.

People often say that, once a woman gives her body to a man, her blood gets cloudy and dirty. However, this is only a superstition. Obviously, there

is no scientific proof that sexual intercourse with a man will result in a dirty body or impure blood. It is also a widely shared view in the scientific community that virginity can be identified through medical examination, but there is no standard measurement for that. In Rama [Rome] of ancient times, a groom would measure the size of his bride's neck before they spent their wedding night together, and then measure it again in the morning. If it got thicker, it was proof of her virginity. Of course, this is also a superstition and has no basis in fact.

To be sure, women experience physical and biological changes after marriage. The general belief is that female physical and mental functions become active after marriage, but that is just one biological condition. It is intrinsically meaningless to argue that married life would make one's blood cloudy or one's body impure. Thus, I think that it is ridiculous and illogical to consider virginity an absolute virtue and equate it with life. It does not mean that I happily endorse youth's debauchery. I still regard the purity of unmarried ladies as precious. What I am arguing is that we need to eliminate groundless exaggeration and mythical sentimentalism in our understanding of virginity. Furthermore, there is no basis or rationale for an unwed woman to end her life if she has lost her virginity owing to unfortunate circumstances.

When we refute the absoluteness of virginity, the next question is how to understand the possibility of remarriage for women. In the East, the injunction that a virtuous woman never serves two husbands has been the prevalent view. As a consequence, obedience to one husband was the only choice women had, and that was the social norm. Unlike now, a woman divorcing her husband and serving another one was unthinkable behavior. It was out of the question for a widow to remarry after her husband's death. Even for a very young woman, the only option that was considered appropriate was for her to remain a widow for the rest of her life.

A woman keeping her chastity for only one man, never two, has been the dominant view of chastity in the East. However, this way of thinking was contradictory and unfair because men were allowed to remarry, while women were forced to remain chaste. It was an evil custom in a male-dominated society. In fact, virginity or chastity was completely unimportant to a collective married life in the primitive era. Chastity became important only when there was a shift from a collective, property-based society toward a private, property-centered society, and patriarchy grew to have more power than matriarchy. Therefore, in the issue of chastity, preventing remarriage and forcing widows to remain chaste reveal the most contradictory custom and feudal ethical practices.

It is this feudal morality that must be tackled as a social problem. Regardless of widowhood or divorce, the option of remarriage for women conforms to the law of nature, the way of humanity, and the avowed path for women. It is, of course, necessary for women to recognize this issue. At the same time, I believe that society should also acknowledge it as the legitimate and proper practice. The majority of men still tend to be hesitant and frown on

once-married women, but their disdain is unnecessary and ungrounded. If a man truly thinks of a woman as his equal and a legitimate member of society, he should not even ask about her virginity. Any man who calmly reflects on this issue should realize how he has been caught in meaningless sentimentalism. I believe that, first and foremost, we need to break away from the myth-related idea of chastity, summarily represented by the axiom "Never Serve Two Husbands" (*pulgyong ibu*).

If we reject the absoluteness of the ideology of virginity and chastity, what would be the new idea of chastity, one more appropriate for our contemporary situation? Chastity cannot be considered without presuming certain ideas about marriage. Therefore, since modern times, our view of marriage is a concrete starting point for approaching the issue of chastity.

Modern marriage is based on the notion of romance that resulted from the development of individualistic liberalism. As we all know, a liberal view of romance evolved at a particular time to challenge feudal morals, and it emerged as a progressive idea. Although it is trivial, the fact that Nora in Ibsen's play created a huge sensation leads us to realize the social implications of such a new, progressive idea. Nora's behavior was an outcry against feudal morals and an individualistic rebellion against male power that does not allow individuality. Nora's spirit represents the view of modern marriage and has had a significant impact on the view of chastity in our contemporary world. However, such a view of chastity, based on liberalism, is imperfect and, furthermore, as I mentioned earlier, it has led to confusion and depravity. Women of the past were customarily subordinated to men, but today's women are also subordinated to men through the system of private property. It is well known that, in the United States and France, where liberalism has bloomed most, many women marry for financial reasons, and this phenomenon is true in our own society as well. This trend contradicts the idea in modern society that marriage should be based on romance. I read an article in the March issue of this journal last year that reported on the conditions students at a women's college had for marriage. Their first condition was wealth, which shows a major discrepancy with the romantic view of marriage. Therefore, I maintain that the present view of chastity is not built on liberal, individual love. Rather, it has become a frivolous thing that young women are willing to sell for money.

I believe that a new view of chastity should be developed by rejecting feudal customs that still surround us and criticizing the material-centered view of chastity. To construct an appropriate view of chastity, there should be a monogamous society that requires men and women to be equal and have equal rights. Romance in the modern era cannot be realized if men and women cannot interact as equals. It is needless to say that social conditions have to be changed first to realize true romance. Marriage based on true love and legitimate chastity cannot be realized in this money-first society if men continue to rule and fathers continue to have the exclusive right to private property. It explains why the modern view of marriage has been degraded in advanced countries. Therefore, as I pointed out earlier, our vision for new marriage starts with a critique on

modernity. In this vein, we may think about the new trends we see nowadays. For example, though they are exceptional, there are men and women who have their own jobs and have achieved economic independence. On this footing, they can engage in a relationship where there is no subordination to each other. They can develop a relationship between completely independent individuals.

When we think about the novel idea of marriage stipulated by the above-mentioned equal relationship between man and woman, the first condition for marriage is love. And the issue of chastity is related to love. In principle, I endorse the idea of chastity! However, my view on chastity is not ambiguous but based on concrete conditions. Chastity makes sense only when a man and a woman are united as equal individuals and their love continues. Not only the wife, but also the husband, should be obliged to remain chaste. In any case, I believe that a husband can demand chastity from his wife as long as they remain a couple.

From this viewpoint, the first basic issue with regard to chastity is not virginity but the condition of the marriage. People nowadays do not seem to value virginity as much as they did in the past, but I believe that every husband still expects his wife to be chaste. *Othello*, the tragedy by Shakespeare, concerns the suspicions of the male protagonist about the chastity of his wife, Desdemona. In *The Father*, a play by Strindberg, the central male character suspects the child his wife has given birth to is not his own, and he is ultimately driven mad by his suspicions. In this way, regardless of the era, it is common for husbands to demand chastity from their wives. And the main basis of the chastity debate is the requirement that chastity continue for the length of the marriage.

In this connection, we can point to a new phenomenon: the so-called woman of leisure (*yuhan puin*). The demoralization of these women reflects the corroded notion of modern marriage. It shows how chastity has lost its meaning to the point where it is corrupt and depraved. These women marry purely for money, without love, and are not content with their married lives. That is how they have become corrupted. Chastity has no part in their conception of marriage and family. Unfortunately, this decadent phenomenon is becoming widespread, with women holding on to their families but abusing their freedom and trampling on the traditional notion of chastity. This corruption of chastity should be deplored.

In this vein, I would argue that a wife's chastity can be demanded as long as the marriage holds, and her chastity should be the mainstay of the family and the unique bond between husband and wife. However, if there is no love between husband and wife, and she seeks another man, she first needs to dissolve her marriage. It is meaningless to continue a marriage without love. Yet, dissolving a loveless marriage and remarrying do not mean she broke her chastity. The real issue is to keep her chastity for her new husband. In other words, a woman's chastity should not be confined to only one man. When I say this, it might sound careless. I do not mean to suggest that I support divorce and remarriage. What I believe here is that a marriage based on true love and

strong character is not easily dissolved. But, in this world, there are many women who sacrifice their lives in a loveless marriage and a false sexual life. I think this kind of life continues because they hold a wrong view of chastity.

In essence, the issue of chastity is not really physical or biological, but ethical. This distinction is the most important point to make. As I mentioned earlier, when there is no love between a husband and a wife, chastity becomes an ethical claim that splits a loveless family. From an ethical viewpoint, chastity never changes. It is the foundation for the family and child rearing, based on mature character and trust. Only when those things are in place can chastity gain its true meaning.

48 Yun Söngsang: Urgent call for birth control: The necessity of publicity and practice

[*"Sana chehan üi chölgvü, sönjön kwa silhaeng i p'iryo," Samch'ölli 5 (April 1930): 35-37*]

Birth control (*sana chehan*) is not about preventing birth. It is about limiting excessive births (*lasan*). There is a general tendency that, upon hearing the phrase "birth control," people immediately perceive it as a subversive or sinful subject. Is it fair to think of birth control as subversive and sinful in the way people often do? When Mrs. Sanger, the famous advocate of birth control, was about to land in Japan last year, there was a huge protest that lasted hours. To that extent, when it comes to "birth control," some people consider its advocates to be dangerous.

Those who oppose birth control have many reasons for opposing it. I cannot list them all here, owing to limited space. But here are a few important reasons: first, an argument that practicing birth control is a sin from religious and moral viewpoints; second, an assertion that birth control will promote a decadent culture by preventing pregnancies resulting from illicit unions; third, an opinion that birth control will reduce the birth rate of geniuses; and, fourth, a belief that birth control will make divorce easy. In addition, some argue that birth control will cause more cases of infertility and female diseases (*puinpyöng*).

I don't think any of these arguments offers a solid ground for opposing birth control. To be specific, the first argument that considers birth control as a sinful act is largely ideological. If people think the prevention of the sperm and egg interacting is a murderous act, I cannot help but think of them as delusional. The second argument is simply groundless. Opposing birth control out of concern over an emerging decadence in the culture is just like banning medicine because of an increase in the incidence of venereal disease. Even if we accept the possibility that birth control may induce moral decay, the practice still gives us more benefit than harm, as it will prevent illegitimate children. The third argument can be easily refuted by the fact that, although we may lose one genius, we would stop the births of thousands of idiots. About

the fourth assertion, that birth control makes divorce easy, I believe it will. Many people remain in unhappy marriages for the sake of their children, but this situation is far from desirable. Birth control is not the same as a no-child policy. It is a mistake to think that the number of children will have any effect on the divorce rate. In addition, with respect to women's health, we do not need to wait for any scientific proof that multiple births lead to more health problems for women. We know this from our own observations.

The above-mentioned arguments are merely hypocritical masks. At least, that is how I see them. Under this attractive facade, so-called experts and advocates cry out, opposing birth control out of their fear of having a smaller industrial workforce in the future, which is linked to their own self-interest. According to statistics, there were about 130 people found dead in the streets of Seoul last year. What else can we call it other than a false mask when these people are screaming about killing sperm and the sin [of birth control] but do not (omission)? In a word, they think about only one side of birth control, without knowing the other side.

It is certainly true that women have innately wanted birth control, regardless of time or place. In her book, *Woman and the New Race*, Mrs. Sanger said:

Women in all lands and all ages have instinctively desired family limitation. Usually this desire has been laid to economic pressure. Frequently the pressure has existed, but the driving force behind woman's aspiration toward freedom has lain deeper. It has asserted itself among the rich and among the poor, among the intelligent and the unintelligent. It has been manifested in such horrors as infanticide, child abandonment and abortion.

How desperately woman desired freedom to develop herself as an individual, apart from motherhood, is indicated by the fact that infanticide was "the most common crime of Western Europe," in spite of the fact that some of the most terrible punishments ever inflicted by law were meted out to those women who sought this means of escape from the burden of unwanted children. Dr. Werner shows that in Germany, for instance, in the year 1532, it was the law that those guilty of infanticide were to be buried alive or impaled. In order to prevent desperation, however, they shall be drowned if it is possible to get to a stream or river, in which they shall be torn with glowing tongs beforehand.

Notwithstanding the fact that at one time in Germany, the punishment was that of drowning in a sack containing a serpent, a cat and a dog—in order that the utmost agony might be inflicted—one sovereign alone condemned 20,000 women to death for infanticide.⁸

Here, the actual examples Sanger listed point to only those cases that surfaced and came to be known. I think that these quotes sufficiently tell us how desperately women have desired to control pregnancy. Unless you are a deluded mental patient who believes women must be slaves to men and act

merely as the tools for reproduction, how should we respond to this female desire?

I am not interested in spreading this idea to the world. I am interested in how we deal with this topic within the context of our own situation. First, I think we should pay attention to the issue of raising healthy children. If we were affluent, it would be a different story. But we are living in a society where every day many people worry about the lack of food, let alone having enough money to raise their children. If that's the case, how could we possibly deal with unlimited births? We can barely endure the enormous burden of taking care of food, housing, education, and an endless list of things. I think it is our duty and responsibility to give our children the best care and education, rather than to produce as many children as possible. If one speaks of sin, there is no graver sin than having to condemn our children to a life of weakness and incapacity because we didn't have the resources to provide them with good care.

Second, we should consider the health of mothers. As I said earlier, unless you think of them as nothing more than machines for reproduction, women are equal to men and legitimate members of society. Therefore, their reproductive-health problems should be considered important. Social progress is not the exclusive domain of men. I will not repeat the argument that the participation of both men and women will double the pace of development. There is no need to rely on scientific explanations. Common sense will tell you of the close relationship between societal development and maternal health and reproduction. We are witnessing the blight and decrepitude of women who have given birth to too many children. These issues of child rearing and maternal health are the matters that compel me to support birth control.

Malthus's theory of population and food supply argues that the population growth rate is a lot steeper than the supply of food, and thus human life cannot be sustained under the current rate of population growth. The argument that population control is the only solution to the food-supply problem ends up making a decisive error by speaking for XXX. It is an error to assert that population control will lead to benefits for mankind. (omission) Even those who advocate birth control make this error. As shown by the ridiculous debate about the choice between birth control and class struggle that was raised in Japan last year, people exaggerate the issue of birth control. Japan's famous feminist critic and activist, Yamakawa Kikue, wrote an article, "Women's Rebellion," stating "we need to limit the number of children to the extent that parents are prepared to fulfill their duties in child-rearing, and this is the natural duty and right of parents." If that's the case, is it possible clearly to measure the extent to which parents can "sufficiently" fulfill their responsibilities? Under the circumstances we are in, I am not even thinking about the "sufficient" duties and responsibilities of parents. I am merely thinking about a "better way" of child rearing. We need to clear up these gaps in our understanding as soon as possible, and also keep in mind that birth control is a rather minor issue in our lives.

Last, I want to repeat that I support birth control, its promotion, and practice, as long as it does not exaggerate the issue and create the impression that birth control will lead to a good life.

Although I have felt physically weakened recently, I have been under great pressure to produce more writing, so I hurried to finish this piece without much systematic thinking. I apologize to the readers for my unruly writing, and I myself regret not having produced something better.

49 Urgent call for birth control!! Four medical methods (interview with Dr. Chông Sôkt'ae)

[*"Sana chehan üi chölgü!! üihaksang 4dae pangbôp," Samch'ölli 5 (April 1930): 30-35*]

REPORTER: Under Korean circumstances, is birth control necessary? It's said that Japan and other countries have already begun to practice birth control as a matter of public policy.

CHÔNG: Of course it's necessary, firstly for economic reasons and secondly for the prosperity of a healthy race in terms of eugenics.

R: In Korea, people are only beginning to hope to control birth artificially, but we are told that many countries already practice birth control. Since you have been abroad for many years, could you describe the attitude foreign women have about birth control?

C: Among the foreign countries I have been to, I think France has the highest rate for use of birth control. When I checked into motels in Paris and other cities, I often found a white square-shaped pot next to the bed. I first wondered if it was for urine, but I found out later that, after having sex, a woman would sit on the pot and turn on a switch, which would release a fountain-like stream of water to wash her private parts. Needless to say, this was a way to prevent pregnancy. In other words, it is a method of birth control. When motels, which are frequented by many people over the course of a week, have such devices, we can imagine how common it is for ordinary families to practice birth control at home.

R: I wonder if it is actually an effective birth-control method to wash a woman's private parts with cold water. I thought such a method would be quite expensive, and on top of this, would require medicine and a complicated machine that is difficult to use. If the use of cold water is effective, wouldn't it be possible not only for women of leisure but for anyone to practice birth control without much fuss?

C: That's true. In general, there are four birth-control methods.

R: I see. What's the first method?

C: The first is to use drugs. However, this method isn't legal right now, so I'm not going to explain it in detail, but the logic of it goes like this. (omission)

R: I see this method is hard to use without changing the law. As it is too detailed to recount here . . . let's stop talking about it. Then what is the second method?

C: The second is to use some sort of device. There are two kinds. The first one is to use a "*ru-desakku*" [condom], which everyone knows. It is often used to prevent venereal disease and doesn't need much explanation. However, many people don't like this method because the condom can be torn, and it also reduces physical sensation. The other way is washing. Perhaps it's the easiest and most common. As I mentioned before, French women use this method.

R: I still can't believe washing with cold water is effective. Please give us a medical explanation of how that could be so.

C: It works this way. Let me explain pregnancy in chemical terms. When an alkali and an acid interact, neutrality results. (omission)⁹ For your reference, lye is an alkali, and vinegar, fruit, or Japan's *umeboshi* is an acid. A sperm can live only in an alkaline or acidic environment. Once alkali and acid are combined and neutralized, the sperm's mobility is curtailed. Once that happens, even if a sperm gets into the ovary, it can't cause pregnancy.¹⁰ Here, what is noteworthy is that water is neutral. Once water has penetrated, sperm loses its power to make a baby.

R: I see. As a non-specialist, it's hard to understand, but it sounds convincing. Nevertheless, whenever one uses the cold water washing method, it would be quite noisy . . . What's the third method?

C: It's a method involving a medical procedure. There are two options. One is to be exposed to X-ray, and the other is to get surgery. Even a single exposure to X-ray results not only in birth control but also sterility, and thus this is a permanent method for preventing pregnancy. Similarly, the surgical procedure is simple but leads to infertility. These methods are a bit different from other birth-control methods. Current medical regulations stipulate that these methods can be performed only when three or more doctors attend the procedure.

R: Please tell us about the fourth method.

C: It is to use academic knowledge. I believe this knowledge is valid because it is based on the accounts of many famous medical scholars from around the world. They have found that one can avoid pregnancy by paying attention to the menstrual cycle. This method gives scientific advice about avoiding sex on particular dates. Let me explain with a specific example. Let's take a longer month like January as an example. If a woman begins her period on January 16, it is likely to last until the 19th. If she has sex anytime between the 20th and the 24th, she has a chance of getting pregnant. If she has sex from the 25th to February 1, she will surely get pregnant. But if she has sex in the period from February 2 to 15, she won't get pregnant.

R: How about the shorter months?

C: For shorter months, I'll take February for example. If a woman begins her period on February 20, it will last until the 23rd. She could get pregnant if she has sex between the 24th and the 28th. She'll certainly get pregnant between the 29th and March 6, but won't get pregnant between the 7th and the 19th. If people need more detailed information about the cycles, their doctor can tell them more.

R: Do many people succeed using the methods you mentioned?

C: Certainly. But I'm not going to point to any specific names. From my observations overseas, I saw much success.

R: But what if someone has used one of the four birth-control methods but still gets pregnant? What should she do?

C: In that case, abortion is an option. However, the law strictly forbids abortion. What I especially want to say is that abortion and birth control are completely different and should never be confused.

R: According to a decision by the Supreme Court in Tokyo, it is not a crime if a woman in the third or fourth month of her pregnancy aborts the fetus, which does not yet have the shape of a baby and is only a clot of blood. C: I don't think that's what happened. As soon as fertilization begins, it's counted as a baby.

R: When a woman uses these birth-control methods, how do they affect her health? Would she be weaker or suffer from physical pain?

C: Absolutely not.

50 Chu Sejuk: I advocate short hair

[*"Na nŭn tanbal ŭl chujang hamnida," Sin yŏsŏng 3, no. 8 (August 1925): 43-44*]

When women have short hair, many people comment, "We see some absurd things in this corrupt, degenerate age." Newspapers make a big fuss about these women in articles with headlines such as, "SO-CALLED SHORT-HAIR BEAUTY, NEW WOMAN, WOMAN XXX-IST." These articles are printed in a huge, bold font, accompanied by photos. In any case, disapproval of short hair prevails in Korea right now. Some people say short hair is no more than a fleeting trend, triggered by curiosity, while others argue it is a behavior of disdainful bourgeois women who advocate gender equality. However, I think it is laughable how short hair is treated in such seriousness and draws all this condemnation.

We are not talking just about a hairstyle. All customs, civilizations, and ways of life change and evolve over time. That is inevitable. There was no Korean custom in the past of women having short hair. But now short hair is turning into a trend because women find short hair more convenient and fun and less time consuming than long hair or chignons. Opponents of short hair argue that, as hair represents a woman's beauty, cutting her hair short is cutting off the