# Transnational Arranged Marriages and the Lives of Married Women in the Hindu-Gujarati Diaspora of Portugal

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# Abstract

**Title:** Transnational Arranged Marriages and the Lives of Married Women in the Hindu-Gujarati Diaspora of Portugal

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The present study took place in the Greater Lisbon area, Portugal and used micro-ethnographic methods, to understand the practice of transnational arranged marriages among the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora. Eight married women between the ages of 32 to 52 years were interviewed to understand the experiences and perceptions of women who participate in such marriages. Furthermore, lives of married women within the diaspora were also analyzed using an intersectional structural approach, to comprehend their position within the larger power structures such as caste and gender. Additionally, strengths-based and agency favoring approaches along with migration theories on transnationalism were used to analyze how married women actively negotiated with their environments and countered challenges faced by them while living in Portugal.

The study established that arranged marriages between transnational communities served the collectivist purpose of ensuring continuity and reproduction of their culture in while abroad. Traditional marriages among diasporas also entailed that certain power hierarchies from countries of origin sustained in the new geographic context. Although married women from the diaspora were disadvantaged in relation to their male counterparts when it came to certain aspects, they were never 'passive' beings within the migration process or while living abroad. Women not only challenged oppressive structures or practices but also occassionally occupied high positions in certain power structures (such as caste) and actively sought to ensure their maintenance in Portugal. The research value of this thesis lies in the fact that this is the first attempt to studying how arranged marriages take place within a transnational context in Portugal. Studying women within diasporas through the lens of strengths-based and agency-favoring approaches is also relatively new approach in social research. Lastly, the study concludes with making suggestions for social work practitioners and researchers who would want to study this group.

**Key words:** *arranged marriage, women, transnationalism, diaspora, Hindu-Gujarati, Portugal*

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-Asawari Nayak

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# 1.Introduction

Traditionally in research, the term 'diaspora' has been seen to be related to a sense of 'forced' diffusion of a people and the resultant longing and mourning for a "lost homeland" (Bak & Von Bromssen, 2010, pp 115). However, more recently scholars from migration studies have started viewing diaspora through the lens of a post-modern concept of 'transnationalism' which focuses on "process where migrants through their daily activities and their social, economic and political relations create social spaces that transcend national borders" (Basch et al., 1994, p 22 as cited in ibid.). Diasporic communities have then and again been analyzed to understand their cultural and social practices and to identify how the various social and kinship practices are sustained while abroad.

Within such social practices, marriage among people from transnational communities has been seen as an important mechanism of cultural reproduction that creates, maintains and reproduces social and communal bonds across borders (Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Williams, 2010). A few studies have also specifically focused on the place of women within such marriages. While some have argued that women within such marriages often find themselves in vulnerable, disadvantaged positions; others have taken an agency favoring approach and have argued that the participation of women in such marriages and the role played by them in maintaining transnational connections is far from being passive (ibid.).

The present thesis aimed to understand the practice of transnational arranged marriages among the Hindu-Gujarati (Indian) diaspora in Lisbon, Portugal. Eight married women between the ages of 32 to 52 years were interviewed to analyze the representations and social practices of women who participated in arranged marriages. Additionally, the study also looked into the lives of these women amidst the diaspora after marriage, to understand their experiences of living in Portugal and to determine how they were affected by social power structures such as caste[1] and gender. The research also used strengths-based and agency favoring approaches to look into how married women actively engaged with their environments; also looking into how they negotiated and resisted various challenges and hurdles faced by them while living in Portugal.

It may be interesting to mention here that my motivation to study this topic was primarily stirred after having visited some of the places where Hindu-Gujaratis lived in Greater Lisbon and from conversing with some of the community members[2]. Hence, rather than just being inspired from

[1] The caste system is the major stratification system in the Indian subcontinent which divides the society into several mutually exclusive groups (loosely based on traditional occupations assigned to them), membership of which is 'fixed' and determined by birth. Broadly speaking, there are 4 major divisions: *Brahmins* (traditionally who were priests), *Kshatriyas* (traditionally who were kings and rulers), *Vaishyas* (traditionally who were traders and money lenders) and *Shudras* (traditionally peasants and other working classes). It is not just a divisive system but also a discriminative one in which the 'upper' castes (*Brahmins, Kshatriyas and Vaishyas*) which consist of the numerical minority of the Indian population enjoys most privileges and prosperity often denying it to the other groups. Inequality is thus the core of this system.

[2] The process of how I arrived at the research topic has been explained in detail in the methodology section of this thesis.

past literature on the topic, it was micro-ethnography that primarily lead me to this area of enquiry. However, the theoretical approach that I take in this study was predominantly inspired from being a student of social work and having read literature on anti-caste feminism and strengths and agency favoring approaches. While looking at the relations between transnational marital practices, social structures and the lives of marital women, I wanted to look at women as active resourceful agents in the process.

## 1.1 Background and significance of the study

The population of Indian origin currently living in Portugal is not a homogenous group. Broadly speaking, this population can be categorized into three groups with reference to their religion and region of origin: Hindus and Muslims with roots in Gujarat (which constitute the majority in terms of number of residents), Christians with origins in Goa and Sikhs from Punjab (Lourenco, 2013). These groups are also diverse when it comes to the different languages spoken within them. Regional Indian languages such as Gujarati, Punjabi and Hindi are found co-existing with English and Portuguese (ibid.). Being aware of this heterogeneity among the people of Indian origin in Portugal, it seemed wise to focus only on Hindu-Gujarati diaspora in Portugal for this study.

Statistics show that currently approximately 33,000 Hindus live in Portugal, spread across Porto, Coimbra and Greater Lisbon (Singhvi et al., 2001; as cited in Lourenco, 2013). Most of the Hindu families that reside in Portugal are *'Gujarati'* which is a term used for people who belong to the North-Western Indian state of *Gujarat* and the union territories of Daman and Diu; all of who speak the language *'Gujarati'*. The beginning of Hindu-Gujarati settlements in Portugal dates back to the 1970s; however, many of these families did not migrate directly from India to Portugal and were a part of the large wave of migration that took place from India to East Africa over centuries, due to maritime traffic (Lourenco, 2013). Portuguese colonization of Daman and Diu in India also facilitated the migration of some families from these regions to Mozambique (another Portuguese colony) in East-Africa. A large majority of the Hindu families that now reside in Portugal had initially settled in Mozambique which later migrated to Portugal following the decolonization and subsequent civil war in Mozambique.

This group has been challenging to study for various reasons. Firstly, since many of them possess Portuguese passports, it is difficult to ascertain exactly how many they are in numbers (Malheiros, 1996, as cited in Lourenco, 2013). 'Hindus' are not noted separately in official Portuguese statistics such as the census and this group is clubbed in the category of "other religions", making it all the more hard to look at them as a distinct group. The Hindu diaspora is also characterized by high level of mobility- making it all the more difficult to account for individuals families that live in more than one countries (Lourenço, 2009, Malheiros 1996 as cited in Lourenco 2013). Hence, although this community represents a significant part of the diasporic community in Portugal it has not been extensively studied.

Furthermore, very few studies have focused on the cultural and familial aspects of this community. One study for example has focused on the phenomenon of transnationality among the families of this group (Lourenco, 2012), another focused on the role played by the women in

the society in constructing gender and religion related identities in the Hindu-diaspora (Lourenco, 2011). The dissertation is hence relevant considering the girth in knowledge regarding research on this community. Additionally, it is also the first study in Portugal that has exclusively focused on the practice of transnational arranged marriages in the diaspora.

Looking at the broader field of migration studies, marriage practices among immigrant communities have not usually been studied using strengths and agency favoring approaches to study diasporas in research. Additionally, studies that have sought to look at agency and strengths among women in migration have generally focused on work related migration and have not analyzed marital and family-reunification practices among families and diasporas to a large extent. Being an educational female migrant from India myself, getting consent from the community and being accepted by them as a researcher was very easily accomplished. I was also readily welcomed to the community and private spaces of the diaspora such as temples, homes of people, etc. Hence, in some way, being 'close' to the population of study favored my access to this group of women in the population and facilitated nuanced discussions of culturally sensitive topics. This distinctive research approach and theoretical framework in my opinion, is what makes study valuable and unique.

## 1.2 Research questions

The present study took place in the Greater Lisbon area (Loures), Portugal. Using micro-ethnographic methods (Wolcott, 1990), it looked at the phenomenon of arranged marriages among the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora residing in Portugal from the perspective of married women from the community. It also analyzed how women from this diaspora actively engaged with societal power structures and demonstrated strengths and agency in their lives in Portugal post marriage. The following research questions hence focused on:

1. How do the married women from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora perceive the practice of arranged marriage?
2. Which are the major social structures that affect the lives of married women in the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora?
3. In what ways do the married women in the diaspora demonstrate resilience, strengths and agency in their life stories?

## 1.3 Structure of the thesis

The study "Transnational Arranged Marriages and the Lives of Married Women in the Hindu-Gujarati Diaspora of Portugal" is presented in six chapters. The first chapter gives an overview of the dissertation. It elaborates on the context of the study in Portugal, its purpose, scope, rationale and also the research questions. The second chapter reviews the literature existing on socio-cultural practices around marriage in India and presents an outline of studies on marriages amongst immigrant groups in a transnational context. Furthermore, this chapter also presents background literature on the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora dispersed around the globe and in Portugal. The third chapter disseminates three theoretical frameworks that have been used to analyze the

results of the study: the strengths and agency favoring approaches, structural (intersectional) approach to power and transnational approach to migration. The fourth chapter elaborates on the methodology applied for this study, the sampling procedure and discusses some ethical and personal reflections of the researcher. The fifth chapter discusses the main findings of the study in relation to the research questions and literature reviewed in the previous sections. Finally, the sixth chapter concludes the study discussing the key findings and making practical and academic implications of this dissertation and also makes suggestions for future research.

# 2.Literature Review

This section provides background literature to the topic "Transnational Arranged Marriages and the Lives of Married Women in the Hindu-Gujarati Diaspora of Portugal". I have begun this chapter by presenting reflections on the practice of marriage in India. I have analyzed the practice of arranged marriage, about the how caste endogamy appears to be the main norm of marriages in India and have also shed light on the place of women within such marriages. While discussing this, I have introduced the realities around marriage in India through providing some statistics and also demonstrated how certain patriarchal and casteist ideologies within Hinduism (and its scriptures) relate to these realities. Furthermore, have discussed marriages that take place within a cross-border and transnational context; and examined how migrant women who participate in such marriages are represented in research. Lastly, I have also included literature on the Gujarati-Indian diaspora around the world and have presented an overview of the Hindu-Gujarati community in Portugal.

## 2.1 Marriage in India

### 2.1.1 The practice of Arranged Marriage

Tovar in the *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women* defines marriage as "a culturally approved relationship that legitimizes a sexual and economic union, usually between a man and a woman" (Tovar, 2001, pp 1301 as cited in Pande, 2016). The topic of marriage has been explored extensively in social science research, and efforts have been made to understand how marital institutions assume distinct forms, in order to examine them in relation to the socio-economic and cultural contexts within which they occur (ibid). Sociological, anthropological and human geographical studies have been the vanguard of studying marriage as a relationship that could be explored to get knowledge of people's personal goals, their self perception and identities and their ideas of romantic love (Gabb, 2008; Fink & Holden, 2010; Morrison, 2010; Yeoh 2013, as cited in Pande 2016).

In many such enquiries, one can see that a divide is often made apparent between marriages arriving out of romantic love- love marriages, and marriage that do not result from romance or a period of courtship - arranged marriage (Pande, 2016). Arranged marriages can be defined as practice wherein the parents or family members, not the two individuals about to be married themselves, play the key role in the deliberations of a match (Pande, 2016; Kakar & Kakar, 2007). Although not unique to the Indian context, this kind of marriage can be considered to be a "pan-Indian norm" (Kakar & Kakar, 2007, pp 60). This means that although the practice itself may vary, parents and/or external family being involved in arranging one's marriage is more or less normal and socially acceptable among people across India, irrespective of their state of origin, education levels, class/caste and religion (ibid.).

The practice of marriage in India is hence a collective or communitarian affair. More often than not, the maintenance of social status and *izzat* (honor) of the two families involved is seen to be contingent on arranging a proper match for their children - a decision too big to leave with the young people who are actually getting married (Chakraborty, 2003). This practice is often rationalized by advising young people - prospective grooms and brides - that the families 'getting

along' with each other is particularly important to assure the couple's continued happiness; and that the decision of choosing a match is hence better to be entrusted with elders or the heads of families (ibid.). The primary criteria for fixing a match for marriage may include looking at the religion, caste, *gotra*[3] and linguistic group affiliation bride/groom. Furthermore, secondary criteria such as physical looks, earning potential and educational compatibility, family's 'moral' history and matching of horoscopes are considered (Mullatti, 1995 as cited in Chawla, 2007).

In 2005 the Indian Health Development Survey (IHDS) was conducted, collecting a more or less nationally representative sample from 33,510 married women from between the ages of 15-49 from 41157 households across the country (from 33 states and union territories of India). This survey established that marriage partner selection primary rests with the family members; only 5% of the women claimed to have had primary role in choosing their husbands whereas 62% claimed to have been consulted by the family in making the decision (Banerji, Martin & Desai, 2008 as cited in Desai & Andrist, 2010). This survey also explored the length of acquaintance between the spouses before marriage, revealing that 66% of the women met their spouses on or around the day of the wedding; whereas 78% claimed to have known their husbands for a month or less before the day of the marriage (ibid.). What this survey to a degree ascertains is that arranged marriages, till today continue to be the norm in India and "love" marriages are often regarded as being deviant and even dangerous for the social order.

### 2.1.2 Caste and Marriage: Endogamy as the dominant marriage norm:

An aspect that is central to understanding the practice of arranged marriages (or any kind of marriages that happen in India) is that of endogamy, which itself is a symptom of the caste system that is the dominant organizing structure in the subcontinent. In India, one is not only expected to marry within one's religion, but also strictly within one's caste (or sub-caste). B. R. Ambedkar ([1917] 2009) in his seminal essay *Castes in India* states that "critical evaluation of the various characteristics of Caste leave no doubt that prohibition, or rather the absence of intermarriage – endogamy […]is the only one that can be called the essence of Caste" (pp 601). He also calls endogamy the "key to the mystery of the Caste system" (pp 602); i.e., a practice that is necessary for the maintenance and reproduction of the hierarchical, divisive system (ibid.).

Caste endogamous marriages are authoritatively prescribed in prescriptive texts of Hinduism such as the *Dharmashastras* and Hindu epics such as the *Ramayana*. An important text among the *Dharmashastras* is the *Manusmriti* (Laws of Manu), which is till today revered among certain sections of Hindus, clearly prohibits inter-marriage between the different castes (Nath, 1993). It says that an 'upper' caste man (*Brahmin, Kshatriya* and *Vaishya*) has to marry a woman from his own caste, especially if it is one's first marriage. However, this man is allowed take a woman from an 'inferior' or 'lower' caste, as a 'second wife' if and when he is surmounted by sexual passion; but *Brahmin* and *Kshatriya* men are even condemned from doing this, stating that they would acquire status of a *Shudra* if they did so (ibid.).

Fanatics of the caste system also often talk of preserving "purity of race" or "purity of blood" (Ambedkar, [1936] 2009), a goal to be reached through practice of endogamous marriage and

[3] *Gotra* literally stands for 'clan', a group that is believed to have descended from the same patriline. Within marriages (especially in North India), this is an exogamous group and marriages within the same *Gotra* are prohibited for being incestuous.

every so often also argue that an offspring that arises from an inter-caste, specially a hypogamous union (wherein an 'upper' caste woman marries a 'lower' caste man) may have aberrant or inferior traits. Such myths are also justified and reinforced in the *Manusmriti*, which ascribes the origin of 'lower' castes to inter-mixing of castes (Abraham, 2014). This text is also more disapproving of *pratiloma* (hypogamous) unions, than *anuloma* (hypergamous) ones; giving the child born from a *Brahmin* woman and a *Shudra* man the 'lowest among the low' status in the caste system and ordering social and economic banishment of such person (Nath, 1993). As the division into caste groups have nothing to do with 'blood' or 'genetics' of people, resolutions to maintain caste-purity, or a 'pure' patrilineal line (Chakraborty, 2003) through enforcing endogamous marriage have no truth eugenically (Ambedkar, [1936] 2009), and is more to do with maintaining power, privilege and status-quo.

The Hindu endorsement of endogamy is not just apparent from its prescription in the religious scriptures and texts but also through the lived reality of marriages in India today. The survey already mentioned, conducted by IHDS in 2005, which included a more or less representative sample of 41157 households across India, revealed that 95% of the marriages that took place in the country were endogamous marriages (Munshi, 2016). Although endogamy is quite strictly followed in arranged marriages, love marriages may not necessarily defy it. For example, a recent study aiming to explore the practice of love marriages in India found that choice of partners done by youngsters often coincides with the social norms and parental expectations for marriage (Vantournhout, 2012). Despite the fact that inter-caste marriages have been legal in India for more than five decades, such unions are still not sanctioned socially, and even punished through employing means of actual violence or threat of it or excommunication (Abraham, 2014; Chakraborty, 2003). Incidents of Honor Killings that are reported in various parts of the country are an example of the intolerance of the dominant society towards young people that aspire to defy the patriarchal-casteist norms of love and marriage in the country; and also in a way reflect failure of the state to enforce anti-discrimination laws. Some studies also show that the social punishments given to hypogamous unions are much more severe and brutal than those given to hypergamous unions (Abraham, 2014). One way of interpreting these realities is by arguing that casteist social order as prescribed by the Hindu texts such as the *Manusmriti* still continues to govern the social and material realities of people in the subcontinent; and practice of marriage and sexuality is no exception to this.

This discussion brings us to the following question: within inter-caste marriages, why is hypogamy more tabooed or punished than hypergamy? Abraham (2014), in her essay *Contingent caste endogamy and patriarchy* argues that, in hypogamy a situation arises wherein woman's (and her family's) caste and hence social-position is seen to be superior to the man's. This disturbs the patriarchal and casteist status-quo in the context of marriage; the scheme that men have to always have more power and status (symbolic power in terms of possessing "higher" caste status and otherwise) in the union (ibid.). She also discusses that the Hindu marital norms dictate the 'wife-givers' always are (or should be) regarded inferior to 'wife takers'; and since in hypogamy the caste and patriarchal powers contradict each other, this situation hence less acceptable (Vatuk,1975 as cited in Abraham, 2014). This perhaps brings us to the next point - how the practice of gender and sexuality in India is intertwined and colored by the institution of caste (an institution which survives through the practice of endogamy).

### 2.1.3 Status of Women in the Hindu Order and the Concept of a Virtuous Wife

As discussed above, governing the practices of marriage, sexuality and hence reproduction forms the basis of how the caste system is sustained. Analyzing conceptualizations of gender and womanhood within Hinduism and the status of women within it hence cannot be done without addressing how caste system sustains itself through systematic control on women's sexuality. In *Castes in India,* Ambedkar ([1917] 2009) rightly raises this issue; giving examples of how Hindu practices related to marriage, that were prevalent at the time, such as *sati* (burning of a widow in the funeral pyre of the deceased husband), enforcement of widowhood (by not allowing the widow to remarry), and child marriage were not only intended to control women's sexuality but were also central to the enforcement of endogamy (ibid).

Within the Hindu order, women are often seen as "gateways" of a caste (Abraham, 2014) and bearers of family's or community's, *izzat* or honour (Soni, 2012). Men on the other hand, are culturally viewed as the regulators and protectors of the woman's *izzat* (ibid.). Policing, controlling and protecting the women's lives and sexuality, is often considered imperative to enforce endogamy, and consequentially to ensure a 'pure' line of descent (Ambedkar, 1917; Chakraborty, 2003).

The *Manusmriti*, which in a way is a text that was formulated to systematize and legitimate the caste-order also mentions rules for women's behavior in it; with a special emphasis placed on the necessity to control women to manage their "inherent evil character". In it, while a man is asked to control, guard and protect the woman; submission to the control exerted by men is specified as the dominant duty of women (Buhler, 1964 as cited in Wadley, 1977). The text says:

> Nothing must be done independently, even in her own house by a young girl, by a young woman, or even by an aged one… In childhood a female must be subject to her father, in youth to her husband, and when her lord is dead to her sons; a woman must never be independent (Buhler, 1964 as cited in Wadley, 1977 pp 118).

Girls in orthodox Hindu households time and again do experience this kind of control and policing right from childhood (Walton-Roberts, 2004). At a younger age, the male members of the family - fathers and brothers are regarded are the primary protectors of their honor (ibid). An unmarried girl is sometimes also thought of as an *amanat*, a guest who is "held in trust" (ibid., 2004 pp 364) in the father's house till she is married. The mother's role in guarding her daughter is specially highlighted when the daughter 'comes of age', wherein she is required to vigilantly monitor her behavior and also teach her to perform the duties expected from her (Das, 1993 as cited in Walton-Roberts, 2004). After her marriage is fixed, the mother along other female relatives is also expected to prepare the girl or inform her about what to expect after she leaves for the husband's house following her marriage (Kakar & Kakar, 2007). After marriage, the woman is expected to keep up to the family expectations of being a good-wife and also a good daughter-in-law. Let us now go back to the *Dharmashastra*s and scrutinize the conceptualization of virtuous wife in the Hindu scriptures. The *Manusmriti* states that:

> Though destitute of virtue, [...] or good qualities, a husband must be constantly worshiped as a god by a faithful wife [...] If she violates her duty towards her husband, a wife is disgraced in this world; [after death] she enters the womb of a jackal, and is tormented by diseases [as punishment] of her sin […] She who controls her thoughts, words, and deeds, and never slights her lord, resides her husband [in heaven after death], and is called a virtuous [wife] (Buhler, 1964 as cited in Wadley, 1977 pp 118).

The depiction of an ideal, virtuous Hindu wife as being submissive, one who does not endeavor to break loose from the bonds of control; whose salvation and happiness is the function of her relentless devotion to her husband is not unique to the *Manusmriti* and is also present in other Hindu Sanskritic texts, folk literature and oral traditions (Wadley, 1977). Examples are of *Sita* from the Hindu epic *Ramayana* or the legend surrounding the Hindu goddess *Savitri* (ibid.). Characters of these women, even today continue to be glorified within the Hindu culture, their image upheld as being the role-model all married Hindu women should strive for; celebrated for their exceptional devotion and dutifulness towards their husbands and remembered through festivals, fables; and in popular culture through TV shows, movies, etc.

The devoted, faithful Hindu wife is often referred to as a *Pativrata*, described in idealistically as being a "mere devotee of that exalted, all-wise and all-powerful God called *pati* (her husband)" (Shah, 2012 pp 80). The wifely duties of the *Pativrata*, in the scriptures are referred to as the *Stri Dharma* or the *Pativrata Dharma.* One of the first clear and radical critiques of the passivity and unfairness behind this *Dharma* and also the casteist, patriarchal basis of Hinduism that propagate it came from Tarabai Shinde(1882) in her *Stri-Purush Tulana (A Comparison Between Women and Men)*. To quote from it:

> What is *stri dharma*? Endless devotion to a single husband, behaving according to his whims. Even if he beats her, curses her, keeps her a prostitute, drinks, robs the treasury, takes bribes, when he returns home she should worship him as God, as if Krishna Maharaj himself had come from stealing the milk of the Gavalis […] there are various reasons for breaking pativrata. (Shinde, 1992 as cited in Omvedt, 2011, pp 33)

Shah (2012), who has analyzed this *Dharma* in her paper *On Gender, Wives and Pativratas* regards it as an 'ideology' popularized through Hindu epics, meant to "school women" into the service role expected from them (ibid.). As opposed to being self-affirming, she opines that this *Dharma* is self-denying, passive and is footed merely on unquestioned devotion to the husband. She also states that the passivity of the wife's *Dharma* in Hinduism is in sharp contrast to the conceptualization of the husband's *dharma* which can either be *brahmacharya* (voluntary celibacy) or as *gruastha* (householder), both of which recognize man as a rational capable actor (ibid.). The *Pativrata Dharma* on the other hand, negates the wife's individuality; she is not entitled to have joys and avocations of her own, she is required to serve not just her husband but also the entire household, included the in-laws and is even supposed to eat, drink and dress according their taste (ibid.). Within this *Dharma*, there is also an over-emphasis placed on the concept of chastity and purity of a wife. Shah (2012) hence defines this *Dharma* as an ingenious ideology which was/is used to encourage compliance with patriarchal oppressive household norms; mainly carried out through psychological means, encouraging internalization and embodiment of said norms.

In my personal opinion, the traditions within Hinduism do not in general favor a gender egalitarian order or a complete emancipation of women within the family and the society. Although I believe it is important to point out and criticize how patriarchy is promoted and reproduced in Hindu casteist order, it would also be erroneous to assume that some kind of a 'shared victimhood' is the defining characteristic of women who practice Hinduism. I do not wish to propagate such essentialisms. Resistance to the patriarchy within Hindu scriptures has been taking place considerably since the early times, the most radical opposition coming radical feminist takes of anti-caste leaders (Omvedt, 1990, 2011). Broadly speaking, upper-caste and

Hindu-reformist or feminists have always taken ‘soft’ approaches while resisting patriarchy within Hinduism; in the sense that they espouse that Hinduism is essentially good and that it could be ‘saved’ or ‘redeemed’ in some way from its patriarchal, casteist base; such discourses also testify that broadly speaking the representation of women in scriptures has been positive (Omvedt, 2011). Some of these feminists also allude to the supposed glory of the Vedic times, claiming that gender relations within Hinduism were more egalitarian then, an order that was later degraded by the Islamic Mughal invasions of India and the colonial rule (ibid.). As opposed to this, anti-caste thinkers who propagated for an equal and just social order in India, such as B. R. Ambedkar, Ramaswami Periyar and Jyotiba Phule among others have vehemently argued how Hinduism (and its ideologies and practices) was in its nature casteist and anti-women women. It was also thinkers from anti-caste thought that radically worked towards women’s rights in India such right to education, property inheritance, among others; and campaigned so that women within Hindu marriages can lead a life of dignity, liberty and equality. Furthermore, the activism and writings of early anti-caste female reformists in India such as Tarabai Shinde, Pandita Ramabai and Savitribai Phule who opposed the casteist patriarchy prescribed within Hindu scriptures, exposed its double standards and worked tirelessly for inclusion of women in public spaces are also noteworthy (ibid.).

Today, up to an extent, the Constitution of India and laws in place aims to create a more gender equal society through stating women and men must be treated equally when it comes to education, employment and inheritance (among other things); and wills to protect women from unjust practices such as discrimination in schools and workplaces, child marriages, sexual abuse and trafficking, dowry related abuse and domestic violence, among others (Sabar, 2016). Married women also have various rights in the constitution such as ownership right to *streedhan* (gifts and money that is given to her within marriage), right to maintenance by husband and right to live a dignified life in husband’s house after marriage among others (ibid.). However, ‘Hindu culture’ is still a factor that very much comes in way of women’s rights. An example is of the debate surrounding criminalization of marital rape. India is one of the 49 nations in the world wherein marital rape is not a crime (Sachdev, 2016). Whereas various international bodies such as the UN and some Indian activists have been appealing the government to criminalize it, Indian law-makers and politicians have still been hesitant (ibid.). One reason that is often given by the ones who oppose the criminalization is that it would somehow come in way of the ‘sacredness’ of marriage in India. This is just one of the examples of how myths regarding the duties of the wife and conjugal rights of the husband, justified by religion and ‘culture’ still continue to govern legal and social realities around women and marriage (Roy, 2016; Sachdev, 2016).

## 2.2 Cross-border and Transnational Marriages

Williams (2010) in her book *Global Marriage* has studied the global phenomenon of cross-border marriage migration with the intention of understanding migration choices of individuals, families and communities and the strategies adopted by them while undertaking the actual migration. She states that marriage migration is one of the opportunities through which women from relatively poor nations get a chance to escape the poverty and inequality in their home countries and work towards their individual and their family’s aspirations (Williams, 2010). Cross-border marriages are also sometimes referred to as ‘strategic marriages’ in literature, in the

sense that they are seen to be undertaken primarily with calculative intentions in mind- to increase one's or the community's social and economic standing through migration. Although migration to more developed countries after marriage may in general increase a woman's standard of living, assuming that all marriage migrants are poor and economically backward would be largely erroneous, as research shows that most such migrants are from relatively better social positions in their home countries - both in terms of their education levels and economic standing (ibid.). Williams (2010) argues that such assumptions are primarily based on stereotypical, overly simplistic assumptions of migrants, and further states that studies on such marriages show that cross-border marriage migration involves much more than these kind of rational strategies that may be apparent from a surface view.

Marriages among communities that can be categorized as being a part of a transnational community or a diaspora are good examples of how marriages across borders can serve an important and culturally motivated role in shaping and maintaining of such communities (Charsley & Shaw, 2006; Williams, 2010). Such marriages may also serve the broader communal role of maintaining social ties and initiating and maintaining familial relationships across borders (ibid.). Marriages, here may be seen as a way of holding on to "home" and can be seen as being a part of "continued projects of transnational connections" (Gardner, 2006 pp 374 as cited in Williams, 2010 pp106) among "globally dispersed kin" (Charsley & Shaw, 2006 pp339). An example of how familial ties are sustained is through sending remittances after marriage (Williams, 2010). Economic remittances may be sent to non-migrant family members, even though they may not be financially dependent on the migrant relative. Studies show that apart from serving an economic purpose, these remittances may also serve an emotional purpose, of expressing kinship solidarity and filial responsibility transnationally. Findings from some of the studies on these communities may also contradict the view that cross-border marriages are sought primarily with the intention to migrate abroad to a better lifestyle, as some of these marriages may also take people who were settled in more developed countries to lesser-developed countries (Williams, 2010). Studies also point that whereas marriages in diasporic communities serve the purpose of maintaining emotional and cultural connections, the dynamics or process of marriage itself may be shaped and reshaped in a new geographic space. For example, adhering to traditional rituals surrounding marriage may become even more pronounced and strictly enforced in the diaspora as cultural and ethnic identities solidify (Sheel, 2005).

Cross-border marriages that involve practices and customs 'foreign' are also scrutinized in media and popular discourses as well as research in the west. An example is that of arranged marriage. Shaw (2006) has reflected on how arranged marriages are often thought of as involving "denial of individual autonomy and emotion" (pp 210, as cited in Williams, 2010 pp 108). Khandewal (2009) has reflected on how a comparative framework based on a binary logic that seeks to contrast west from the 'other', consequentially placing love and arranged marriages as natural opposites perpetuates an essentialist view of marriage further. In her paper *Arranging Love* she presents that essentialist binary as follows:

| *"Arranged Marriage* | *Love Marriage* |
|---|---|
| Tradition | Modernity |
| Authority of kin | Individual choice |
| Social mobility | Emotional and sexual fulfillment |

| Women as commodities | Women as agents |
| --- | --- |
| Rationality | Irrationality” |

(Khandewal, 2009, pp 586)

Such an over-simplistic dichotomy exemplifies an orientalist view of the East, wherein marriage based on romantic love that is free from practical considerations and structural constraints is seen as being primarily a part of western reality; and as being foreign or absent from Eastern traditions such as arranged marriage (ibid). This ‘western’ form of ‘pure’ love is then also made into some sort of an ideal and a yardstick against which all other types of relationships or marriages are defined and judged. Feminist discourses that challenge patriarchal conceptualizations among eastern marriages are also seen as being a gift of the western modernity and any reference to eastern traditions or culture is seen as violating gender equality (ibid.). The essential problem with such discourses is that it reifies and often demonizes communities that are perceived to be ‘different’ from the majority.

Some of these studies also specifically talk about women who have migrated to marry or join their husbands living overseas. In these studies, migrant women who opt for such marriages are often victimized and seen as being ‘forced into it’ (Williams, 2010) or portrayed as being doubly disadvantaged - having less agency in the migration process and within the patriarchal hierarchies of both emigration and immigration countries (Cheung, 1999 as cited in Charsley & Shaw, 2006). What this does, is denies the agency that women possess in the migration trajectory. Migrant women, until recently, are seen as relatively passive in the migration process, as merely following or accompanying their husbands, fathers or other male relatives (Boyd and Grieco, 2003; Buijs, 1993 as cited in Charsley & Shaw, 2006). Some other researchers in response to this have also spoken the importance of acknowledging the existence of female labor migration, and its increase in the past few decades also called ‘feminization of migration’ (Castles & Miller, 2003; Sharpe, 2001 as cited in Charsley & Shaw, 2006); nevertheless, it is important to also acknowledge women having agency other kinds of migration such as marriage migration and migration attempted at family reunification. Studies show that even women who participate in marriage migration play an important role in developing and sustaining transnational networks after migrating and also sometimes act as catalysts for initiating migration of other members in their home countries (Charsley & Shaw, 2006).

## 2.3 Locating Gujaratis in the Global Indian Diaspora

Oonk (2007) in his book *Global Indian Diasporas* states that the “mosaic of Indian identities abroad is presented as the mirror of India itself. India is diverse and so are its migrants”. He also reflects on the difficulty of attempting to analyze the various heterogeneous groups (linguistic, religious, caste-based) that form the ‘Indian diaspora’ as a single unified category; as the migration trajectories, reasons to emigrate, experience in the host countries, etc. will all be different for each of these groups (ibid.). The *High Level Committee Rexport on the Indian Diaspora* (Singhvi et al., 2001; as cited in Lourenco, 2013) states that currently the Indian Diaspora comprises of over 20 million people. Among this sizable populace, the sub-community that is specifically of interest for the present thesis is the one that originated from the coastal western Indian state of Gujarat.

Gujaratis have a long history with migration and ever since ancient times they have been known for trading with different parts of the world (Singh & Rajan, 2016). During the colonial period as opportunities began to emerge in other colonies of British or Portuguese empires, this community was one of the firsts to emigrate (ibid.). A fairly recent report by the *Vishwa Gujarati Samaj* (Global Gujarati Community) declares that Gujaratis comprise of 33% of the global Indian Diaspora, and can be found in varied numbers in 129 of 190 sovereign nations listed by the UN (Rajghatta, 2015). The largest Gujarati immigrant group is the British East African Asian community in the UK (ibid.). Apart from this, a significant number of Gujaratis also exist in East and South Africa and also in South-East Asia; and they also compose of 40% of the Indo-American population (ibid.).

Khan (2008) believes that Gujaratis stand out from their other Indian counterparts because of three qualities that they possess: (i) their entrepreneurial spirit, (ii) commercial networks that they have established and (iii) their aptitude for business. Additionally, he also argues that the Gujarati migrant population around the world can be called a 'diaspora' because in spite of being dispersed around the globe, they possess some sort of an idealized memory towards their homeland, a wish (that may or may not actualize) to return to the homeland, and a communitarian feeling of solidarity among themselves. M. F. Salat (2011) has also argued in these lines, stressing on how themes of memory of homeland and an associated feeling of loss are quite pronounced in the Gujarati diaspora writings. He says that remembering, preserving and re-inventing memories of homeland and reproducing Gujarati culture (language, religion) plays an important role for the people of this community, causing them to retain a distinct identity for themselves while living overseas.

The Gujarati community dispersed in various parts of the world has also organized itself through establishments of global community network societies such as the *Vishwa Gujarati Samaj* and the *Gujarati Samaj* (Bhat & Narayan, 2010). Such organizations encourage memberships from Gujarati people from various parts of the world and provide a common platform to discuss political, social, cultural and economic matters that are relevant to the community; and sometimes also provide members counsel on matrimony and real-estate matters (ibid.). The Gujarati diaspora also eagerly participates in various events and proceedings happening in the home state of Gujarat in India (Singh & Rajan, 2016). For example, members of this community are dutifully involved in various religious organizations in India such as the Swaminarayan Society. Some of the Gujaratis around the world also keep connections with their home-lands though helping to build infrastructure (such as schools, hospitals) and contributing to the economy of the villages they left behind (ibid.). A few of them also participate in state or national level political proceedings, such as elections in India. Although the number of individuals from this community that participates in direct voting during state elections is low, their contribution to the PR related activities required for election campaigns cannot be overlooked (ibid.).

### 2.3.1 The Hindu-Gujarati community in Portugal

The *High Level Committee Rexport on the Indian Diaspora* claims that approximately 33,000 Hindus live in Portugal, spread across Porto, Coimbra and Greater Lisbon (Singhvi et al., 2001; as cited in Lourenco, 2013). A large majority of the Hindu families that now reside in Portugal originally come from the Northwest-Indian state of Gujarat, and were a part of the large wave of Hindu-Gujarati migration that occurred from India to East Africa (ibid.). A fraction of these

families also came from Diu which was a colony of Portugal (along with Goa and Daman) until 1961. These families later migrated and settled in Mozambique (another Portuguese colony) during the colonial rule. Following the independence of Mozambique in 1975 and the subsequent civil war they later migrated to the Lisbon Metropolitan Area (LMA) in early 1980s (Bastos and Bastos, 2001, as cited in Lourenco, 2013).

It is important also to acknowledge that the migration trajectories for some of these families do not end here. Research has shown that a wave of migration also began in the 1990s in which several Hindu-Gujarati families migrated from Portugal to several British Urban settings such as Southhall and Wembley in London, Leicester, Manchester, Reading and Birmingham (Bastos, 2005; Cachado, 2008; Dias, 2009; Lourenco, 2007 as cited in Lorenco 2013). The social cohesion among the members of this group is also apparent through some of these studies which showed that the migrated Hindu families in the UK only circulate among other Hindu-Gujarati networks within the diaspora almost throughout their lives (Lourenco & Cachado 2012, as cited in Lourenco, 2013).

This community is fairly affluent when it comes to its socio-economic status of these Hindu families in Portugal, the *High Level Committee Report on the Indian Diaspora* reveals that most individuals from this community are involved in some sort of business- retail or the wholesale and a few work as skilled or unskilled workers (Singhvi et al., 2001 as cited in Lourenco, 2013). Furthermore, a few of them are also engaged in white collar jobs (ibid.). There is some kind of socio-economic disparity that can be noticed within this diasporic group such that some of the members possess considerable social and economic power while others are not so privileged, even depending on the Portuguese social services for assistance (ibid.).

Although this community represents a significant part of the diasporic community in Portugal it has not been extensively studied. A Lourenco (2013) in her paper on Indian immigrants in Portugal cites Malheiros (1996), a geographer who has commented on various reasons why it has been difficult to study this community in Portugal. The first difficulty that he has pointed to is that many of these people possess a Portuguese nationality, making it difficult to know for certain the exact number of people who belong to this group. Secondly, the Portuguese census does not classify Hinduism as a separate religion, clubbing it under the category of "other religions." Statistically, this makes it difficult to officially distinguish Hindus from other immigrants. Thirdly, this population is characterized with a high level of mobility - the number is not accounted for those individuals/families that live in more than one countries (Lourenço, 2009, Malheiros 1996 as cited in Lourenco 2013). There hence remains a significant gap in research when it comes to this community.

Whereas there is a considerable lag in research on this community in Portugal, even fewer studies have focused on the cultural and familial aspects of this community in Portugal. One study by Lourenco & Cachado (2012) for example has addressed the phenomenon of transnationality among the families of this community and the various aspects concerning trans-local and social mobility of this community. This study has also briefly shed light on the identity negotiations related to gender, family, religion and caste among the Gujarati-Hindus with relation to migration and establishment of this community to Portugal. It also speaks of how Hinduism as a religion got adapted within the transnational context in Portugal and functioned as a factor which fostered the formation of a consolidated cultural-identity of this community. A

brief reflection on gender roles, status of women within the family and community and the practice of marriage is also present in this paper.

One of the studies has also specifically focused on the part played by the women in the community in constructing gender and religion related identities abroad (Lourenco, 2011). It states that culturally and socially, women from the community are primarily assigned the role to ensure reproduction of culture in the Portugal. It also sheds light on how power and status related to gender order is replicated in the host countries and also on the inter-generational differences between older and younger women in the community with regard to this aspect.

# 3.Theoretical Framework

This section would elaborate on the three theoretical frameworks that would be used to analyze the results of this study: (i) Agency-favoring framework and strengths based theory, (ii) Caste, Gender and Intersectional theory (iii) Migration theories on diaspora and transnationalism.

## 3.1 Agency-Favouring Framework and Strengths Based Theory

South-Asian women in the diaspora are often stereotyped and perceived in the media as being oppressed by patriarchy, sheltered at homes and in the society and ill-educated (Brown, 2006). Although 'South-Asian women' itself is a very broad category (as is 'Indian women'), there may also a tendency among Western researchers to club South-Asian women under the even broader category of 'Third World Women' (Mohanty, 2003). Chandra Monahty (2003) in her Paper *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* gives a critique of some of such texts (Hosken, 1981, Cutrufelli, 1983, Minces, 1980, Lindsay, 1983 & Jeffery, 1979 as cited in ibid.) and discusses of how they ghettoize, reify and discursively colonize these (non-western) women as the homogenous, oppressed and distinct 'other'. She argues that the "average third world woman" is seen to lead an "essentially truncated life based on her feminine gender (read: sexually constrained) and being "third world" (read: ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domestic, family-oriented, victimized, etc.)" (Mohanty, 2003, pp 337). Mohanty (2003) further argues how this representation of a 'third-world woman' is often contrasted with "the (implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions" (ibid. pp 337).

This stereotyping of South-Asian women as 'victims' may be complemented with stereotypes about predatory nature of South-Asian men, which may sometimes lead to a denying of the inherent racism behind these presumptions; and rationalizing of the orientalist gaze with the emphasis placed on wanting to 'help' or 'save' these women from their own societies (Flood, M., Gardiner, J. K., Pease, B. & Pringle, K., 2007).

Apart from problematic, essentialized portrayal of migrant women, customs and practices viewed as being 'different' from those present in host countries may also be stereotyped, racialized and demonized (Williams, 2010). An example that I will choose to highlight in this section is of arranged marriage that happens on a cross-national level. Firstly, arranged marriage is often equated with 'forced marriage' and is seen as a practice that is unacceptable, aberrant and often as being in complete contrast to western norms (which are seen as more egalitarian or superior) regarding love and marriage (ibid.). Common sense and anecdotal evidence may also be provided by contenders from the western majority groups in order to make a case that such marriages, particularly those involving close kin (such as cousins) are genetically dicey, irreconcilable with gender equality, and possibly are a bad and abusive substitute for love marriage (ibid.). Within such discourses, migrant women who

have experienced arranged marriage are more often than not viewed as being 'forced' into it, their apparent 'victimhood' becomes highlighted, while the possibility of women being capable of exercising choice and agency in entering and sustaining such relationships is made invisible (ibid.).

While I do not want to glorify the practice of arranged marriage, or deny that forced marriages happen or even refuse that immigrant women in certain circumstances may experience vulnerabilities or challenges; I strongly believe that there needs to be literature that challenges this reified, victimized narrative on the lives of these women. This is why I have chosen to discuss Strengths-Based Theory (Saleeby, 1996, 2000) and Agency Favouring Approach (Williams, 2010) in the following section of this chapter.

The Strengths-Based Approach, as espoused by Dennis Saleebey believes that "every individual, family, and community has an array of capacities and skills, talents and gifts, wiles and wisdom that, in the end are the bricks and mortar of change" (Saleebey, 2000, pp 127). It advocates that people who are tackling with stress more often than not develop some ideas, capacities, abilities or defenses; and that typically they also possess knowledge of what is right for them. The task in front of the social worker, practitioner or researcher is hence to look for people's resilient and transformative responses as they counter challenges (ibid). This approach also recognizes that all individuals, even those living in demanding, dangerous, unpleasant environments, do have resources in their reach which could be mobilized when needed. It hence places an importance on understanding the context and the environment around the person. This framework, in a way, arose as a critique of the over-reliance of Social Work on psychodynamic, psychotherapeutic approaches in the 1950s-60s and was seen as a way of shifting the focus from looking for dysfunctions, vulnerabilities in individuals and the environment to focusing on their strengths (Guo& Tsui, 2010). However, some recent adherents of the Strengths Based Model also suggest expanding it to also include concepts such as resistance and rebellion along with concepts of resilience and strengths (ibid). They suggest that although an overdependence on understanding people by placing them in structures may be deterministic or even fatalist, it is only by understanding the structures that govern people can one think of breaking them (ibid.).

A related and complementary framework is the Agency-Favouring approach. Agency may be defined as "socio-culturally mediated capacity to act" (Ahearn, 2001 p 112 as cited in Williams, 2010, p 36). Here it is important to understand that the concept of agency is much broader than 'autonomy' or 'free will', both of which imply that a person decides and acts in a self-directed and autonomous manner; without acknowledgement to contextual or structures factors that may affect his/her behavious (Williams, 2010). Agency can neither be seen as emerging entirely from the 'self' of the person or solely from the external structures of power; but through the interaction of both these elements. Bourdieu's (1977) concept of 'habitus' can also aid in understanding agency of an individual within a social setting (Vertovec, 2000; Guo & Tsui, 2010; Williams, 2010). 'Habitus' refers to a constellation of non-conscious dispositions and characteristics within a person and the schemas in his/her possession that guide perception; both of which are gained through socialization. Bourdieu states that although Habitus is patterned, it is also malleable and open to change in relation to changing nature in the social field. Agency can hence be seen as being located among

personal and community histories, in a person's hopes and aspirations, cultural beliefs and intertwined in a person's material realities (ibid). Agency also must not be seen as an 'all or nothing' thing, in the sense of defining a person as being either vulnerable or in full possession of it. In this framework, like in the Strengths Based Approach, every person, even those that can be perceived to be in risky and vulnerable situations, are seen to possess some degree of agency and power; whether they choose to negotiate, agree to, accommodate, deny, resist, or protest with a structure or a situation.

The common aspects of both these frameworks is that they both contest a pathological deterministic models of people and chose to portray people in a positive way- focusing on them as able, active, resourceful agents with strengths capable of empowering themselves. The reason why I feel that these perspectives are particularly important for the present study is because, as discussed above, immigrant women from developing countries many a times they are seen as being 'vulnerable' in their families societies or in the host country; or as 'victims' to cultural practices (such as arranged marriages). Employing frameworks such as Strengths-Based Theory (Saleeby, 1996, 2000) and Agency Favouring Approach (Williams, 2010) would bring to the fore narratives of resistance and resilience in the picture. Moreover, it would allow to focus on the constructive aspects of their lives such as their strengths, hopes, and aspirations, and not just their vulnerability in the existing system. Hence, employing these frameworks would not only challenge the negative, reifying, essentialized narratives on the women and their lives but also lead to a more accurate, positive and empowering representation of them.

## 3.2 Caste, Gender and Intersectionality

As mentioned above, although in this study the Strengths-Based and Agency-Favouring Approaches would take an upper-hand, I nonetheless consider it important to delve into structures surrounding individuals. Quoting Guo & Tsui (2010) it is "only when we recognize the structural relations that influence our behaviour can we resist their oppressions" (Guo & Tsui, 2010, p 240). Paying attention to structures, while remembering to assert on strengths in people, is important in my opinion, not only to make the people or even the practitioners/researcher more reflexive in their practice, but to also understand which resources can be rallied from the environment when needed.

Very broadly speaking, the lives of Indian-Hindu women like other women around the world are affected by patriarchy. However, from my own personal and academic encounters, I believe that attempting to 'study' Indian women by taking an approach which highlights patriarchy as the overriding structure that determines a woman's life, and her status and interactions with others, would be highly inaccurate. An onlooker must bear in mind that the Indian society is by and large a caste-based society.

Caste may at times interact and combine with other structures such as gender, socio-economic class, etc. producing multiple oppressions. However, by and large it remains a structure that largely determines any individuals' material and social realities. Thus, a *Brahmin* woman in the caste-society would have access to much more privileges, economic

capital and have a higher status than a man (or woman) from castes on the 'lower' hierarchies (Kakar & Kakar, 2007 as cited in Lourenco, 2011).

Keeping this understanding of Indian-society in mind, let's now move to the concept of intersectionality, its meaning, relevance and criticisms. Intersectionality is a part of feminist theory whose basic premise is that people live and experience several, layered identities which emerge from their social relations, their history and the structures of power that organize a society (Symington, 2004). It was coined by legal scholar Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989, in her seminal paper *Demarginalizing the Intersections of Race and Sex: A Black Feminist Critique of Antidiscriminatory Doctrine, Feminist Theory and Antiracist Politics.* Crenshaw in her paper argues how using 'gender' or 'women' as broad categories, or defining 'sexism' as something that affects all women equally, irrespective of race, class would fail to take into account the diverse histories and realities of women. Placing this paper in its historical context, it also emerged as a critique of white feminists whose voices dominated the feminist narratives at the time. Crenshaw remarked that white feminists who often spoke "for and as women" conveniently ignored "how their own race functions to mitigate some aspects of sexism and, moreover, how it often privileges them over and contributes to the domination of other women" (Crenshaw, 1989, pp 154). A comprehensive theory that would look at the multiple layers of oppression, taking into account other identities such as one's race, class, etc. along with gender would hence be more fair and accurate (ibid.).

Applying this theory to Hindu-Gujarati migrant women would require us to demarcate which are the significant organizing principles of the Portuguese-Hindu community (Symington, 2004). This would entail looking at the major power structures relevant to the Indian context such as caste along with other structures that could be relevant in multiple contexts such as gender, class etc. Following this, one must also look at converging points where these structures may intersect, in order to reveal the multiple oppression or even multiple privileges a person may experience.

Feminists from anti-caste tradition of thought have then and again, spoken and written against upper-caste, elite feminist for erroneously using the theory of intersectionality, and treating caste as just another power structure that affects a person's life like class, gender. Here, it cannot be stressed enough that caste is the overarching structure in the Indian scenario, such that it will colour and shape almost every aspect of a person's life including class and the experience of gender and sexuality. Arguing from this line of thought, writer and journalist Pathak (2015) in his article *Brahmins Preferred: the Caste of Sexuality* argues:

> Most *savarna* (upper-caste) dominated spaces in India, be it media or academia or civil society, attempt to look at 'intersections' of 'caste and sexuality', 'caste and gender' which is the beginning of a false discourse…The 'and' here refers to how caste becomes just another thing among the various identities one is supposed to have. It magically erases most material realities, primarily caste, that shapes our interactions. (para 24)

Intersectionality, hence, may be a good theory as it addresses how multiple, layered oppressions or privileges are experienced. However, remembering the previous discussion on caste, while using this theory, one must acknowledge and recognize that some structures

(such as caste) may be more dominant organizing principles than others (gender); such that when two structures are seen to intersect (such as caste and gender), both individual structures cannot be viewed as having equal weight and importance.

# 3.3 Migration theories: Diaspora and Transnationalism

Apart from the theories mentioned above will also use studies from migration studies to explore concepts of Diaspora and Transnationalism to guide my analysis.

Transnationalism may be defined as a "social process whereby migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political and cultural borders" (Brettel, 2003, pp 48). As conceptual framework it offers a different way of looking at a migrant, going beyond the assimilationist view, to see him/her as being simultaneously a part of or holding attachment towards two (or more) nations or worlds, as being a part of the past as well as the present (Thapan, 2005). A cultural identity of a person within this framework, is not seen to be fixed or absolute and its fluidity and flexibility is stressed. As quoted by Thapan a migrant's identity is seen to be "constructed across difference through memory, fantasy, narrative and myth, within the framework of, and across, time and place" (Thapan, 2005, pp 25).

'Diaspora' is a word often used to depict population or individuals that can be seen as being either 'transnational' or 'deterretorized', it speaks of people "whose cultural origins are said to have arisen in a land other than in which they currently reside, and whose social, economic and political networks cross the borders of nation-states or, indeed, span the globe" (Vertovec, 2000, pp 141). According to Gijbert Oonk (2007), most researchers agree that at least four characteristics are important to qualify as a diaspora: (a) Dispersal from one's homeland to two or more countries. (b) Existence of a collective myth regarding homeland and some kind of a commitment to create and maintaining this imaginary homeland. (c) A strong ethnic conscience abroad and a myth of returning to one's homeland. (d) Strong sense of solidarity or empathy with akin groups abroad or with people, events, societies in homeland (ibid.).

Vertovec (2000) in his book *The Hindu Diaspora: Comparative Patterns* says that there are essentially three meanings of diaspora: it can be understood as a 'social form', as a 'type of consciousness' and as a 'mode of cultural production'. As a social form, it can be seen as a "triadic relationship" (Sheffer, 1986; Safran, 1991 as cited in ibid. pp 144) between (a) the globally dispersed ethnic group holding a collective identity (b) the territorial region or the region wherein the group resides and (c) the homeland states. This refers to the geographical dispersal of the members and how social ties, communal identities are maintained across borders. The socio-economic strategies adopted by the members and their political orientations related to the unwillingness or incapability to be accepted into the 'host' country (Vertovec, 2000, Oonk, 2007).

Diaspora as 'a type of consciousness' (Vertovec, 2000, pp 146) includes psychological aspects such as one's mood, mental and emotional states as well as feelings of identity and belongingness. This dimension may also have an ambivalent or paradoxical nature such that, in the 'host' countries one may experience exclusion and discrimination along with being

appreciated for one's cultural heritage; one may feel at home in spite of being 'away from home'. This dimension also acknowledges the principle of 'multilocality' in which on a conceptual level, one is able to simultaneously connect with people "both 'here' and 'there', who share the same 'roots' and 'routes'" (ibid. pp 147).

Diaspora as a 'mode of cultural production' can be conceptualized as involving construction and reproduction of worldwide social and cultural phenomenon. This aspect stresses on the "world-wide flow of cultural objects, images and meanings resulting in variegated processes of creolization, back-and-fourth transferences, mutual influences, new contestations, negotiations and constant transformations" (Vertovec, 2010, pp 153). This aspect also stresses on the intergenerational flow of culture and on the position of the youth who may be socialized into more than one cultures.

I will apply the aforementioned frameworks to highlight issues such as how the migrant women in the diaspora negotiate between various cultural and social identities, how they reproduce their culture abroad, how they participate within the community abroad, how they maintain relationships with their home-lands, among others.

# 4.Methodology

## 4.1 Population and Sampling

Women from the Hindu-Gujarati community comprised of the population of the study. Considering the limited time-frame within which the thesis needed to be finished, the sample size included eight women between the ages of 32 to 52 (as you may see in table 1). All of the interviews took place in Lisbon. Out of which seven took place in the Santo Antonio dos Cavaleiros area and one interview took place in Damaia Cima area.

The sampling method consisted of meeting participants through talking to previous researchers who had worked on the Hindu diaspora in Portugal and through visiting community spaces such as temples (opportunistic sampling) and then snowballing from there (Bryman, 2012).At the outset of the research, there were various inclusion criteria that were decided to determine which women could be included in the study. At this time, I only wanted to only focus on Hindu women who had spent a large part of their lives in India and had participated in cross-border arranged marriage migration. The rationale behind doing so was to have a very focused approach in the study to understand how cross-border marriage happened in the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora.

However, as the study progressed, it was decided that the criteria may be broadened in order to include a larger diversity in life histories. I decided to broaden the topic from cross-border arranged marriages to 'transnational arranged marriages' also including women who had spent their entire lives among the diaspora; and women who had married in India and had migrated with husband to Portugal post-marriage. The choice of broadening the criteria enabled a more nuanced understanding of how transnational arranged marriages happened within the diaspora. In terms of studying the lives of married women within the diaspora, the study also became much more representative of  This was also important as arranged marriage was not a practice that specifically affected first-generation migrant women but also women who had spent their entire lives away from India.

The Hindu-Gujarati women that I interviewed for the study can broadly be divided into three groups:

a) Gujarati women who participated in cross-border migration from India to Portugal after arranged marriage with men from the Hindu Gujarati Diaspora (4 cases).
b) Gujarati women who migrated along with her husband post marriage for economic reasons (1 case).
c) Second-generation female migrants from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora who experienced arranged marriage (2 cases).

Apart from this, it was also thought that it would be interesting to interview a Hindu-Indian immigrant who was not a Gujarati to get insights into the inter-group dynamics of the various

communities of Indian origin living in Portugal (such as Punjabis, Goans[4] etc.). For this purpose, a married woman from the Indian state of Uttar Pradesh was also included in the study.

Table 1 presented below elaborates on information about the interviewees included in this study. Pseudonyms have been used instead of using the actual names of interviewees throughout the thesis, in order to respect their privacy and maintain confidentiality. As can be observed from below, the table provides information on the ages, current occupations, migration trajectories (including the duration of stay in Lisbon), marriage histories (including the age at marriage) and family composition in Portugal.

[4] Punjabis are people from the Indian state of Punjab. Goans from the Indian state of Goa.

Table 1: Elaboration of Interviewee information

| Name | Age | Current Occupation | Migration trajectory | Marriage history | Family composition in Portugal |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Rina | 43 | Part time English tutor | Duration of stay in Lisbon:19 years Came to Lisbon soon after marriage. Husband's family came from Mozambique around 40-45 years ago. | Age at marriage: 24 years Arranged by parents. She asked a few questions about how Lisbon would be to the husband over the phone after the marriage was fixed. | Husband and son (stayed with in-laws for 11 years, now in-laws live in the same building, family shares business and eats meals together) |
| Tamanna | 52 | Home-maker | Duration of stay in Lisbon: 29 years Came to Lisbon after marriage. Husband's family came from Mozambique around 15 years ago. | Age at marriage: 23 Arranged by parents. Felt that she was very young at marriage to make any decisions. | Husband and sons (Lived with in-laws for 5 years, now with husband and son) |
| Esha | 40 | Home-maker | Duration of stay in Lisbon: 13 years Her sister was married to a man from Hindu-Gujarati diaspora. When Esha got married in India, sister's networks were used to migrate to Lisbon with husband and son. Main reason to come- business. | Age at marriage: 23 Arranged by parents got married in Gujarat, India. Lived with in-laws in Porbandar for a while. Left with husband to Mozambique- stayed there for three years. Went to India when pregnant with son and migrated to Lisbon in 2005. | Husband, son and daughter (in-laws passed away) |
| Mita | 38 | Business (jointly with husband) | Duration of stay in Lisbon: 14 years Came to Lisbon after marriage Husband's family came from Mozambique 'many' years ago. | Age at marriage: 25 Arranged by extended family and parents. The husband's family was from the same village as her in Gujarat. | Husband, two daughters and mother-in-law |
| Kinjal | 52 | Business (jointly with husband) | Duration of stay in Lisbon: 21 years Husband's sister was married to a man from Hindu-Gujarati diaspora. The husband later came through sister's network in 1991. After husband got settled he went looking for wife in India. K married him and migrated to Lisbon. | Age at marriage: 31 Arranged by parents but felt that her opinions were considered.. Met husband once for 10-15 minutes wherein both parties were 'interviewed'. Within 15 days they were engaged and married. It was 'quick' because husband wanted to come back to his business. | Husband and daughter |
| Komal | 32 | Business (shop, fair) | Duration of stay in Lisbon: since birth Born in Portugal. Family came from Mozambique around 40 years ago. | Age at marriage: 17 Arranged marriage in 2001, against her will, with a man from Diu that father chose. Was in love with someone else at the time. Physical, mental abuse, leading to divorce in 2012. | Daughter and son. (mother also stays with her occasionally) |
| Shamala | 43 | Business (shop, fair) | Duration of stay in Lisbon: 37 years Came to Lisbon when she was 6 year old with her parents from Mozambique. Husband's family had similar migration trajectory. | Age at marriage: 16 Parents decided everything, met husband once before marriage, Got married at 16 in India. Been married for 25 years. | Husband and daughter. |
| Bina | 37 | Home-maker | Stay in Lisbon: 14 years From Uttar Pradesh. Husband found a job in Portugal. Couple came together after that in 2002. | Age at marriage: 20 Got married in 1999. Arranged marriage. | Husband, daughter and son |

## 4.2 Research Method

### 4.2.1 Microethnography

The study was mainly qualitative in its approach as I wanted to look into how and why a certain phenomenon (arranged marriages) occurred within a particular context (transnational milieu involving Hindu-Gujarati diaspora) (Bryman, 2012). Qualitative methods were also relevant as I also wanted to get to know about the subjective experiences of the participants (married women) and to gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons why certain practices take place within the diaspora (ibid.). Ethnographic methods within qualitative research seemed the most relevant as they concurred with the social-constructivist epistemology (Yilmaz, 2013) that the researcher does not wish to 'explain' a phenomenon that he/she observes, but only offers one possible 'interpretation' (Wolcott, 1990). What this entails is that the end result of a research is not the objective truth but a subjective product not separable from the researcher.

Although ethnographic methods are generally seen to be all-encompassing, requiring research over a long period of time, microethnography, sometimes also called focused ethnography is more specific (ibid.). According to Wolcott (1990), microethnography "zeroes in on particular settings…on the ways that cultural ethos is reflected in microcosm in selected aspects of everyday life… giving emphasis to particular behaviours in particular settings rather than attempting to portray the whole cultural system" ( p 64). Instead of taking a completely atheoretical, 'open-to-everything' approach (ibid.) which would aim to look at the entire female population in the community or all aspects of their lives, a focused approach was used, guided by the research questions, the aim of the study and theoretical framework.

### 4.2.2 Reflections from field notes: initiating contact and finding respondents

The initial contact to the field was established using contacts of a researcher who had prior experience working in the same locality and also good rapport and relationship with quite a few people from the community. Here, I want to admit that the beginning of January 2017, the topic of my research was quite different. I wanted to focus on the youth of the Indian-Gujarati community that were born in Portugal; and explore how they perceived their cultural identity and their integration to the host society. To initiate contact for studying this topic, I visited a Hindu temple with the aforementioned researcher and she introduced me to a few elderly men from the community. I was greeted with much warmth and felt quickly accepted; perhaps because the researcher had already a relationship based on trust with them, and also because they saw me as a 'Hindu girl who came from India'.

On the same day, two of the elderly men gave me their contacts and said that I should speak to their daughter-in-laws, who had teen-age children; insisting that they would be very happy to assist me. Following their advice, I then contacted one of the daughter-in-laws, who told me that although she was willing to give her consent for me to talk to her child, she was not sure whether the child himself would agree. Even if the child agreed, she affirmed that he

would be most comfortable if the interview would take place in Portuguese. She told me that the age group that I was interested in (teenagers between thirteen to eighteen years), would be difficult to access due to similar practical reasons. She clearly said that none of the children would be able to speak in English, or even in Hindi (the languages that I was familiar with). It was her suggestion that I should shift the focus to the mothers instead, who were her peers; many of whom were women who had come from India after arranged marriage with men from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora in Portugal. She said that this group would be able to understand either Hindi or English or both and would also be willing to talk to me about their lives in Portugal. She suggested that if I would like, she would also talk to some of her friends to help me find respondents.

From interacting with a few researchers who had worked with this population (Gujarati-Hindu diaspora in Portugal), and through reading one or two articles on this group, I had some basic idea about this community and about the practice of marriage in it. I was aware that caste and religion based endogamy was highly practiced within this populace and that the practice of arranged marriage was not so uncommon. Within arranged marriages, cross-border marriages were also common; mostly when it came to finding brides for men from the community. After finding out that the topic of transnational arranged marriages has not been explored related to the diaspora living in Portugal, I thought that getting a perspective from the women who have experienced such marriages would be very interesting. When I found out that this group of women was also very willing to talk to me, I chose to revise the research topic and focus on the life-histories of married women who participated in transnational marriages with men from the diaspora.

I hence spoke to this woman again and requested her to kindly ask her friends whether they would agree to participate in the study. From the time the process of snowballing started, it took almost two weeks for her to get back to me and confirm that three women had agreed to talk to me, however at the time she did not share their contacts with me. However,even after the women had confirmed their participation in the study, for them to actually find time for me and a fixing a date for the interview took a lot of time. I did not get any response for over weeks.

Later that month, I was invited by the woman to go to the Shiva temple to participate in the celebrations of the Hindu festival *Mahashivratri*. I accepted the invitation as it would be a good way to establish initial contact and rapport with the women who had agreed to talk to me. The researcher who I was in contact with had also informed some other people from the community that I was coming on the day. When I went there in the morning, I was very warmly received by an elderly woman (the mother-in-law of one of the women who had consented to being interviewed). There were around seven to ten women and two to three men helping with the preparations. I assisted the women in preparing for the gathering that was going to take place at night; we cooked, washed utensils, arranged tables together, etc.

As we worked there together, I realized that they were also very curious to know about me so I welcomed them to ask me whatever they wanted to. They asked about my family, about where I was from in India, about my religion, why I was in Portugal, what business I had in the temple, etc. I explained that I was a student on a scholarship and had come from India to

do my Masters in Social Work. I also told them that towards the end of the course, I had to do a 'project'; that I had chosen to write about the Indian-Gujarati community and specifically the women who had migrated after marriage. I also mentioned to them that whatever I gather from talking with them would later be used for this 'project', to be written and submitted to ISCTE, but that their names would not be used anywhere in the report. I then welcomed more questions that they had about me and the thesis. This experience of being together in a communal space familiar to them and also agreeing to be open to answering all their questions was a very important step in the thesis. It helped very much to establish some level of trust and also reduced doubts, anxieties and inhibitions that they had about meeting me and talking to me. I could even notice that many of them grew more comfortable, less shy with me as we spent time together and also were more relaxed to be respondents for the study.

The same morning, I met two women that fit into the sampling criteria and they agreed to being interviewed in subsequent weeks. In the evening, during the festival, I met four other women, from the same social circles and they too gave me their phone contacts and agreed to talk to me soon. Hence initial contact with six out of eight respondents was made on this same day. The remaining two respondents I met through snowballing- one was a sister-in-law of one of the respondents and the other, a friend of another. In retrospect, I feel that I would have not been able to get so many respondents, who were themselves willing to help me if I had tried to only initiate through phone or other communication media. Personally meeting them was important.

## 4.3 Research Tools

The research was essentially qualitative in nature. In-depth semi-structured interviews as well as participant observations were used to gather data from the field. The data collection took place between the end weeks of January to the first week of April, 2017.

### 4.3.1 In-depth, Semi-structured Interviews

Face-to-face, open-ended, semi-structured exploratory interviews (Bryman, 2012) were used to enable a collection of in-depth narratives from women in the sample; with a focus on their experience of transnational marriage and their lives in Portugal. The day, time and place to meet was decided by the women themselves according to their convenience. I had prepared an elaborate interview guide much before the interviews were held, which I had read multiple times to memorize the key questions. Memorizing was important as I did not want to carry the interview guide in print or digital format with me, as I thought that it would probably intimidate the respondents. Initially, I wanted to ask all of participants for one-on-one, individual interviews; however, one respondent insisted that she be interviewed along with her friend as she would be more comfortable that way. All the interviews, except for one were recorded using a voice-recorder. One woman did not consent to being recorded as she felt safer if I noted down whatever I wanted to in-front of her. Such wishes of respondents were respected, in order to create a secure and comfortable space for them to share their opinions and feelings.

Although I met the women at least two to four times during the research process, most of them specified that it would be convenient for them to finish the interview in one meeting. After completing the interviews, if I had any additional queries, they advised that I could reach them over the phone. Mostly all of the interviewees chose Hindi as the language they would be most comfortable to answer questions in. Only two of the women alternated between Hindi and English.

Denaturalized method of transcribing was used while converting the recorded audio files into text, as I wanted to focus on the content of speech, to catch "the meanings and perceptions created and shared during the conversation" (as cited in Oliver, Serovivich & Mason, 2005, pg 1276) rather than stressing on the specific characteristics of it (such as tone, pauses, etc.). Although the interviews were mostly in the Hindi, they were directly translated and transcribed in English, to make it more convenient to utilize them for the present study.

### 4.3.2 Participant Observation

Apart from the time when the women were met for individual interviews, encounters with the participants and other members of the community also occurred on several informal and personal occasions. I attended almost all of the major religious festivals that took place in the Shiva Temple during the time period of the study- *Mahashivratri, Holi*. Through this, I also got to interact with young and old people from the community and also spend time with the participants in a social setting with their families.

Additionally, I was also invited for meals (lunch/ dinner/ tea) by five of the women in their homes. They also readily introduced me to their families, their husbands, in-laws and children if they were home. I also went to the workplaces of three of the women- who all had small businesses in shopping complexes.

Although the observations gathered in participant observations only complemented the responses gathered from the interviews, it still gave some sense of the dynamics within the families, the social life and friend circles of the women, and also of their usual day to day activities. I could also interact with other people from their social circles, their friends, neighbors, families, etc.

However, on many occasions although I was willingly invited into the houses of the women, I felt a bit uncomfortable to undertake observations and to take notes for research purposes as I thought that it could be unethical and also intrusive; specially if the invitation was meant to be only be of a social nature. If I wanted to ask them something during the time, I would take consent yet another time, and make it obvious that I wanted to know something specifically for my research. This was also because I wanted the process of being a 'participant observer' to be as transparent and non-deceptive as possible.

## 4.4 Positioning the Researcher in the Research

The concepts of positionality and gaze (Kanuha, 2000 & Labaree 2002) and also reflexivity on the self of the researcher (Stoeltje, Fox & Olbrys, 1999) are very important in any kind of social research in general but also ethnography in particular. One must understand here, that social research is not an impersonal endeavor and many a times, this makes it difficult and perhaps even problematic to 'invisibalize' the researcher from the research process. One's interest in the topic, the way of approaching it or even the schemas one chooses to analyze and organize data in it are very much determined by what a researcher brings to the field. Caplan (1994) refers to this as "cultural baggage" of the ethnographer whereas Lambek (1997) calls it "historicity" of the researcher (as cited in Stoeltje et al, 1999, p 159).

What this perhaps implies is that ethnographic studies cannot be free from biases or the subjective gaze of the researcher. This is possibly also the reason why "insider researcher" (researcher who is studying his/her own community) is possibly able to produce findings that are quite different from when the researcher is completely unfamiliar to the respondents and the topic (Kanuha,2000). In my opinion a recognition of these 'biases' is necessary and, instead of trying to make studies more and more objective, the endeavor should be to reflect on the subjectivities of the researcher. With this in mind, let us move to the present study.

Being an Indian myself and woman, also, being from a culture in which the practice of endogamous arranged marriage is quite familiar, the present research topic and the participants were not so 'exotic' or unfamiliar to me, as it possibly would to a foreign researcher. This however, does not mean that the present research was 'bias free'. But as mentioned above, 'completely ridding the research from biases' was not my main concern, as I believe this is often impossible to achieve. However, following Stoeltje et al (1999), I wanted the research process to be as reflexive as possible and hence. I hence constantly asked myself questions such as: *What motivated my interest in studying this topic? How would my socio-economic position- being an Indian woman from an 'upper' caste and class affect my relationship with the respondents and the findings? What were the power dynamics between me and the respondents? Would I be doing justice to the participants when I write up the results?* The following discussion would be a reflection on some of these questions.

Although I was aware of my role as a researcher and the professionalism that surrounded this role; conscious that I was a person attempting to 'study' the respondents from the 'outside'; sometimes I noticed that the intimacy and familiarity with the topic caused these professional boundaries to get blurry or ambivalent (Bakalaki, 1997). For example, during the research the respondents often asked me not to be formal with them, and said that I was like a 'daughter' or a 'friend' to them. Some even called me much after I had completed interviews with them to ask if I wanted to go on road trips with their families or just to tell me about their days. Some of these requests were also accepted by me. Insider- outsider, familiar-strange, same-different, self-others boundaries were very fluid and constantly changing and although I was getting quite 'close' to the respondents themselves, I tried as

much as possible to also maintain a professional distance from them and also the topic(Kanuha, 2000; Stoeltje et al, 1999).

In retrospect, as I reflect on my own presence in the research, I feel like being perceived as an ‘insider’ by the respondents was beneficial in many ways. Firstly, it favored access to the field. A few researchers who had prior experience with this community also told me that being Portuguese, it was quite difficult for them to access this particular group of women who had come from India; an issue that I did not experience. As mentioned before, I mainly met the respondents through visiting the Hindu temple during the festival of *Mahashivratri*. Here, I felt that being seen as ‘one of us’, (Bakalaki, 1997) in this case as ‘a Hindu girl from India’, made rapport formation with people of the community considerably easy. During my first visits, some of the women also confessed that they agreed to being interviewed by me only after they found out that I had come from India, like them and because I agreed to do the interviews in Hindi. After I disclosed that I had spent two years in the state of India that they belong to- Gujarat and spoke basic Gujarati, they were even more pleased.

I believe that I also could get deeper insights into certain practices, such as arranged marriage or the caste system- as they talked about them quite casually, in a matter-of-fact way with me. For example, even before I had asked about how the caste system manifests itself in Portugal, almost all of them (mostly those from ‘upper’ castes) mentioned their castes, spoke about being vegetarians and sometimes, even asked me about my caste. *“What is your last name? Which city in India are you from? Are you a vegetarian?”* such questions were common, which I believe would not be the case if I was a western, non-South Asian, ‘caste-less’ researcher.

Although I reflect on what it means to be seen as an ‘insider’ in the research process, I also feel uncomfortable and hesitant to call myself “native researcher” or even “indigenous researcher” as these terms in themselves have a colonialist intonation (Kanuha, 2000). Perhaps using such words may also promote essentialized and reified notions of what such a researcher is supposed to be like, and it may also colour how the readers of this thesis would read my findings. However, I still believe that being reflexive of my role and presence in this research is required and this is also the reason why I have chosen to speak in the first person, and use ‘I’ throughout the write-up; instead of using ‘the researcher’ as is the practice in more positivist research epistemologies. I will now reflect on some ethical principles dilemmas.

## 4.5 Ethical considerations

Firstly, I would like to discuss the ethical principle of informed consent. This principle entails that participants “must consent to being researched in an unconstrained way, making their decision on the basis of comprehensive and accurate information about it; and that they should be free to withdraw at any time” (as cited in Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007 p. 210). Although most researchers would agree that this principle is necessary while doing research, they may differ in terms of what following it means in specific situations and about when it could be ignored (ibid.).

Atkinson & Hammersley (2007) have discussed the various dilemmas surrounding this ethical principle, which I could relate to and empathize with while carrying out my research. Firstly, they argue that although the participants may be informed that what is observed may be recorded, it isn't uncommon that they may forget that a research is being conducted when a rapport is built and conversations get more informal and intimate or when a more covert form of participant observation is being carried out in the study (ibid.). Additionally, continually reminding the participants that a research is being conducted may also disrupt the observation and color the responses of participants (ibid). Furthermore, the researcher himself/ herself may not know everything that he wants to focus on at a given point in the study and newer ideas or points of departure may gradually develop as research progresses; in such a case, 'fully informing' the participants about what the researcher is trying to study may also be difficult to achieve.

In the present study, although thorough information about the research was given and oral consent was taken from the participants, it was not clear whether they were aware at all times that I was a researcher on the field and not their 'friend' or 'daughter' as they referred to me as. This kind of boundary establishment between the professional and personal was much easier to do during interviews than during 'participant observations'; when I was in the temple, or attending other social events with the respondents. For example, sometimes when I was going on a casual walk with some of the women, was having coffee with them or was in the car with them after the interview was completed, they shared things quite informally which I would think could be used for the study. At this time, I would let them finish what they had to say and ask, "*Can I write this for my study?",* only after they had consented a second time would I note it down. To some extent, this strategy helped in making sure that the participants were aware about my role and that there was no deception involved.

One other ethical principle which is partially related to the above ethical principles is that concerning protecting privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the principle of no-harm; and the related dilemma concerning the negotiation required with the key informants and gatekeepers and other participants to ensure that this principle is not violated (Bryman, 2012; Atkinson & Hammersley, 2007). For example in my study, I attempted to meet the participants through various organizations such as temples, diasporic/ community organizations, researchers who have previously studied the population concerned, community members with prior experience with being researched etc. During the researcher I wondered about how much I should be answerable to these individuals once the initial permission was sought and contacts were made. Some of them had initially told me to 'keep them informed' which I suppose could have been because of curiosity, as some were also concerned about how they and their community were portrayed in the research (Bryman, 2012). Since I used snowballing technique, the participants were also aware of who else had agreed to talk to me. To not reveal the names of who participated in the research from other participants was hence not possible. However, their request that what they reveal during the study remains confidential, especially from their friends and family members was protected.

In conclusion, I believe that it is not just enough to read and know theory on ethical principles required in research. A genuine concern about the well-being of the participants

along with abilities to be reflexive about the dilemmas that arise during them and problem solve are a must.

## 4.6 Limitations of the study

One of the major limitations of the study was the limited time period within which the study had to be completed. I had at my disposal less than four months to do through the entire data collection and writing process because of which I could not delve as much into the topic as I would have liked to. A study spread across a wider time period would have allowed me to do so and also to explore using more diverse research tools (such as focus group discussions) as I wanted to in the beginning of the research. The sample size could have also been increased to include more respondents or multiple interviews with the same respondents could have been carried out to make the study more intensive, if time had permitted

The use of snowballing as a dominant sampling method also perhaps limited the diversity of the sample as many of the respondents were from same social-circles. This also did not let me protect the identity of the respondents as much as I would have liked as their friends or acquaintances from the Gujarati community already knew that I had spoken to them. Additionally, since the recorded interviews were translated from Hindi to English, it may have lead to some loss in meanings during the process/.

# 5.Analysis and Results

In this section, I discuss findings of the study and analyze them in relation to the theoretical frameworks - Strengths-based and agency favoring framework, structural theory of power and intersectionality and migration theory. I have analyzed the narratives collected through thematic content framework and looked for major themes that have emerged through them. I have chosen to organize this section according to the three key research questions: (1) How do the married women from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora perceive the practice of arranged marriage? (2) What are the major social structures that affect the lives of married women in the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora? (3) In what ways do the married women in the diaspora demonstrate resilience, strengths and agency in their life stories?

## 5.1 Perceptions of married women from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora on the practice of transnational arranged marriage

### 5.1.1 The Process of arranging a match

The Hindu-Gujarati women[5] that I interviewed for the study can broadly be divided into three groups:

d) Gujarati women who participated in cross-border migration from India to Portugal after arranged marriage with men from the Hindu Gujarati Diaspora (4 cases).

e) Gujarati women who migrated along with her husband post marriage for economic reasons (1 case).

f) Second-generation female migrants from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora who experienced arranged marriage (2 cases).

In the cases of the women who migrated from India after marriage (i.e., women from the (a) and (b) groups), marriages were generally arranged by elders from their families. For most of them, process generally began with the parents or close relatives deciding that the girl had 'come of age'; meaning that she was ready to be married and sent off the husband's home. The parents subsequently decided that it was time to start the looking for a husband for the girl and shared this decision with other family members (this may or may not include talking to the girl who has to marry). A word was then put out to extended family and family friends, asking them to keep an eye out for prospective grooms for the girl.

One of the women also revealed that newspapers in India are often referred to by Gujarati families (both living abroad and in India) to find out which boys/girls from the community are available for marriage. This is how her family had found her a match. She explained to me that often the groom's and the bride's families gave out advertisements in the classifieds sections of newspapers. These advertisements described the religion and caste of the boy/ girl looking to be married, the age, current city where he/she lived, what he/she does professionally (hinting at the

[5] As mentioned before, the sample also included one non-Gujarati Hindu immigrant woman.

earning potential), their educational background and also the physical appearance (height, skin complexion). They may also mention what qualities are being hunted by the family in their future grooms/ brides and include the contact details of someone from the family (mostly a phone number or PO Box number), enabling the interested people to reach out to each other. She also mentioned that recently she also has heard of a lot of families going to 'marriage bureaus' to request for 'professional' help in finding matches. There were also matrimonial websites that could be used. However, she stressed that the families in the diaspora in Lisbon usually preferred meeting through family networks, as it was considered to be much more safe and trustworthy.

Once these aforementioned means are used in the initial stage to narrow down a handful of eligible candidates, the families proceed to arrange meets wherein the to-be couple as well as the two families involved can meet each other. This meet was referred to as the "interview" by the women and the relevant information about the potential bride or groom that was exchanged (before or during the meet) was called "biodata". This 'interview' generally gave the families a chance to find out more about their future son or daughter in law, and was often the first and the only time the couple interacted before marriage. This was also the time the two families could judge and rate each other's candidates: whether the girl will be able to 'fit' in the family and its values, whether the boy with be able to maintain the girl economically, among other things.

It was also an opportunity for the two families to rate and compare each other's statuses to see whether the families 'matched' socially and economically. From what I was told, the two families also had to coincide in terms of their values or 'morality'. For example, 'girl with short hair who did not wear traditional clothes' or 'a boy from a vegetarian caste who drank alcohol and ate non-veg' could be unacceptable as eligible candidates for marriage, as they would not fit in the 'family culture'. Remembering her own experience of being 'judged' for marriage, a woman said,

> *"Traditionally, they want a woman with long hair, one who wears a sari…I had short hair at the time, I was like a tom-boy. Never used to wear churidaar, sari… wearing mini skirt, shorts, was allowed in my house. They didn't like that"* (Kinjal, 52 years).

The general process of arranged marriage was also similar for the second-generation female migrants from the diaspora. The women that I spoke to from this group also suggested that when they got married, the major decisions were taken by the parents. The to-be brides and grooms also did not really know each other before marriage and a period of courtship even after the marriage was fixed was not allowed. For all the women, marriages took place in India, generally in the native village/town in Gujarat.

A point to keep in mind while understanding the process how marriages are arranged is that families will never consider girls/boys who are from other religions or even those from the same religion, but from a different caste as people "eligible" for marriage with their children. Caste-endogamy appeared to be the rule, not only for the Gujarati community in India, but was also highly regarded by their counterparts in the diaspora. In the interviews, this practice was also not mentioned as something practiced in a covert or proscribed manner; but was openly acknowledged, even in casual speech.

### 5.1.2 General opinions on arranged marriage

In all the cases the decision for the daughter's marriage was primarily made by the parents or other elderly family members. However, in spite of most of the girls having nominal role in the final decision, most of the women[6] did not think that the marriage was 'forced' on them in any way. Arranged marriage was perceived as the only acceptable way marriages happened at the time.

The women also did not see love as being 'absent' from arranged marriages, but saw it as something that gradually emerged over time; after having lived and adapted with the husband and his family.

> *"When you have to live in a family of twelve, you have to adjust right? To let go… Be nice to everyone… Leave your personal likings… you can't have a life of your own when you're in a joint family…In the beginning, all this used to be like a mental shock for me… But then you start to love the person. And then all these things, start to take the back seat."*(Rina, 43 years)

The women also perceived marriage to be more of a familial or communitarian affair than a life-event celebrating the union of two individuals. For example, during the process of arranging a *rishta*, "matching of families" was equally or perhaps even more important than matching of two individuals. As evident from the process that I have described in the section above, within arranged marriage, parents are not just looking for a groom or a bride for one's children, but also for a son-in-law or a daughter-in-law for the family. A good arranged marriage is supposed to ensure the continuity and reproduction of family's or community's (caste group) culture; and hence maintain or expand the family's social standing and status quo (Chakraborty, 2003). One respondent for example revealed that the bride's parents often expect son-in-laws to carry forward the family business (if there is no male heir), and also to protect and maintain the daughter. Daughter-in-laws on the other hand, are looked at as ones who would carry forward the culture and tradition of the family and caste at home: by cooking the traditional cuisine (following caste-dictated rules of cooking such as vegetarianism), teaching the children the language, religion among other things.

Although many of the respondents had complaints about the way their marriage was arranged or about the circumstances they found themselves in following it, it was not really the 'norms of marriage' that majority of the women opposed. For example, most of them were not necessarily opposed to the practice of caste-endogamy in marriage, or against the practice of families arranging the children's marriage. This was particularly evident from how the women spoke about their wishes for their children's marriage. A large majority of them expressed how if given the preference, they would like their children to marry from the same community and believed that parents should be 'asked' for their opinion even if the children chose a love marriage. Some were even specific about the castes of the people their children should marry into.

[6] One woman in the sample did reveal that her parents married her against her will. Refer to Komal's case discussed in section 5.2.5.

*"Lohana and Vania are the only two communities we would like our children to get married into… only within these communities we would like it to happen. Because after that everyone else is low…low…low… According to our Indian standards."*(Rina, 43 years)

### 5.1.3 Perceptions on why cross-border arranged marriages takes place in the Diaspora

Since to a large extent, the decision to marry was not independently taken by the women (to-be-brides) themselves, the migration to Portugal was neither foreseen nor planned by them in advance. Almost all of the respondents declared that while growing up, they had never thought that they would someday leave the country after marriage. When I enquired further about how it came about that their families arranged their marriage with someone from abroad, they said it was not so unusual among Gujaratis. All of the interviewees already knew someone or the other from the Gujarati diaspora much before they came to Portugal. They either had relatives or friends who were in London, Portugal or knew people in India who asserted their East African (usually Mozambiquan) legacy. Some of the people I spoke to also proudly affirmed that the Gujarati community was quite 'international' in its reach and simultaneously also very much maintained ties with their families and friends in India. It appeared that this interconnectedness within this seemingly 'transnational' community served as a plus point if families looked for transnational matches, giving them a larger pool of candidates to choose from.

Most of the respondents also testified that the marriage was not motivated by a desire to migrate; and that their families were not consciously looking for Non-Resident-Gujarati (NRG) grooms for them. They believed that at the time, it just 'fatefully' happened that the most compatible *rishta* (proposal for marriage) came from a Gujarati family living in Lisbon. However, following the engagement, the women did look forward to living in a foreign country and expected the migration to lead to some betterment in their lifestyle. A few of them had already either been to some western country (such as the UK) or had actively taken initiatives to enquire from their relatives about how spending a married life abroad would be.

During the interviews, the women who had witnessed cross-border marriage migration also shared their assumptions of why the families from the Hindu Gujarati diaspora preferred daughter-in-laws who came from India than Gujarati women born and raised abroad (Gujarati-Mozambiquans, Gujarati-Portuguese, and so on). The women recounted that a general belief among the diaspora was that the women who had spent their childhood and youth in India were much more traditional, religious and culturally knowledgeable and more 'authentic' than their counterparts who had spent most of their lives abroad (Lourenco & Cachado, 2012). The Gujarati women from India were also seen as been culturally honed into being more accommodative and enduring wives or daughter-in-laws, making them much more 'desirable' for marriage. For example, one of the respondents commented:

> *"This is their* (elders from the Gujarati diaspora) *opinion... that girls from Mozambique can't adjust with them. And I have also witnessed this. The ones who married brides who came from India have had a lesser divorce rate... The ones who have married within Mozambiquans, their marriage has not lasted... Do you know why we last here? We middle class. When we participate in an arrange marriage, we are prepared from the*

*beginning that whatever type of husband we find, however he is, we would adjust or adapt."* (Mita, 38 years).

Another interviewee, who was a second generation migrant (born and raised in Portugal) also contemplated on similar lines. While speaking of why families like hers, that migrated from India over five decades ago, still looked for wives (or daughter-in-laws) from India, she remarked:

> *"Initially there was a thinking that the girls who come from India are from poor families… that they didn't have much there. Families here also believed that these girls would be simple and modest enough that they would stay in the marriage* (not break-up or divorce) *and also agree to sit at home after marriage."*(Komal, 32 years).

Gujarati women from India were hence perceived as being more 'marriageable' as they were seen as being less independent and more domestic than their counterparts who were raised in a foreign or a 'western' environment. Some women also spoke of how a perceived lack of 'suitable' matches in the diaspora could also motivate cross-border marriage migration. One woman from the *Vania* caste for example said:

> *"You see the Gujarati population here (in Portugal) is too less. We have just ten to twelve houses of families belonging to my caste (Vania)... So if we don't find a suitable boy or a girl here, we search in London. London is the best place to go... The* (*Vania*) *population is a lot there… Otherwise we look in India, if you don't find it in London also…"*(Rina, 43 years).

It was also noticed from the interviews that the patterns in which cross-border marriages were arranged were also affected by the beliefs and practices of gender within the diaspora. I informed by several of the respondents that while families from the diaspora preferred 'traditional women' from India as wives for their sons, they generally wanted male suitors from families with similar migration trajectories for their daughters. This did not mean that cross-border marriage migration did not send women who had settled and lived abroad back to India, or brought men from India to Portugal. Nevertheless, these cases were quite rare. Mostly, the families from the diaspora wanted their daughters raised in the west, to stay in the west.

### 5.1.4 Reflections on changing marital and familial practices within the diaspora

While the women spoke of traditional Hindu marriage practices that persist even in a newer geographical context, such as adherence to endogamy or the process of how marriage fixing is done, they also discussed examples of some of these practices have been changing and altering over time. While some felt that living in new countries such as Mozambique and Portugal has lead to these changes, others felt that they were just a part of broader inter-generational changes in ideals that are occurring within the community as a whole (in India as well as in the diaspora). For example, while talking about endogamy, some of the women disclosed that a few youngsters from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora in Portugal were marrying *Goras/Goris* (White boys/girls) from Portugal.

Although this was not completely acceptable among the community and is still far from being the norm, I was told that some such cases did exist. Very few also said that inter-caste marriages were occurring, but these seemed even rarer and somehow even more unaccepted (especially if

the gap between the castes was too wide) than a marriage between a Hindu Gujarati and a *Gora/Gori*.

Another example of changing marital practices was provided about the custom of *dowry*. Two of the women revealed that the groom or his family did not 'demand' anything specific from the bride's family, or keep *dowry* as a pre-condition marriage anymore. I was informed that they had seen this change in the past two generations. However, the women also mentioned that the groom's family nonetheless did have 'expectations' from the bride's family, that they will not send her empty-handed to the in-law's place. The bride was thus parted with 'gifts' and other necessities that she would need in the new home, and assets which the parents had saved for their daughter's wedding day. In the case of some of the women that I interviewed, I was told that the girls themselves had asked their parents for things that they would need after marriage and brought it along with them to Portugal. As *dowry* may sometimes also include the bride's family covering all the expenses or costs incurred for the wedding (Walton-Roberts, 2003), the women claimed that there was a more egalitarian trend even in this aspect. They said that as compared to older generations wherein everything was expected from the bride's family, now the groom's family also shared half of the wedding expenses. The women also concurred that it was not just migration or being in a new country that caused these shifts or alterations in practices and argued that such changes were also noticeable within their counterparts in India.

In many of the interviews there was also much acknowledgement of intergenerational transformations in beliefs and values in the diaspora, wherein youngsters born and raised in Portugal were getting more and more critical about the traditional norms regarding romance, familial relationships and marriage. This intergenerational change was quite apparent when the women spoke about their hopes for their children's marriage and their anticipations about it. Many of them stated that they did have some expectations from their children regarding their marriage and felt that their children should involve them while making the choice. However, they also felt that the newer generation, that their children were also a part of, was not just going to blindly follow their parent's wishes and orders like they used to. Expectations from parents such as wanting their children to marry within the same caste, to live in a joint-family, would not be met. One of the women contemplating on these lines revealed,

> *"Today these kids roam with Goris, have affairs with Goris so then why would they marry Indians?... in the school that my son attends, there are no Indians. There are people from all over the world but no Indians. So if I tell him 'you have to find some Indian girlfriend, you have to…' from where will he find one for me?...*
>
> *… I was telling him, my only son, recently, 'after three years you will finish your school and then you will be away from home', to which he said 'yeah I would be away'. Then I was saying to him, 'when you come back after that…' He immediately interrupted and said, 'Who's going to live with you for the entire life? You have to live your life, I have to live mine. I will not live with you. Keep that out of your head.' They* (the children) *are preparing us* (parents) *from now itself. My husband would have never dared to talk like this to his parents. This kind of talk was never allowed, even now it isn't allowed."*(Rina, 43 years).

Thinking along the same lines as above, some of the women also reflected on how the power dynamics within the family were also changing (or would eventually change), with youngsters

from the diaspora challenging the family or marriage related rules set for them by elders. They anticipated that the influence of traditionally authoritative family members such as parents or the parents-in-law in the family was weakening, and agreed that nowadays a young married Hindu-Gujarati couple had much more autonomy or independence in their private lives than in the past. Reflecting on this, one of the interviewees said,

> *"Earlier, when our elders would tell us to go to the temple, to do seva* (offer service)*, we* (daughter-in-laws) *would listen, but tomorrow if I tell my son's wife the same thing, she would not. Tomorrow, if my bahu* (daughter-in-law) *comes home from work and if I order her, 'DO THIS! DO THAT!'… She would not listen. I would probably also have to cook the food for her and tell her politely, 'daughter, come eat'. She would perhaps not like what I cook also..."*(Tamanna, 52 years).

However, the women did show some level of empathy towards their children and were also happy that these kinds of changes were happening. Furthermore, some women also actively rebelled against familial traditions[7].

### 5.1.5 Why Hindu women endure in arranged marriages

The women during the interviews also spoke of their beliefs of why they thought Indian- Hindu women lasted in marriages, even when not all marriages were very fulfilling. In earlier generation, (like those of the interviewees), separation and divorces among married couples were almost non-existent. Nowadays, although it was still not a common occurrence, the numbers were still increasing and around five cases were noted within the community.

Here, the Hindu ideologies surrounding sanctity of matrimony and the dutifulness of wives (*pativrata dharma*) functioned as mechanisms governing marriage realities faced by women (Shah, 2012). Here, marriages were generally thought of as being 'indissoluble' in some way and women were schooled into thinking that this sense of 'permanence' in Hindu marriage is what makes the matrimony sacred. Such an ideology also emphasized that role of a wife was to adjust and endure within a marriage; even if the marriages materialize into being violent and destructive for the women involved. This notion of 'permanence' in marriage was further reinforced by the notion of *kanyaadaan* or "gift of a virgin" (Fruzzetti, 1982 as cited in Charsley & Shaw 2004 pp 336) in which the young bride is perceived to be a 'gift' given away to the groom and his family. In such a discourse, once the bride leaves her natal family, her right to demand support from them to some extent is seen to be severed, placing her even more to the mercy of the in-laws (ibid.). One of the respondents, reflecting on this stated:

> *"The parents from the beginning have put in our heads that after marriage, you can't come back. So however it ends up being, we endure it."* (Esha, 40 years)

Another respondent who had experienced several emotional and physical abuse from her husband in marriage revealed that for the longest time, her family asked her to fulfil her wifely duty and to tolerate and accept whatever her husband does to her. The husband was seen to have a 'right' to do whatever he pleased with his wife, while tolerance to abuse inflicted by the husband was seen as the wifely 'duty' (Wadley, 1977). This woman also revealed that while she was deciding whether to divorce, the social belief that leaving a marriage would also somehow

[7] As discussed later, in section 5.3.3

tarnish the *izzat* (honor) (Soni, 2012) of her father and the fear of bringing *sharam* (shame) to the family prevented her from doing so. Later, gathering the strength from within her and from her Portuguese friends, she managed to get a divorce. She also faced excommunication from her family soon after. She mentioned:

> *"My family had all turned their face away from me after the divorce… My mother, brothers, sisters, everyone stopped talking to me. It was my friends who supported. Now everyone has accepted it. Before they would say, whatever your husband does, if he hits you, verbally abuses you, or even kills you, he is your man…*
>
> *…When I had the bad phase in my marriage, my father was no more. My mother would have never accepted a divorce... Not bringing shame to my father was the main reason I did not get a divorce. For eleven to twelve years, I tolerated everything. I tolerated the hell… Here this happens a lot... But because of shame and honor people don't even like to share such stories with others from the community…"* (Komal, 32 years)

The respondents claimed that divorces within the community were almost non-existent around five to ten years ago. However, now there were around five cases wherein the girls left the husbands. They argued that young girls in the diaspora with access to higher education and stable jobs increasingly did not want to comply with the passive, devoted wife ideal and that this made it possible for them to have the option to leave a marriage.

## 5.2 Major social structures that affect the practice of marriage and the lives of married women in the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora

### *5.2.1* The cultural reproduction of structures in a transnational space: *"the mentality problem"*

To begin the discussion of which structures affect the lives of married women within the diaspora, let us first discern how the respondents felt about living amongst the Hindu-Gujarati community and their opinions about this group. Firstly, there seemed to be a consensus among all the women that the diasporic community was very orthodox and conservative with their outlook towards life in general and behavior towards women in particular. Multiple respondents referred to this as the *"mentality problem"* of the people from the diaspora and felt that some of the behavior and thinking of the people was relatively quite 'backward' even compared to the Indian standards. For example, one of the respondents while contemplating about this said, "*India is 50 years ahead of this place"* (Rina, 43 years).

This woman, along with some others believed that the main predicament was that the mentality of the diaspora was somehow 'stuck' or 'stagnant' in the time period when they emigrated from India. They thought that the Hindu diaspora in Portugal lived according to fictitious, often idealized images of 'India' and 'Indian Hindu culture'; and also though that aspects of this imagined 'Indianness' were clung to quite vehemently. This is similar to Baumann's

observations of Southall wherein an exaggerated 'cultural consciousness' is developed within the members of a community wherein collective identities, cultures become reified fixed and bounded (Baumann, 1996 as cited in Vertovec, 2000). As described by Oonk (2007), such an existence of a collectively held myth about 'homeland' and a shared commitment to create and maintain this imagined homeland while abroad is quite common among diasporas.

Another respondent said that this *"mentality problem"* stemmed from conflicts or confusions arising from having lived away from their homeland for too long and being unable and/or unwilling to integrate into the majority culture abroad. Stating that *"the community here is neither Indian not European"* (Mita, 38 years), she hinted that the urge to cling on to a conservative lifestyle and mindset came from such kinds of 'confusions'. These 'confusions' are similar to Vertovec's (2000) conception of 'multilocality' and the paradoxical nature of feeling that one simultaneously belongs both 'here and there' (in the host and source countries).

The interviews as well as the participant observations hence revealed that the Hindu diaspora placed a lot of stress on preservation, replication and reproduction of home-land 'Hindu' culture while living abroad (Oonk, 2007). This reproduction of culture also entailed that various power structures from the country-of-origin were transported and integrated into the lives of people in the diaspora.

### 5.2.2 Power structure within the Hindu-Gujarati family

The families among the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora were mainly joint in their structure. The Hindu 'home' was seen to include an older married couple, their married sons, daughters-in-laws, grandchildren and unmarried children (Lourenco & Cachado, 2012). Often, the entire family did not live in the same house. Usually, one of the married sons stayed back with the parents, while the other siblings separated after marriage and formed their own nuclear-family units. However, it was common for these nuclear families to live in close proximity of each other (in the same neighborhood or the same building) such that the big family could still gather with each other for meals or consult each other while taking small and large decisions concerning their lives. In this way, the 'joint' family structure was maintained. It is important to mention that most of the Hindu-Gujarati families in the diaspora were involved in small or large businesses that were usually owned jointly my families. This dimension also added to the interdependency and closeness among family members.

The Hindu home was largely patriarchal and the age and gender of the family members affected how much power and status they had within it. As mentioned in Lourenco & Cachado (2012), "one must respect the elder" (pp 63) was a strongly held belief within the Hindu household. A young married woman entering her husband's family or the family's *bahu* (daughter-in-law) usually began with a low rank within the power-structure of the household. Directly above her were the husband and the mother-in-law, with whom she interacted the most during her daily proceedings. The father-in-law was usually considered to be the head of the family and occupied the highest rank; however, the interactions with him and *bahu* were limited. If the husband had elder siblings, the power assigned to them was similar to the parents-in-law of the *bahu*.

It was expressed by multiple women that I interviewed, that the new *bahu* was expected to care for and 'serve' not just the husband but his entire family including the in-laws. The mother-in-law (*saas*) was also the person who she usually has to consult and report to within the power hierarchy of the family. The *saas* also 'taught' the *bahu* about the 'rules' of the house, the likes and dislikes of the family members and was responsible to initiate her into the duties that she was expected to perform within the household.

It was brought to my notice that in the first few years of the marriage, the *bahu* was shielded and protected from the outside world to quite an extent. Every activity that she would do was supervised and surveyed. For the women who come from India, lack of knowledge about the Portuguese language and the anxieties they have about being in a new 'foreign' place ameliorated their dependence on the in-laws even more. The women hence mentioned that their interactions with the outside world are limited.

For women who worked, there were also restrictions placed on where one could work and with whom one could interact at work. A woman working in the family business (usually alongside the husband) was fairly more acceptable than a woman running an independent business. And a work which required the woman to interact with un-familiar men (whether co-workers or clients) was generally frowned upon. The women felt that the policing of women from the community was not just done by the immediate families themselves, but the entire Gujarati Hindu community functioned as the watch-dog. In this respect, two women commented,

> *"They are… very much conservative. Really orthodox… when it comes to girls and women… if some woman goes out and talks to a man… then the community would quickly start gossiping and talking about it"*(Esha, 40 years).
>
> *"They* (the Gujarati-Hindu community) *are very orthodox. I have a business of cigarettes and other things. Now if some male salesman comes… In the beginning they would all stand next to me and watch and wonder, 'what is this Indian lady saying to the Portuguese man?'... Such a cheap mentality the community has. So that is the reason I don't like them. I don't even like to roam much with these people for this reason."*(Mita, 38 years).

Policing the women from venturing into the outside world on their own may also prevent them from making any friends outside the husband's extended family or friends. In such a situation, the wives of the sons in a family or the '*bahus'* of the house, often developed a sense of friendship and camaraderie with each other as they empathized with each other's situations.

At this juncture, a point to keep in mind is that within Hindu families, the filial bond between son and the parents, especially the son and his mother are often regarded as being paramount. Within a family, this bond is considered more consecrated and important than the bond between the husband and his wife. Wadley (1977) also speaks of how within Hindu mythology and scriptures, the mother and wife of a man are depicted almost in contrasting terms. In relation to a man, a mother is represented as someone who harbors uncontrollable energy (*Shakti)*; as someone who gave him life, love and care. A man is expected to revere and obey his mother (ibid.). The wife on the other hand, is viewed as someone who embodies both productive and destructive energy within her, requiring control, protection and guidance from a man (ibid.).

The women in the sample felt that the men within the diaspora often placed wives and mothers at different positions in the family power structure. They also mentioned that often, their husbands readily complied with their mother's wishes, without questioning or challenging them, expecting their wives to do the same. One of the respondents contrasting the position of a wife and a mother in a man's life said,

> *"These men* (from the diaspora) *listen to their mothers a lot. The mother has a place in the family and the bahu her place. And they* (the husbands) *tell us… that things have to be done this way. In the way their parents want"* (Tamanna, 52 years).

It was also mentioned that the mother-in-laws had the duty to ensure that the patriarchal power-relations between the married couple was maintained. For example, one of the respondents stated that although she continually negotiates with her husband to achieve a more gender-egalitarian order in the family in terms of how housework was divided, her mother-in-law actively opposed it. In her opinion,

> *"The Indian mother-in-law would never accept that there is a more equal housework distribution among husband and wife… she would not want her son to work in the home… so the bahus have to do it"*(Kinjal, 52 years).

Some of the women also sympathized with their mother-in-law's controlling behaviors towards themselves. They rationalized it by stating that their *saas* was once a *bahu* herself and had undergone similar, perhaps more stringent treatment in her time. When the *bahu* became a *saas* it was understood that exerting control on the *bahu* was just another role a woman was expected to perform within the family.

In contrast, some other women saw the control of women by in-laws as 'exploitation' and said that they also actively rebelled against such control. One of the respondents for example commented,

> *"they* (husband's families) *expect the bahu to do everything. Soon after my marriage my husband's sister would even make me work in her house… to wash dirty dishes, my husband also did not say anything at the time… they exploit the bahus a lot… now I don't listen to my in-laws"* (Kinjal, 52 years).

### 5.2.3 The persistence of caste and the social lives of married women

From what the women revealed, caste as a system of hierarchy and stratification was very much present in the diaspora. The impression that I gathered from my few visits was that Gujarati-Hindu community was fairly a close-knit group, even in terms how geographically it was concentrated only in some specific parts of Lisbon. Furthermore, a few of the women also perceived that the dispersion of the diaspora in Lisbon was organized in caste lines. One of the women said,

> *"In terms of areas of living, this area, Santo Antonio is mainly of the Vanjas. Odivelas is for Punjabis. Chelas, Olaias, Moscavide is for our people, Fudamia. Some also live in Portela but there they are mixed with the Khanias."* (Komal, 32 years).

What I could understand was that a person from the diaspora was much more exposed to caste if one resided in a Gujarati/Indian dominating area rather than if one lived in a locality that was prominently Portuguese. However, just the fact that one lived in Portugal where broadly speaking, caste system was not a marker of one's existence, to some extent did provide some with the freedom to 'transcend' or 'escape' caste. For example for some women, just shifting out of a locality that was prominently Gujarati such as Santo Antonio dos Cavaleiros, or refusing to frequent community spaces (such as temples) could give one the opportunity to 'avoid' caste to some extent.

Nevertheless, as stated in Lourenco & Cachado (2012), since in Portugal (or Lisbon), most Hindus trace their origins to the Indian state of Gujarat (or Diu), the caste structures from the state are able to be reproduced in newer community-dominated locations. Socially and religiously the community (including women) seemed to be organized on caste lines. To provide an example of religion, talking to a researcher who had previously worked with the Hindu community I found that certain Hindu temples in Lisbon were also loosely associated with certain castes, for example, the Radha-Krishna Temple in Lumiar mainly catered to the *Lohanas.* A *Lohana* woman from my sample also spoke of this caste related bias existed in Hindu religious community spaces in Portugal. While speaking about how those from her caste along with other 'upper' castes treat the people considered by them from 'lower' castes in temples she said,

> *"In the temples here* (in Lisbon)*, definitely caste is present… they ('upper' caste people) don't like it when the other castes… when the 'lower' ones come to the temple, for example, when they come for festivals like Navratri… when they do come, sometimes the upper castes sit on one side and the lower castes sit on the other… such things happen. Sometimes, if you're rich, but if you're 'low', it can be okay. But not for the others... they neglect others"* (Kinjal, 52 years)

In a very broad sense, caste-structure determined the social status and respect the married-women received within the larger Gujarati (or Hindu) community, and also served as a mechanism that privileges some and devalued others. From the conversations, being a part of an 'upper' caste community was seen as a matter of pride and honor. To give an example of how caste persisted even after migration, one of the *Lohana* women said:

> *"Hum kahin pe bhi jaayen, apni jaat nahi choddenge"* (Esha, 40 years)
> *("No matter where we go, we will not leave our caste behind")*

People from traditionally considered 'upper' castes like *Brahmins, Lohana and Vania* also contrasted themselves from the 'other' castes (such as *khania, koli, mochi*) who on one or two occasions were seen as being *'lowly'.* Conversing with one respondent from the *Lohana* caste also hinted that the casteist mentality was so pervasive within the 'upper' castes, that they even adapted the system to include and discern Portuguese individuals within the hierarchy. She informed me that a few of her acquaintances from the same caste (*Lohana*) regarded the Portuguese people who cleaned the streets or picked garbage in Lisbon as "untouchables"; and that they hesitated to get close to these people or let them in the house for water or food, because of bias related to the purity/pollution in Hindu ritual logic. This example was fairly unique and not corroborated by the other respondents who generally spoke of caste hierarchies as affecting

only Hindus. Nonetheless, it could be seen as a case in point of how the Hindu casteist worldview did not just persist in the Portuguese context, but also about how it had accommodated new realities into its fold.

### 5.2.4 Married women as protectors of caste purity: inside the Hindu kitchen

As evident from above, women from the diaspora were not just ‘affected’ by the caste system but also participated actively in its perpetuation and reproduction. Since this hierarchical system privileged the women from castes placed higher in the hierarchy, their role in preserving and protecting the system, alongside their male counterparts was noticeably much more.

In this respect, the Hindu household was a space which also needs to be scrutinized in order to understand the practice of caste as many practices that imbibe casteist mode of thinking begin here (Chakraborty, 2003). Since the domestic sphere is generally seen as the ‘domain of women’ (Lourenco & Cachado, 2012) and one of the duties of women within this sphere was to ensure that caste- related rules are followed while preparing food in the kitchen.

As mentioned by Chakraborty (2003), “The bodily purity of upper castes is believed to be linked to what is ingested- so what is eaten, how it is prepared, and how it is served, plays a crucial role in the purity of men in the family and of the caste” (pp 147). The casteist order within Hinduism hence dictates strict rules to be abided by its followers regarding food cooking and consumption. The interviews revealed that vegetarianism was seen as an ‘upper’ caste food habit, followed by *Brahmins*, *Lohanas* and *Vanias* from the diaspora. The interviews as well as the participant observations (home and temple visits) revealed that this practice was far from being just a ‘lifestyle choice’ and had strong caste based connotations; and ‘Pure’ vs. ‘impure’ were often words used by women to describe and distinguish between food during casual conversations.

Hence, in my opinion, the practices and myths around maintaining ‘bodily purity’ through following caste-dictated rules of food are much more than being mere ‘cultural rituals’ and also are a part of an ideology or mechanism of controlling social interactions, mixing and intermingling among people from different castes. For example, as mentioned by B. R. Ambedkar (2009), “A Hindu will not eat food cooked by a Non-Hindu. A Hindu will not eat food cooked even by a Hindu unless he is a *Brahmin* or a man of his caste.”(pp 2695). The casteist order hence did not just dictate whether one could eat vegetarian food or not, but also from whom one could accept food and with whom can one eat good; which meant that there was a strong interpersonal dimension associated with the food-related norms. Furthermore, the symbolic association with different kinds of food (vegetarian, non-vegetarian) with notions of bodily ‘purity’ or ‘pollution’ may lead to a discriminative separation of people. The people who are vegetarians (meaning those belonging to ‘upper’ castes) are seen as being associated with positive qualities like ‘cleanliness’ or ‘purity; and non-vegetarians- (usually belonging to ‘lower’ castes) associated with ‘pollution’; and the mixing of these two groups is disapproved (ibid.).

While talking about how the newer generations were refusing to follow the traditional norms around food, the women (from ‘upper’-castes) revealed that nowadays non-vegetarianism was also embraced by individuals from their castes. However, eating non-vegetarian food did not make the upper-castes ‘impure’ or lose their status in the society (although it may mildly upset certain people); nor did adopting vegetarianism make the ‘lower’ castes more ‘pure’.

‘Vegetarian’ or ‘non-vegetarian’ were words that were used in more permanent, unchanging sense, referring more to the caste of the person rather than his/her actual food habit; and ‘non-vegetarianism’ was continued to be referred to as ‘lower’ caste, ‘impure’ trait. For example, one *Vania* woman told me that her husband and son ate meat, but she continued to refer to her family as ‘vegetarian’ (while she was the only one who was a vegetarian). Furthermore, while discussing her hopes for her son’s marriage, she disclosed that she would like him to be married only to a *Vania* or a *Lohana* (both castes belonging to the *vaishya varna*), as going ‘lower’ than that would not be acceptable, as those castes would be “non-vegetarians” (this was minutes after she had told me that her son ate meat). She further added that it was the ‘Indian standards’ that would not allow such marriage between them (*Vanias*) and “non-vegetarians”.

Although to some extent, casteist beliefs related to ‘purity’ and ‘pollution’ were upheld by most ‘upper’-caste women from the sample, one woman quite overtly showed her contempt towards people eating non-vegetarian food. *“My children and even my husband may even vomit if they sit next to someone eating meat”*, she mentioned while casually conversing me. Some others said that although their children were allowed to eat non-vegetarian food, it had to be ‘outside the home’ and hidden from the elderly family members. In one *Lohana* house, I noticed that eating and cooking non-vegetarian food was permitted, but there were different vessels and also a different kitchen for cooking vegetarian and non-vegetarian dishes.

One other daily household duty of the women related to food was also the preparation of *tiffin* (packed meal) for the children or other family members to carry with them to schools/work places. Although for some, it may have been just the convenient and economically viable option of eating meals, one of the women also mentioned that she ‘had to’ prepare *tiffins* because her husband was very strict about food related “cultural rules”. These ‘rules’ did not just dictate what was cooked but also who cooked it and where it was cooked (which kitchen). Making sure the children or other family members carried a *tiffin* was also a way of protecting them from consuming something whose ‘purity’ was not verifiable.

Although among the ‘upper’ castes certain changes in food habits and diet were ‘allowed’, attempts to apply casteist logic to maintain the contented ‘purity’ of the body, the kitchen, the home and community were continually made. And since kitchens were largely managed and frequented by the women, the importance of these food-related caste rules was also mainly emphasized and enforced mainly by them in their home.

### 5.2.5 Caste-endogamy, marriage and sexuality

Another way how caste affected lives of women was through the practice of marriage. Caste-endogamy persisted as a norm governing Hindu marriages among the diaspora. Since marriage is often looked at as a practice to ensure the continuation family lineage (Chakraborty, 2003), caste endogamy ensured that this lineage was kept ‘pure’ and ‘authentic’. Within a transnational context, it also ensured that the casteist social order was maintained and reproduced in the new geographical location. The persistence of caste-endogamy in cross-border marriages within transnational communities also hinted at how the immigrant communities continued to seek to maintain ties with their caste communities from home.

Within the diaspora, caste endogamy when it comes to marriage was generally enforced through psychological means, by ‘schooling’ the youth since childhood about what was acceptable and

what wasn't when it comes to romance and marriage. Over time, these norms were normalized and internalized by the youth; so when it comes to the time the parents arrange their marriage, it was not perceived to be a practice that is 'forced' on them in any way. Similar to Walton-Robert's (2004) reflections from his study exploring transnational marriage networks between Canada and India, fathers were seen as the ones who set and enforce these caste-dictated rules, mothers of young girls and boys also played an important role in the 'schooling' aspect. For example, the mothers were generally expected to stay aware about her child 'maturing', be on guard to check if he/she is romantically involved with someone or sexually active, among other things . The mother was also supposed to talk to her children about norms around romance and marriage (caste-directed norms) and to teach them the acceptable social behavior regarding these aspects. In the interviews, I was told that during the youth of the respondents, the young boys from the diaspora were not barred from dating or exploring their sexuality, even if it meant being involved with '*goris'* or girls from other Indian communities. However, they were strictly told that when it is the time to marry, the parents would arrange it with someone from their caste and religion. The young boys, at the time, also seemed 'okay' with this order. Parent's involvement in marriage was seen as a manner of making sure that their sons or daughters would not stray from the rules set by the caste-community. In this respect, some of the women reflected,

> *"My mother-in-law had that mentality… 'I want an Indian (*daughter-in-law)*'. She had told my husband, 'You can have as many affairs as you want, but marry someone from our community'."* (Rina, 43 years)

> *"My husband, his brother and his friends, all of them must have had affairs with goris. Everyone has these affairs* (prior to marriage). *But then they married someone else."* (Tamanna, 52 years)

Hence, although migration and living abroad for decades might have brought some acceptance towards certain youth practices such as dating and courting; marriage was a practice that strictly had to follow 'traditions'. An explanation to this may be because marriage is generally seen a primary practice that would affect who would be the heirs of the family and the community (Chakraborty, 2003). Restrictions on marriage such as those mentioned above may ensure that the succession line is kept 'pure' (ibid.).

As against the freedom of dating allowed to young boys from the diaspora, sexuality of the young girls on the other hand, appeared to be much more controlled and policed; and 'boundaries' set for acceptable behavior for them were enforced in a much stricter manner. One of the women who was Portuguese by birth and spent her entire life in Lisbon remembering her childhood revealed,

> *"In my youth, till I was married I was not allowed to talk to any male. I was not allowed to go out much. I was not the kind who wanted to drink or go to the disco; I have stayed within the boundaries my culture like that… but during this time, I was not even allowed to talk to my male cousins."* (Komal, 32 years)

Komal's case also exemplified how at times in the diaspora, caste-endogamy in marriage may be enforced using severe or often violent means and how the casteist-logic within Hinduism influences and governs realities related to gender and sexuality in the diaspora. Komal revealed how within her community, many families wanted 'protected' young Gujarati girls from

'western' society by schooling them into accepted 'Hindu' ways of behaving since childhood. She also disclosed that girls from orthodox Hindu families are strictly made to dress in Indian clothes to 'look Indian', made to drop-out of schools early (Komal was not allowed to be in school after completing fifth grade) and are married at a young age (usually around 18 years). Komal revealed that this mentality to control women in this way often stemmed from "caste related arrogance" and male-centric beliefs of the community. Recounting how her family had 'forced' her into an endogamous arranged-marriage when she was not ready for it, she said:

> *"I got married in 2001. I was 18 then…My father had a lot of arrogance to do with his caste. He always said I should marry a boy from my caste. I am Fudamia, he wanted the boy to also be Fudamia. At the time, I liked a boy at the time who was a Khania but my father did allow the relationship…*
>
> *My marriage was arranged by my parents. I did not want to get married at the time, but I had to… I did not know him* (my to-be husband) *at all. We went to India for the marriage, I met him there and immediately got married…"*(Komal, 32 years)

Another connection of "caste related arrogance" with sexual control of women who lie within the socially decided 'marriageable age' is that women within Hinduism are seen as having the ability to carry forward the family's and the community's lineage through giving birth to the heir. For caste order to be maintained, it hence becomes very important to control the women's sexuality (Ambedkar, [1917] 2009; Chakraborty, 2003). Arranging her marriage at an early age can be one such example of assuring that the lineage is kept 'pure' and that the caste order is left undisturbed.

Whereas younger women from the community are often subjected to policing and control because of these endogamy related caste norms, older women from the society may participate in enforcing these norms alongside their husbands. Even within the husband's family, older women such as the *saas* (mother-in-law), *jethani* (sister-in-law) participate in maintaining the patriarchal hierarchy within the family. As women in the diaspora are often assigned the role of ensuring the 'cultural continuity' of the community (Lorenco, 2011), the women are often rewarded and honed into accepting, adopting and reproducing old power structures into newer geographical contexts.

# 5.3 Resilience, strengths and agency among married women within the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora

## 5.3.1 Agency of married women in arranged marriage

As mentioned in the literature, married women from diasporic communities are often viewed as being doubly disadvantaged; firstly within the patriarchal cultures of the source countries and also among other immigrants in the host society (Cheung, 1999 as cited in Charsley & Shaw, 2006). In studies that focus on such women, their vulnerabilities often get highlighted and their strengths and invisibilities overshadowed (Williams, 2010). Through this study, I wanted to

challenge such essentialized notions about immigrant women by employing strengths-based and agency favoring approaches to understand their life stories.

Observations and interviews that supported the present research revealed that, although the women's role in decisions regarding their marriage may have been limited, that women in no way were they 'passive' or 'without-agency'. Since the time the marriage is fixed, women in some way or the other try to prepare themselves for their journeys ahead and their lives after marriage. Often they come into the husband's home with the belief that they have to 'fight it through' and 'persist' in the marriage. Although the casteist and patriarchal order may expect passivity and submission from the women, the interviews and observations revealed that these women had abundance of strengths and also actively endeavor to make the best out of the situation at hand.

For the women who had engaged in cross-border marriage, ties with the natal family continue to be maintained after marriage (Charsley & Shaw, 2006). I was informed by two of the respondents that it was fairly uncommon for girls who participated in cross-border marriage migration to send economic remittances to her non-migrant family members as the patriarchal logic looked down upon families who depended on their girl child's income. However, the married daughters of the family were resourceful in other ways and played an important role in maintaining transnational bonds with the home countries (ibid.).

Furthermore, the migration and experience of living abroad often also increases their status in the family and community in the home country (Charsley & Shaw, 2006). The migrant woman was often consulted by the non-migrant family members if they themselves wanted to migrate abroad for work or other reason (such as wanting to marry an NRI). Sometimes, the marriage migration of a woman also lead to 'chain of migration', in which after having settled down, she may advise her family members to immigrate to work or participate in cross-border marriage. This was the case with Esha's family. Her sister was first married off to someone from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora in Lisbon who then advised Esha's brother to immigrate for business reasons. The brother also got settled in Portugal and married someone from Gujarat (causing his wife also to immigrate). In a few years, Esha was also asked to immigrate with her husband and child. Esha's sister, who was a cross-border marriage migrant hence became the catalyst initiating migration of several other family members. Older married women from the diaspora also played a major role during the match-making of their children.

### 5.3.2 Married women's resistance to challenges faced in Portugal

During the interviews the women spoke of various challenges that they faced while living in Portugal. For the women who migrated from India after marriage, one of the major challenges after arriving to Portugal was the inability to speak, understand, read or write the Portuguese language. These women who came from India were all mostly from upper-middle class families and possessed higher education (at least a bachelors degree). Most of them also mentioned that they also possessed significant knowledge of English language (at least spoken). However, after arriving in Portugal they felt that the knowledge and expertise that they possessed were 'useless' in a way, mainly because they thought that they could not apply their knowledge in the Portuguese context. One of the women said,

*"I had thought of everything (life in Portugal)… I wanted a career, because I was an M.Sc. in child development… nothing could happen here. My education was of no use here. My English is of no use here… In the beginning, all this used to be like a mental shock for me…"* (Rina, 43 years)

Many women also revealed that due to the lack of language, they also became overly dependent on the husband's families and would feel lonely at home, and anxious about leaving the home by themselves even to do necessary tasks such as buying groceries, commuting in public transport, going to the hospital, etc.

*"In the beginning, the insecurity was so high because of not knowing the language, if I had to leave the house, catch the bus… I didn't even have words to say where I wanted to go. Because in our side of the country (India), we didn't even know the P of Portuguese… My husband used to work from eight in the morning to eleven at night. And I used to stay in the apartment. I used to keep looking out of the window the entire day… I used to watch the people leave the building in the morning for work, and then watch them come back at home at night. And I used to stand next to the window and feel disturbed and guilty, that because of one language I could not do anything."* (Mita, 38 years).

However, it was evident that the women did not just passively accept this disadvantage and dynamically attempted to overcome this barrier by mobilizing whatever resources available to them. For example, one of the respondents revealed that she would go with her husband to his place of work and assist him in the business. She remembers how she actively made efforts to listen to the conversations between her husband and his clients and claimed that within six months she not only could speak Portuguese, but had also learnt to manage the business on her own. Another woman that I spoke to revealed that apart from trying to learn from the husband and his family, she also found the time to take night classes to learn the Portuguese language. All the women in the sample who came from India said that over time, they had learnt to speak Portuguese. A majority of them also used Portuguese alongside Gujarati to converse with their children. Portuguese language acquisition served as a major factor that helped them be more confident to venture out of their homes, participate in economic activities and broadly speaking favored their integration into the larger society.

Another challenge that was mentioned was that accessing governmental services was not so easy for the women in the diaspora; especially if the women had to manage without assistance from their husbands or family members. For new immigrant women who had migrated soon after their marriage from India, the lack of language skills and the resultant anxiety also acted as a obstruction in them successfully seeking assistance. For example, one of the women from the sample revealed that for her it was difficult to seek medical help during pregnancy and get the help with services her child needed after. She said,

*"During my pregnancy, I got late in delivering my child… I did not understand the procedures because of the language. There were resultant complications and she is a slow learner baby because of that… my husband used to stay on the shop all day. The doctors here were also very careless. I suffered a lot…"* (Kinjal, 52 years).

One other interviewee revealed that she experienced severe physical and mental abuse from her husband. Being someone who was born and raised in Portugal, she said that the Portuguese Government intervened very late in cases of domestic abuse; and claimed that this was not just an issue faced by immigrant women, linked to them not knowing their rights or not having the means to approach the government, but was an issue affecting the larger Portuguese society. In her opinion, the legal system in place took years to react to complaints, by which time, the situation had already reached a dangerous stage. While recounting her story she said,

> *"The government intervenes very late here. I had lodged many complaints. I had gone as a witness to the police station several times here. He* (my husband) *wanted to even throw me from the 8th floor of the building,.. he came with a cylinder with gas once and wanted to burn me and my children. And I had proof. But the police, government did not do anything."*(Komal, 32 years).

Komal's attempt to access services was even more limited by the fact that her family was not supportive of her reporting a complaint against her husband or separating from him. Although she withstood domestic abuse for several years, in the end she did gather the strength within her; and also obtained support from her friends to get a divorce and to live separately with her children. She also disclosed that for her, having faith in God helped in her difficult times and gave her the strength to fight back. Komal also revealed that at present, she was independently running a business that she had built on her own and was also single-handedly supporting herself, her children and her widowed mother. Komal was also proudly said that, *"I never asked anyone for help. I work and live on my own terms."* Komal's story was hence a story of resilience, resistance and strengths.

### 5.3.3 Married women's resistance to traditions

Many of them also broke free from their joint families and convinced their husbands to form nuclear units of their own. While the nuclear families were still controlled by the larger joint families, the women felt that their bargaining power in the decision making within the household was much more after having separated from the in-laws. Even though the women explained that the control of their in-laws in their lives continued, they also spoke of how they actively rebelled against traditional authority figures at home and in the community. In this way, the women also resisted the *pativrata* ideal of being an all obedient, sacrificing wife and *bahu*. For example, one of the interviewees said:

> *"We bahus* (daughter-in-laws) *don't agree with many things. For example, we don't go for satsangs* (religious gatherings) so much anymore*... this transition is a very big deal for the elders. 'The bahus don't listen now, the bahus don't like this, now we're on our own'... You know, now I go out of the house on my own, I go for yoga… now I'm living my life on my own terms. But that transition is not easy. The in-laws, they want to dominate us"* (Rina, 43 years)

The *bahu*s continuously strived to go around the restrictions set for them by the family members. For example, women who were not allowed to peruse independent careers after marriage used to begin by started getting involved in family businesses. Some of these women later ran the businesses alongside the husbands and sometimes also diversified and started businesses of their own. A few of them also ran commercial activities that they could do from home. One of the women for example used to run a '*tiffin* service' supplying home-cooked traditional meals for individuals who did not have time to cook at home. Another woman ran tuition classes for children and youth who needed support in learning the English language. Although the patriarchal power structures within the families largely determined the extent a woman could pursue her career, more often than not, they never accepted authority with complete passivity.

Another example of women negotiating boundaries set for them is related to the rules that govern their socializing with the outside world. As discussed in the section on women within the Hindu family structure (section 5.2.2), a family initially places considerable amount of restrictions on the life of *bahu*s whether in the domestic sphere, or in the outside world. For example, a considerable amount of women from the sample revealed that *bahu*s were not allowed to make friends outside the family during the first few years of their marriage. However, as time passed the women did get acquainted with other *bahu*s from similar age groups in community spaces such as temples. As they engaged in socially acceptable community activities such as *satsang*s[8] *pooja*s[9], preparing for Hindu festivals, etc. friendships also developed. Some of the *bahu*s also revealed that instead of frequenting temples for the sake of religious beliefs, it was the communitarian aspect associated with religion that attracted them to temples. A few of them also revealed that while in India, they rarely attended temple activities. While in Portugal, the communitarian aspect associated with religious activities such as *pooja*s or *satsang*s facilitated them getting acquainted with their peers and consequently also to tackle with the alienation and loneliness felt by them in Portugal.

Some women from the diaspora also radically opposed the patriarchal ideologies that affected their lives within the diaspora. For example, one of the respondents, Komal, was not allowed to continue her studies after grade five by her father as girls from the community 'did not need to study'. Later in her life, she found herself in an abusive domestic relationship with her husband; which she had a hard time leaving because of social and familial pressure. Although the conditions at home and in the environment may not have been favorable, Komal managed to surpass the challenges on her own and build a better life for her and her children. Very early into her marriage, she took initiatives to start and build her own business. In between work and household responsibilities, she also joined school and completed studies till the 9$^{th}$ grade. She also did a diploma course in computers and took driving lessons. Through learning these new skills and as well as being an earner for the household, she was able to empower herself. When she could not get emotional support that she needed within the family, Komal reached out to her

[8] A *satsang* is a religious or spiritual gathering.
[9]A *pooja* refers to a ritual prayer offered to deities.

Portuguese friends. Komal also actively rebelled against the Hindu ideologies and norms that were meant for married women from the diaspora. She spoke against her husband (which went against the *stri-dharma* and *pativrata* ideal (Shah, 2012)) and lodged official complaints against him and also finally managed to legally divorce him, at a time when divorces were almost non-existent within the community. Thus, Komal did not only actively oppose the adverse or challenging personal situations she found herself in, but also stood up against the casteist patriarchal traditions in place for women in Hinduism.

For a few of the women, including Komal, the inspiration to challenge the existing beliefs and practices affecting women and resist oppressive traditional structures came from the hopes and dreams they had about their children's future. Some of these aspirations, hopes and dreams were also influenced by the retrospective reflections on their own lives. For example, some of the women believed that as young girls they had very less autonomy within their lives and marriage, and they wanted to ensure that their daughters do not go through similar retraints. To illustrate:

> *"I will not do this with my daughters… I don't feel like they should marry in my caste… I only expect that whoever they choose and like, they bring them home and tell us that I like this person. Then we would do our analysis and see and think ahead. But the way I had an arranged marriage, I do not wish that they have the same."* (Mita, 38 years)

> *"I always tell my daughter three things. The first one is, I was never allowed to wear pant-shirt* (western clothes) *when I was younger by my father. I always really wanted to… I tell my daughter she can wear whatever she wants, as long as it is appropriate for her age and she looks respectable. Second, my father did not let me study when I was young. I only studied till fifth grade. He used to say to me, 'you're a girl, you anyway have to stay at home after marriage, so then why do you have to study?' So I want my daughter to study. Thirdly, I have no caste restrictions when she would get married. In my time, I wanted to marry in a different caste. I was in love with someone from here. But my father did not allow that. I don't have such expectations from my daughter. I would like her to find someone for herself, when the time is right. But not now, she is only fourteen."*(Komal, 32 years).

While some women attacked the core ideologies affecting marriage, domestic and work lives, in a riotously, others rebelled against tradition more subtlety. One example is of women resisting the dress-code prescribed to them by their families and the community. Increasingly, I was told that married women wore 'western clothes', refused wearing *bindi*s and other symbolic markers meant for married women etc. In my opinion, a change in dressing style did not really bring about an actual change in the power status of women in the society, but could cause discontent among some community members. Since it was considered that the women from the diaspora are supposed to carry forward the culture and tradition of the community, the burden of 'looking Indian' was usually borne by them. However, there was some difference on how different women within the diaspora perceived and negotiated with this expectation. While the women who migrated from India after marriage saw acceptance of a 'western' dress code as a symbol of modernity and resistance to tradition; the women who were second generation migrants saw the integration of traditional Gujarati dress-code into a Portuguese environment as being not

problematic, and even more ‘harmonious’. The latter group did not equate traditional dressing with orthodoxy and believed that ‘looking Indian’ was only a way of proudly asserting one’s heritage while living in a culturally ‘foreign’ environment. In my opinion, both of the choices, whether to reject traditional prescriptions on clothing, or assert their ‘difference’ in the Portuguese society by choosing traditional outfits recognized that women have the agency and ability to rationally make cultural choices and choose what is best suited in their position.

Although women within the diaspora more or less rebelled against the patriarchal traditions within Hinduism, they did not rebel against caste-system related traditions with the same keenness. This could have been because in many ways, the loyalties and allegiance of married women lied more with their fellow kin and caste members than with the members of the same gender community. As explained in section 5.2, women from ‘upper’ castes were assigned a higher status within certain community spaces and also actively propagated the maintenance of the caste status quo. Hence, although as ‘women’ they may share certain similar life-experiences within the diaspora, the resistance towards patriarchy would never assume a ‘collective’ form. Although a “Gujarati women” identity was assumed while dealing with a non-Gujarati (such as Punjabi or Goan), amongst themselves, they were divided in smaller divisions; and caste as a marker was sometimes much more dominant than gender.

# 6.Conclusions and recommendations

The present study took place in Greater Lisbon area (Lisbon), Portugal and used micro-ethnographic methodology (Wolcott, 1990) to understand the practice of transnational arranged marriages among people from the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora. Eight married women between the ages of 32 to 52 years were interviewed to understand the experience of women who participated in such marriages. Furthermore, the study also looked into the lives of married women within the diaspora, to determine how they were affected by the larger power structures such as caste and gender. The study also utilized the strengths-based and agency favoring approaches to analyze how married women actively negotiated with their environments and countered challenges faced by them while living in Portugal.

## 6.1 Main findings

Firstly, the analysis of the material collected from interviews and exercises of participant observations revealed that marriages among the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora served the purpose of ensuring cultural continuity of the community while abroad. Furthermore, cross-border marriages serve the purpose of maintaining social and communitarian ties across borders. Within transnational marriages, arranged marriages, wherein the parents and extended family members of the to-be bride and groom played the major role in finding a suitor and making preparations for marriage were not uncommon in the diaspora. The young brides-to-be had limited role to play in deciding about their own marriage; however, in most cases they did not think that they were being 'forced' into it. This perhaps owed to the fact that the young girls were prepared and schooled from childhood into accepting the marriage norms within Hinduism (acceptability of parents arranging marriage being one of them), such that these norms were internalized and normalized. Endogamy appeared to be a dominant norm within transnational marriages just like in India and was also a practice that was upheld to ensure that caste-relations and status quos from the home-state were reproduced in the host-countries. The stress on endogamy also meant that the socializing and sexuality of youngsters, especially young girls from the diaspora, was controlled, policed and monitored till marriage. This establishes strong links between the practice of caste and those related to gender and sexuality. At the time of selection of partners, amidst the pool of prospective matches, a *bahu* (daughter-in-law) for the family was chosen by analyzing whether she would be able to comply to the expectations and norms of the groom's family, give the family an heir and able to impart to this heir with the caste culture effectively. Post-marriage the *bahu* was expected to endure and sustain through the marriage, her behavior monitored by to Hindu casteist and patriarchal ideologies such as the ideal of *pativrata, stri-dharma*; *kanyaadan*, permanency and sanctity of Hindu marital union; *izzat* (honor) and *sharam* (shame) among other things. Within a transnational context, marriage was thus though of not just an affair involving two individuals, but an important communitarian affair; and the reproduction of 'pure' and 'authentic' culture of the diasporic community was seen to be dependent on it.

Secondly, the study looked into how social power structures affected the lives of married Hindu-Gujarati women from the diaspora. The women believed that the Hindu-Gujarati diaspora in Lisbon lived their lives by an exaggerated 'cultural consciousness' (Baumann, 1996 as cited in Vertovec, 2000) wherein the 'Hindu culture' and a collective Hindu-Gujarati identity became reified, frozen and fixed and lead to replications of power structures from source to host

countries. This diasporic commitment to reproduce 'pure' culture in the host societies was seen to be a consequent of having lived away from homeland for very long and being unable and/or unwilling to integrate into the host society cultures. Within such a reality, the patriarchal and casteist ideologies entrusted the role of 'authentic' cultural reproduction of culture on the women of the community. The Hindu-Gujarati family was largely patriarchal and usually 'joint' in spirit, even though the individual couples shifted into their own housing units. The new *bahu* (daughter-in-law) assumed the lowest position in the family power hierarchy. She was expected to offer her *seva* (service) to the entire household (not just the husband) and her domestic and social life was largely monitored by her *saas* (mother-in-law) and other elder family members. Patriarchy was not the only power structure affecting the lives of women and the influence of the Hindu caste system on their lives was very pertinent. Since the majority of the Hindu community of Portugal hailed from the Indian state of Gujarat and generally was located only in certain parts of the country, largely in Lisbon and Porto; the caste hierarchy from the state of origin was to a large extent able to be reproduced in the newer geographic context. Caste system broadly determined the social status of the person within the diaspora and also affected inter-personal and communitarian practices related to socializing (such as religious activities, inter-dining) and marriage. Women (especially those from 'upper' castes) were not just 'affected' by the caste system and also acted as agents involved in protecting and reproducing the casteist order along with their male counterparts. Hence the traditional power hierarchies were largely resistant to migration or external forces of the host countries.

Lastly, the study sought to challenge the essentialized and victimizing narrative on immigrant women by adopting the strengths-based and agency favoring frameworks to analyze the life narratives of married women from the diaspora. As evident from above, although the patriarchal and casteist order within Hinduism affected the lives of these women, they actively negotiate between the power structures and often resisted and rebelled against them. Women who had engaged in cross-border migration were also not 'passive' migrants as they are usually thought to be and occasionally also function as important resources and catalysts for migration of other family members. Most of the married women from the sample also strived actively to counter challenges faced by them in Portugal (such as gap in language, domestic abuse) and rebelled against several Hindu traditions. Although patriarchy was a structure that most women sought to oppose, they did not rebel against the caste system with the same wholeheartedness. This was possibly because the allegiance of married women within the diaspora often lied more with the fellow caste and kin members than with those having the same gender. The findings thus suggested that the women also possessed stakes within the power structures and also ample agency to lead their own lives.

## 6.2 Lessons from fieldwork for social work practice

When I discussed some of the results of this study to a researcher who had closely worked with this community for several years, she mentioned that the life worlds of immigrants of Indian origin in Portugal, the Gujarati-Hindus being among them, were to a large level 'invisible' in social research, media and other public discourses until a few years ago. Since this community is significant numerically [10] many of these community members were citizens or residents of

[10] People of Indian origin comprise of 70,000 people, comprising of 0.7% of the Portuguese population. Out of this, 33,000 are Gujarati Hindus.

Portugal, it is important for practitioners working in immigrant communities to understand the life-worlds, familial and marital practices of these community members. This study shed some light on a few aspects related to cultural practices of this diaspora; such as the practice of marriage, stratification systems within this diaspora, women's position in such systems, their agency and power within the diaspora, among other things. It also helped put in perspective that immigrant women should not always be looked at as vulnerable, passive people in need of 'saving' but must be seen as rational actors with strengths and agency and the capacity to improve their own lives.

In this section, I would reflect on some of the discussions that I had with the women from the diaspora in Portugal about the systemic and practical challenges faced by the them and propose some recommendations for social policy and social work practice. Firstly, for many of the women a language gap inhibited their interactions and contact with the outside society. This was especially true for first generation women from the diaspora. Learning the language of the host country is one of the most important resources of integration and ensures their autonomy. The women who went out to work (with their husbands or by themselves) usually picked the language up in a relatively short time and were considerably able to get integrated into the host society. For the ones who did not work, due to less or no exposure to the language, this was difficult. Portuguese language acquisition was not only important for women to be able to get jobs or participate in economic activities but also for them to be able to perform daily and necessary activities like buying groceries, going to the hospital by themselves, participate in the family decisions or their child's education, among others. Portuguese language classes for foreign nationals are available in Portugal free of cost in some public schools but not all families were aware about this (Lourenco, 2013). Hence these classes must somehow be made more accessible to the immigrants (especially female ones). This can perhaps be achieved through increased public awareness of their availability through approaching community run organizations such as Comunidade Hindu de Lisboa, Associação de Solidariedade Social Templo de Shiva, among others.

Due to lack of language and other social and familial restrictions, some of the women also had difficulties in knowing about their rights or in general hesitated from going to seek help from the governmental services related to health-care, child-care, etc. on their own. While usually, the in-laws and husbands (who lived in Portugal for a long time) guided them or handled most of the formalities or paperwork related to accessing services, in case the women did not have family members available to help, it sometimes could prove to be a challenge. Awareness campaigns related to rights of women in Portugal as well as the rights of their children, state provisions and services entitled to them among other things, needs to be carried out with this group. Again, in order to achieve this, professionals (social workers, health-care professionals, legal workers) could reach out to community run associations such as temples, which are spaces frequented by most of the women.

Lastly, it was also brought to my notice that domestic and intimate-partner violence was an issue affecting women in Portugal in general, also including some women from the diaspora. From the experience of one of the women in the sample it was seen that although the community did prevent its women from reporting violence due to ideologies related to *izzat* (honor) and *sharam* (shame); however, this was only a part of the problem. The larger judicial and system in place were significantly not able to detect women (including host country women and their children,

elderly dependents) at risk of domestic and intimate partner violence and relied on the victims themselves to come forward with the complaints. Furthermore, legal counsel is not accessible to all women equally; and professionals took a lot of time to act on a reported case, and sometimes the intervention was already too late (after the abuse had caused considerable damage). The state bodies concerned with this issue need to work alongside NGOs, health-care practitioners, social workers and legal actors to increase the identification of women, children and other individuals at risk of violence at home. Awareness campaigns also need to be conducted to encourage public reporting of cases and the police and judiciary must be pressed to take immediate steps once a family at risk is identified.

## 6.3 Recommendations for future research

The approach used by this study to look at the practice of marriage and the life of women in the diaspora was relatively new in the field of migration and diaspora studies and also in anthropology and social work. Apart from employing migration theories and structural theories of power (intersectionality), it had also used the strengths based theory and agency favoring framework, to ensure that immigrant women are presented as active, able agents in the study. Furthermore, I had also consciously avoided using a comparative approach relying on dichotomies such as Portuguese vs. Indian culture; Western vs. Eastern; love marriage vs. arranged marriage to analyze the cultural practices of people, which in my opinion can get quite reductionist and essentialist. I had chosen to use micro-ethnography guided focused approach to be able to observe the nuances within the research topic. I hope that the use of such approaches inspires researchers further to explore the cultural practices among diasporas. The topic of transnational arranged marriages also need to be explored more in research. Furthermore, research on immigrant women who migrate for reasons other than work - such as marriage and family reunification; and the agency held by such women in the migration process is also fairly underexplored. Research also needs to be carried out on this.

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# Appendix 1: Interview guide

PERSONAL INFORMATION SHEET

Name: Age:
Year of arrival in Portugal:
Age at the time of marriage:
Educational qualifications:
Employment status (current): Employment status (past):
Hometown: Rural/Urban:
Number of children:
Education level of spouse:
Number of people in a household:
Citizenship of family members:
Number of earning family members:

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Migration Trajectories:

- When did your husband's family come to Portugal?
- Did they come directly from India?
- What was the reason for migration? What did the family do in India/Wherever they came from?
- What about you? Had you always wanted to come abroad or to Portugal? Can you please tell me about the process through which you reached the decision of coming here?
- How long did the whole process take from hearing about the marriage proposal to making the decision?
- How did you and your husband interact before you came here?
- Were there any conditions that you or your husband set before you came here? (For example dowry?)
- Did your family and friends help you in making the decision?
- Where did the marriage happen?
- Did you move to Portugal soon after the marriage?
- Did someone from your family also accompany you when you first came here?
- Did you face any kind of difficulties regarding documents? Visa/Passport?
- How did you feel after you first came here? Tell me the first impression you had of this place.
- Did you feel any stark difference from the life you were used to at home?

- Was it easy to get used to the life here? Was it easy to make friends?
- Which were the initial challenges that you faced when you got here? If you needed some kind of help who could you go to? Was it easy to get support here?
- Did you do any preparations before coming from India, such as taking a Portuguese class/ talking to friends who lived abroad?

Relationship with people back home:

- Do you maintain contact with people back home? Is it mostly through social media?
- How often do you visit India? Are there particular reasons such as festivals/ family functions?
- Does your family visit you?
- Do you have family/friends in other parts of Europe/anywhere else? Do you also maintain contact with them?
- Do you think your status changed after coming here? Do your friends or family back home look at you differently since you have come here? If yes, why do you think that is?
- Do you send them gifts/ any other material things from here?
- Since you are here, do other people back home also ask you questions about how they can come here, get Portuguese Nationality, etc?

Home situation

- When you think about the word ‘family’, which people are included in it? In your opinion, what is an ideal family? (ask about opinions on marriage)
- What is your usual day like? How do you spend your free time?
- Usually, how is the work divided at home? Do you get help in your housework? Such as a housekeeper?
- How are important decisions taken in the family? Who do you think everyone listens to at home?
- What do you feel is your major role in the family?
- How is your relationship with people in your family? Who are you closest to? (elders/husband/child)
- How is your relationship with your child? Do you think there are any differences in how a child is supposed to be raised in India and in Portugal? If you were parenting your child in India do you think you would do it in some different way than you’re doing now?
- Do you think there is any difference in the way housework was done at your home in India and here? What about in terms of support? Is there any difference in the two places in societal-support that one gets to take care of the house, raise kids, etc?
- Have you ever considered working since you have come to Portugal? What factors have affected/would affect your decision to stay at home/work? Familia and communal factors/ factors related with Portuguese work market.

Indian Identity:

- How important is the ‘Indian’ part of your identity? Do you talk much about India, Indian culture at home? Are there differences with your idea of what India is and with what your husband’s family thinks India is? Is there a difference between what the elders in the family feel and what the young people feel?
- In what way do you or your family participate in the Indian community that is here?
- I would like to know a little bit about how this community organizes itself here. Are all the Indians united here? Or do you think there are divisions according to religion, caste? Are there also separate activities for women and men? Do you think young and old people participate the same way in this community?
- What in your opinion is significance of associations/ organizations such as Communidade Hindus de Lisboa, Templo Shiva for Indian Immigrants living abroad?
- Has being part of the Indian community helped you/ your family in any way?
- When it specifically comes to women such as yourself, what is their role in this community? Are there formal/informal networks within the community only for women? For a woman, how can being a part of an Indian community here be advantageous/disadvantageous?
- Would you say that ‘conserving Indian identity’ is important for you? When you talk about this, which part about being ‘Indian’ is important in your opinion? Religious identity? Caste identity? Linguistic identity? In what ways do families here do this kind of ‘conservation’?

Challenges:

- Since you have been in Portugal for a long time, would you say you like living here? Do you think the wider Portuguese society is friendly? Accepting to foreigners? Is it easy to make friends or to find a job for a woman like yourself? Are there parts of your life in India that you miss?
- What kind of challenges have you as a woman faced in Portugal? How do you resolve these challenges? Have you received adequate support from your family/ community whenever you have needed them?
- What about some kind of state support? Do you think as a resident of Portugal you have access to more services than you would in India?

Thank you for your time. How did you feel about being interviewed? Was there any question that made you uncomfortable? Have you participated in such an interview before? Would you like to give any sort of feedback so that I can improve on myself the next time?

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Transnational Arranged Marriages and the Lives of Married Women in the Hindu-Gujarati Diaspora of Portugal

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