Honor and Happiness
An ethnographic study of arranged marriages in a context of tradition and globalization in South India.

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Abstract

The tradition of arranged marriages is still the most popular form of organizing a marital relationship in India. Traditionally, parents are in charge of choosing the life partner for their child, which is a manifestation of honor in the Indian society. With globalization, the transcultural flow of media and ideas is rapidly increasing, which makes young middle-class Indians start nurturing new dreams and ideals such as free choice, individualism and romantic love. This essay is an ethnographic study based on interviews and participant observation with nine middle-class, English-speaking South Indians. The research objective is to explore how they understand the term arranged marriage and personal respective collective wishes in the choice of spouse and how they deal with the conflicts that occur when incompatible normative systems start to overlap. By using Appadurai's (1996:33-36) concept *ideoscapes* and Lyn Parker's (2005:20) definition of agency as "*how people shape the world according to the possibilities of the context*", I investigate how my informants navigate in the landscape of ideas and as active agents select, reject, combine and transform cultural norms, creating new models of marital ideoscapes. Being more mobile than the older generation both geographically and within these different scapes they find new, creative ways to support their personal interests and preferences without losing the loyalty and respect for their parents, both within and opposed to social structures.

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1. Introduction

In India, the tradition of arranged marriages seems to cross all caste lines, regional boundaries and language barriers. Specifically, among Hindus in India, they continue to be the most popular form of organizing a marital relationship. In the year of 2006 an estimated 90-95 % of all Indian marriages were still considered arranged (Viraj Ramade 2011:1-2). However, the matrimonial situation for India's urban youth today is significantly different from their parents' (Fuller&Narasimhan 2008:745). With globalization, the cultural flows across the globe are intensified and expanded (Steger 2009:71). Linking imagination to hope is at the core of sustainable social change (Appadurai 2007), and in the case of arranged marriages, meetings with people who move in different ideoscapes (Appadurai 1996) put people in India into contact with of other ways of organizing a marital relationship than those provided by the Indian hierarchic, patriarchic and collectivist tradition (Srinivasan Shipman 2010).

1.1. Objective

Through interviews and participant observation my aim is to understand the ideoscapes the English-speaking middle-class in South India move in, how these ideoscapes influence their understanding of the term arranged marriage and collective respective individual preferences in the choice of spouse and what changes and conflicts that occur when incompatible ideoscapes start to overlap. My presentation of ethnographic material is intended to contribute to a general discussion about how cultural norms in the globalized world are selected, rejected and adapted in culturally specific ways depending on the context in which they are used.

1.2. Overview of the problem: transcultural flow and tradition

In Europe and the US, the hegemonic ideal image of a marriage is the joining of two individuals to form a new family unit and the choice of partner is an autonomous decision (Viraj Ranade 2011:1). In India on the other hand, the dominant ideal is that a marriage is the foundation of a lifetime relationship between two existing families rather than the creation of a new family (McDonald et.al 2012:369). Even among the educated middle class in modern, urban India, marriage is as much a concern for the families as for the two individuals involved (Nanda 2000:1). That is not to say that personal concerns such as love play no role in the relationship, but values such as maintaining the balance in the family and consideration to other peoples' goals are in most cases mixed with personal preferences (McDonald et.al 2012:369). A couple who take their relationship in their own hands without their parents' consent take a big risk, since parental opposition means a cut-off from the social network and

resources like financial support, jobs and houses which are normally provided by family connections (Nanda 2000:1). On the other hand, the more a person is exposed to global media, nonfamily work and education the more likely that person is to be involved with the choice of marital partner (Ghimire et.al 2006:1184). The exposure to global media flows gives the opportunity for the individual to reflect over and criticize attitudes, beliefs and values in a way that differs from her or his family traditions and create a sense of independence in that individual. According to Nancy S. Netting (2010:707), Indians in the urban, industrialized context combine the two models of love marriage and arranged marriage and create new, hybrid models of mate selection. This group is described by many social scientists as more or less equivalent to the new middle class in the West, and has expanded rapidly since economic liberalization began in the early 1990's (Fuller&Narasimhan 2008:750). In this group, values such as intimacy, equality and individual choice are combined with traditional values, ideas and practices such as supernatural support, growing love and wives moving in to their husband's families (Netting 2010:708). This group is highly exposed to modern transcultural flow of media images and ideas since they through media have access to news, culture, values and norms from all over the world. They are also becoming more mobile and have the opportunity to meet groups from other normative systems (Appadurai 1996:33-36). Influenced by notions such as freedom, rights and democracy, young urban Indians are nurturing new dreams and ideals (Netting 2010:708). Such visions meet resistance, especially if they go against habits that are supposed to represent essential cultural identity (Appadurai 1996:13-14).

Taken into account that one generation has not yet passed since the rapid economic liberalization and high exposure to transcultural flow began, and that family approval has a long history of being crucial for mate selection in India, it is not surprising that arranged marriages still play a central role in the organizing of Indian families. What is special with the current situation is that people in industrialized contexts in India are exposed to other normative systems to a significantly larger extent than was the case for their parents. The problem that occurs in this context is that ideas from individualistic normative systems such as viewing the choice of partner as an individual, autonomous decision based on free choice in many cases are incompatible with the patriarchic and hierarchic collectivist system, with the idea of a marriage as a decision that involves the whole family in search for a suitable match based on religious, educational, economic and social compatibility (Viraj Ranade 2011:3). This often creates conflicts as many parents in India grew up in a context where

these values contribute to shape their identity, and since they associate love-marriages with premarital sex and abandonment of family obligations they find their children threatening their very identity. On the other hand, young Indians today respond that traditional principles are incompatible with human rights and individual choice (Netting 2012:710).

What made me interested to study the phenomenon of arranged marriages is that my experience both before and during fieldwork tells that many middle-class Indians express frustration and suffering in the clash that occurs between personal preferences in the choice of spouse and their families' preferences. Given the current situation, I believe that ideas and practices of marriage, honor and spouse selection are very likely to transform. Therefore, the relevance of this research springs out of the necessity to understand the conflict between incompatible normative systems that, regarding arranged marriages, in many cases creates difficulties. This is important to highlight since the situation occurs in a relatively new and uninvestigated context where tradition and subordination are challenged by transcultural flows and rapid development. An understanding of the clash between normative systems is of high relevance since it can prevent negative consequences and contribute to a debate on social change and conflict. With this essay, I wish to contribute to a debate both within the academy but also to open up for young people in India to reflect upon their situation and to question and discuss the subject.

1.3. Research Questions
To obtain my objective I work with the following research questions:

What does a marriage represent for English-speaking middle-class South Indians?

What preferences does the individual have and what preferences does the family have in the choice of partner?

Whose preferences carry authority in the process of partner selection?

2. Theoretical concepts and analytical strategy
Throughout this chapter I will show the perspectives and analytical tools that I will use to analyze my ethnographic material. I will explain the relevance for these specific tools given my object of research and how I will use them to analyze my ethnography.

2.1.   Standpoint epistemology

My analysis will be conducted from a perspective of standpoint epistemology, which according to Sprague (2005:41) argues that all knowledge is created in a specific matrix of physical location, history, culture and interests, and that these matrices change in configuration from one location to another. The vantage point throughout my analysis is that the concepts of arranged marriage and personal respective collective preferences are experienced and constructed differently depending on these matrices. Knowing, Sprague (2005:41) argues, is partial, local, and historically specific. In this essay, I will argue that "location" does not have to be a geographical place but instead a cultural. This is relevant for my research since my target group is not located spatially but rather socially and culturally (discussion derived from Robertson 1995), in urban settings both in India and abroad. Throughout this project, there are views and expectations within this cultural locality I aim to investigate.

2.2.   Ideoscapes

In the same way as culture is no longer spatially organized, neither are ideas. Appadurai (1996:33-36) describes the global cultural flow of ideas as *ideoscapes*, a landscape of ideas that surrounds the agents and in which they navigate according to the possibilities of the context. The ideoscapes are uneven, overlapping and subjective and inherent in them are different kinds of notions, ideas and ideologies, material structures such as media, technology and infrastructure but also practices such as rituals and individual actions. An ideoscape can also be composed of different overlapping and shifting scapes, for example can a marital ideoscape include the scape of romantic love and/or an Indian traditional, hierarchic and patriarchic ideoscape. The agents moving in these landscapes are of different proportions varying from as large as nation-states to as small as individuals, who open and close different gates when moving in this landscape. The ideoscapes are facilitated by new technology, financed by recently generated wealth and move across the globe in *mediascapes* and with the shifting *ethnoscapes*, where the latter refers to the landscape of groups of moving people who constitute the shifting world in which we live (Appadurai 1996:33-36). During my fieldwork, it was the encounter with variable ethnoscapes that had influenced my informants to open up new gates. The gates are social constructions that define imagined borders; they are possible to open up and to close and are often guarded by "gatekeepers", people who can decide whether the ideas and practices behind the gate can become accessible to the agent. Opening the gates create possibilities for my informants to move into new ideoscapes, mainly those of

individualism, freedom and romantic love. These scapes were also overlapping Indian traditional ideoscapes such as arranged marriage in which the inherent notions are for example respect for parents and the choice of partner as a parental decision, which in many cases gave rise to clashes between incompatible norms.

The reasons why I have chosen to use the concept ideoscapes as an analytical tool are that it includes a diversity of normative structures and because it allows for an idea of different landscapes as slowly merging into each other, although they can be demarcated by socially constructed gates. For my research this became useful since when agents navigate in and between these scapes, their actions change the relationship between agents and structures and content of structures. Throughout my research I will use the concept ideoscapes to investigate how, depending on the social structure in the surroundings, my informants are opening up gates to explore new landscapes of ideas while closing other gates to landscapes where they have previously moved. For some informants the new ideoscapes remain a field spotted on the other side of a closed gate to which they don't have access, which nonetheless influences them to reflect differently upon and criticize the terms arranged marriage and collective respective individual preferences in the choice of spouse. For other informants, gates are opened up to the possibility to explore the new scapes in practice. Sometimes, gates are closed and the agents are sealed off from scapes where they have previously moved, which in some cases means a cut-off from social relations that stay in these scapes. When being influenced by notions from previously unknown scapes, there is also a possibility to create new scapes that combine previously incompatible norms and practices. According to Appadurai, (1996:32) the moment a cultural practice reaches a new society, that practice is transformed into something culturally specific. Since the agents are interpreting the ideoscapes subjectively and according to a specific historic context, this gives rise to new, hybrid patterns of cultural practice.

2.3. Agency

Within feminist research, agency tends to be seen as an individual's capacity to understand her own interests in relation to habits, tradition, transcendental will or other obstacles (Mahmood 2001). In Western social science agency is equated with free will, rational choices and individuals exercising free and instrumental action (Parker 2005:9). Agency for the individual under the Western, humanist discourse is seen as autonomy of the individual in relation to society. The tendency here is to suggest a dichotomy between fate and free will and to assume that people have access to choice and have the rationality and freedom to make

decisions and exercise agency as resistance to structure (Parker 2005:9). According to Mahmood (2001), this becomes problematic since it limits the understanding of people raised in non-liberal traditions. Agency is not only synonymous with resistance but also a capacity for action that certain relations of subordination render possible. This may increase a person's relative freedom and capacity, since the active agent can reorganize dominant cultural conceptions in order to support her own interest, even if this is not explicitly challenging the structure (Mahmood 2001). Throughout my research, I will use Lyn Parker (2005:20)'s definition of agency as "*how people shape the world according to the possibilities of the context*". This creates an understanding of agency as occurring within social relations and cultural practice both within and opposed to structure, as constrained by forces and conditions within the specific context and allows agency to be interpreted differently depending on cultural conditions. Agency is also strongly related to the concept ideoscapes, since the agents move in and between these scapes and their actions determine whether they will or will not move into new scapes, whether they will cut the relations with people in scapes to which they have closed the gate or whether they will create their own, new scapes.

2.4. An intersectional approach

My analysis will be conducted intersectionally from a perspective of gender respective social hierarchy based on age. Both gender roles and age hierarchy are power relations that strongly contribute to shape appropriate behavior and give guidelines for social organization in the context where I conducted my fieldwork. Therefore, investigating agency in relation to gender and age hierarchy structures is central in order to understand how my informants make choices regarding and reflect upon the issues of arranged marriage and collective respective personal preferences in the choice of spouse.

3. Method

In this chapter I will explain and motivate the methods I have used to gather my material. I will describe how qualitative methods such as participant observation, interviews, "active listening", "walking the walk" and "headnotes" become relevant given my object of research. I will reflect upon the researcher as the research tool and ethical considerations in my study, and also clarify my informant selection and the reason behind my identified target group.

3.1. Participant observation and interviews

Throughout my research I have used participant observation and interviews, which are both qualitative methods. The reason for this is that qualitative methods according to Sprague

(2005:119) "emphasize interpretation and nuance since researchers address interviews, texts and observation with an intense focus and seek a detailed analysis of processes and meanings", which I find useful given my object of research. I have chosen participant observation as my main method of study since it enables the researcher to interact with the informants and to gain an insider's view on their life routines (DeWalt&DeWalt 2011:1+139). According to DeWalt&DeWalt (2011:137), the type of interviewing that is part of participant observation is usually informal and more akin to conversations between acquaintances than formal interviewing although with special interest paid to a certain phenomenon. The advantage of this kind of material collection is that it enables the researcher to participate naturally in unfolding events and to observe them as carefully and transparent as possible. For me, this method has been useful since I conducted my research when I travelled around in South India for 10 weeks. When encountering and starting a conversation with people from the Indian middle-class, I told them already in the beginning that I was doing research about arranged marriages and in most cases people were interested in telling me their personal views and experiences regarding the subject. Consequently, the main part of my material has been gathered through unstructured interviews and informal conversations in restaurants, buses, shops and at the informants' houses. Two of my interviews can be described as semi-structured, where I asked prepared interview questions with open ends that let the respondents have an impact on the way that the interview unfolded (Dewalt&Dewalt 2011:137) in order to open up for as much free narrative as possible. The interview questions covered what a marriage is, educational and occupational background, expectations of partner, the marriage process, premarital and postmarital living situation and, centrally, the informants' and their families' ideas on how a marriage partner should be chosen. These topics were also a pervading theme in my unstructured interviews. In all cases except two, the interviews have been conducted in India. The two cases that have been conducted in Sweden were with Indian students living in Gothenburg.

3.1.1. Active listening and "walking the walk"

A central theme throughout my gathering of material has been active listening which is described by Dewalt&Dewalt (2011:142) as the most fundamental technique for a good interviewer. Active listening means that the interviewer is more actively aware of the conversation than would otherwise be the case and that she or he uses the least directive types of probes and prompts. Another important technique in my fieldwork has been what Dewalt&Dewalt (2011:58) call "walking the walk", which means to learn what is appropriate

behavior and what constitutes good manners in the specific setting where fieldwork is conducted. For me, Indian culture has been an interest since two years before I started my fieldwork, and since I have spent a lot of time with Indian people living in Gothenburg and participated in Indian events I had basic understanding of appropriate manners and social conventions. This made it easier to start conversations with the people I met. In addition, I had former experience in listening to stories regarding family organization and marriages through conversations with my Indian friends in Gothenburg. This gave me the opportunity to start conversations by asking more informed questions in order to gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon I was studying.

3.1.2. Headnotes

Apart from to the unstructured and semistructured interviews I have conducted and written down throughout my fieldwork, I will also use "headnotes" in my result and analysis. According to Ottenberg, writes Sanjek (1990:93), ethnography consist of two equally important parts: fieldnotes and headnotes, where the latter are experiences and memories that continue to evolve even after the fieldwork is conducted. My former experience in discussing arranged marriages and what norms that are prevalent regarding marriages and spouse selection is one kind of headnotes that I will use throughout my analysis. These are memories that didn't become material until I gained more knowledge about the subject and started writing. Another type of headnotes are the reflections I have done throughout my travelling in India that gave me new perspectives on my subject and made me understand my informants better, and informal conversations with Indians that I don't consider interviews but which has relevance in highlighting certain aspects of my analysis and discussion.

3.1.3. The researcher as the research tool

In participant observation, the observer is the research tool Dewalt&Dewalt (2011:111). Since this limits the objectivity of the research, to understand from where the observer is observing is fundamental to understand the product. My personal background as an interviewer is that I am born and brought up in the Swedish middle-class in Gothenburg, a context that differs significantly from informants'. Therefore, my understanding of what love and marriage is about does in some aspects inevitably differ from theirs. My cultural background has consequences for what questions I ask, how I interpret my informants' narratives and what parts of the interviews that I put emphasis on and find interesting. On the other hand, my informants and I are both middle-class and English speaking so there were similarities as well as dissimilarities. It is in these meetings between slightly similar and slightly dissimilar

subjects that cracks opens up in the understanding of the world which necessitates an explanation and it is in these intersubjective meetings that ethnographic material develops.

3.2.   Informant and material selection

My informants are nine Hindu women and men from the middle class in South India who are fluent in English. It is important to note that this group is not homogenous. The informants participating in the study are both men and women, married and unmarried and ranging from 23 years old up to 44. They are neither a geographically situated group since they are located in different settings both in South India and abroad. What they do have in common, which becomes relevant given my object of research, is their cultural locality (concept derived from Robertson 1995). They are all exposed to transcultural flow in the sense that they have either been abroad and met other normative systems, or they have encountered these in India, for example through work with tourism or through university. This has put them in direct contact with new ideoscapes, mainly scapes of liberalism which advocate free will and individual choice. In many cases throughout my research these individualistic ideoscapes have been expressed as desirable, and in all cases they have been described as giving my informants new perspectives on their traditional way of mate selection. Also, all of my informants have different kinds of stories and opinions regarding arranged marriages, collective and individual preferences in the marriage process, family honor and responsibilities towards the family, something that becomes relevant since my aim is to investigate these reflections in the current rapidly modernizing and globalizing context. The reason why I have chosen to study Hindus is both that most people I encountered in India were Hindus, but also because the practice of arranged marriage among Hindus is a religious sacrament, instead of a social contract which is the case among many other groups, a subject to which I will return below. A requirement in my informant selection has been decent fluency in English language in order to create mutual understanding in the interview situations. I also want to highlight that this essay makes no claim to give general answers to how English-speaking middle-class Indians reflect upon arranged marriages, but rather to contribute to a debate regarding the issue based on reflections from the nine persons who participated in my study.

For obvious reasons, all material collected will not be used throughout this essay, and as noted above conversations that were not intended to be material were later considered useful. Being a researcher means that there is a power relation between me and my informants since I have the power to interpret their narratives and also to select what parts of their interviews that I use as material. In order to be as transparent as possible throughout my presentation of result

and analysis, I have used citation marks to make it clear what paragraphs that are my informants' narratives to distinguish them from the paragraphs where I as a researcher interpret their narratives. The reason why I have chosen the material present in this essay is that I find it highlighting my research questions to a larger extent than other parts of my material. Some material that I chose not to use was derived from informants who were not clearly identified within the frames of my target group, for example informants from rural areas and informants whose English- level kept them from narrating freely, which might lead to misunderstandings in the interpretation.

3.3. Ethical considerations

During my research I have used participant observation, which means that it was not always obvious when I was observing and what informal conversations that later became considered as material. According to Dewalt och Dewalt (2011:225-226) it is always unethical to use information if the informants do not know that they are observed. In all cases throughout my research, I have made it clear that I am a university student who write an essay on arranged marriages, I have consulted them whether their narratives can be used for my project and in almost all cases I have exchanged email-addresses with my informants to report what material I will use. Throughout this essay I have used fictive names on my informants and the specific place where the interview has been conducted is never revealed to make sure that my informants cannot be identified. I have chosen to do this since my research subject can be sensitive both for my informants but also for their extended families and people in their surroundings.

4. Delineations, definitions and previous research

Two central concepts throughout my research are *arranged marriages* and *honor*, which strongly contribute to my informants' understanding of what a marriage represents and how the partner selection should be made. Throughout this chapter I will define these concepts and create a picture of how previous research scholars interpret their importance in India. My choice of academic literature is used to define from what angle I will conduct my analysis and discussion and where and how I connect to the academic debate.

4.1. Arranged marriage and its importance in India

Throughout my study I will use Viraj Ranade's (2011:3) definition of arranged marriages as:

 "*a marital union in which the man and woman are introduced to each other through their parent/s, elders &/or extended family members for the purpose of marriage after having*

achieved religious, educational, economic and social compatibility between the two families. In recent years, the man and the woman have the right to make the final choice or decision".

One key reason why arranged marriage still is the most prevalent form of organizing a marital relationship is according to Netting (2010:708-709) that since as early as 1500 B.C, religious guidelines in the early stages of Hinduism put emphasis on people's responsibility to marry and produce children and to preserve the patriarchal family line. As time passed, these guidelines and duties were codified into the Hindu sacred teachings and were seen as crucial to family stability and honor. Self-chosen marriages were also known in India but considered lustful, disrespectful of parents and dangerous to society (Netting 2010:708-709). Because of the religious guidelines, an important aspect of mate selection in India is to marry within one's subcaste (Sharma 2008). This has to do with the Hindu belief in karma, which tells that you are reborn into a particular situation depending on your good and bad deeds in your past life. Since the place where you are reborn is a direct consequence of what you achieved in your past life, your dharmic path is to perform your duty and collect good karma in that particular position. Therefore, to marry someone from another position or from another caste is considered disobedience to dharma, the natural universal laws that make humans contended and happy (Sharma 2008).

Since the rapid economic growth that gave rise to transnational investment, products, media and ideas began in the early 1990's, arranged marriages have changed (Netting 2010:710). Traditionally, the children are their parents' juniors and should not question their superiority, but with schooling and activities outside the domestic sphere they learn things that their parents don't know and can therefore be a source of new ideas and resources which increases the parents' respect for their children (Ghimire et.al 2006:1184). Also, the children's approach towards family formation transforms with the exposure to non-traditional ideas, like love marriage. This highly desirable ideoscape is linked with values such as freedom, rights, modernism and self-development, and is, unlike the older generation, considered a realistic goal for young Indians today (Netting 2010:710).

Increasingly vital in marriages today are the qualifications and qualities of individuals (Fuller&Narasimhan 2008:745-747, Atmavilas 2008:8). Since the girl mostly moves in with her new husband's family, her adjustability to the new family is, in addition to her physical features, the most important quality. In arranging a marriage, a girl is being judged as a

prospective daughter-in- law just as much as a prospective bride. Central for boys on the other hand are that they have a well-paid job and high education. In the modernized, industrialized context, girls prefer professional husbands like engineers, doctors and lawyers rather than prosperous farmers and landlords who were considered desirable a couple of decades ago. 21:th century marriages in India are normally delayed until the boys have stabile job and also for girls the marriageable age has increased from their late teens until their mid-twenties. Unlike before, many boys value educated wives both because they can help the children with schooling but also because they share similar interests and lifestyle.

4.2.   The concept of honor and its importance in India

In India, marriage and relationship decisions are tightly connected to a family's honor (Kay 2012:83). In my research and analysis, I will use Kay's (2012:79) definition of honor as "*a social reputation or measure of esteem, respect or prestige that links behaviors of the individual with the image and welfare of the group*". Family honor is often described as fundamentally gendered, especially concerning practices of marriage and sexuality, and particularly important is the maintenance of the female family members' purity (Kay 2012:79-83). Sexual and marital practices are seen to function for group identity reasons and violations are therefore conceived as damage to that group's identity. Within the family unit honor is derived from celebrations and continuations of the family lineage, the maintenance of individual and family purity, and resistance to familial and cultural degradation. Rituals central to maintain family honor are arranged marriages and taboos against extramarital sexuality. Within honor systems, authority increases with age and treating elders with respect is considered prestigious behavior (Campbell 1964:160). In India specifically, the honor system consists of three interrelated notions: caste purity, women's chastity and men's courage which determines his masculinity (Mahalingam 2007:242). To maintain these notions regulate how many people in India live their lives and are also the foundation for the creation of gender roles. Inter-caste marriages are seen as pollution and men's masculinity is closely related to the maintenance of the female family member's chastity. Therefore, violations are seen as threatening their very identity as men.

According to Ortner (1996:25-30), the reason behind the universal view of women as inferior to men is that women are made into symbols of something that every culture devalues. This symbol is "nature", conceptualized as the opposite of "culture", which is equated with human consciousness and the human ability to control and transcend nature, to turn it into its

purposes. Since women are seen as closer to nature, it becomes "natural" for men to control them in the same way as culture asserts control over nature. The most common rationalization why women are associated with nature is a view of their reproductive functions including menstruation, pregnancy and lactation as confining her in natural, that is biological, processes. Giving birth and breastfeeding creates a tie between mother and child which makes it natural for her to be close to the children and stay in the domestic sphere. However, these functions and activities are not inferior unless they are placed within a cultural framework that says so.

Women's closeness with nature is emphasized in societies where the honor system is prevalent, such as India (Das 1976:5-10). Human nature is in these societies seen as essentially animal in origin and the whole task of socialization is the enabling to overcome the animality inherent in us. Human conduct is derived from a dialectic between biological nature and social construction which are distinct but may partially overlap. The belief is that conduct derived from the biological nature cannot be suppressed but that it should be kept in the backstage, away from public view. The most significant biological conducts are the facts of procreation and sexual intercourse and the only justifications for these practices are that they are necessary for reproduction. In a society with this belief, to disguise sexuality and to maintain the female family members' virginity becomes crucial to be socially recognized and to maintain honor and prestige. It is also influencing family relations, since the biological ties between family members are considered sacred in a way that a socially constructed relationship like the one between husband and wife can never be. This becomes especially important for men, since their wives move in to their homes after marriage. After a man gets married, the strong bonds created by sexuality come in direct conflict with biological bonds, which he has with his mother. This is the reason why public affection is traditionally never shown between husband and wife in India, and is also the reason behind the highly valued practice to respect one's parents, to show that the biological tie can never be trumphed by any sexual tie between husband and wife (Das 1976:5-10). It is also the reason why widows cannot remarry, since the husband-wife tie is seen as such a strong bond that a part of her also dies the moment he is perished (Lamb 1997:292-293). She is then seen as a socially old woman, performing activities that are the same as old people who prepare to die, so-called "cooling" practices to control her sexual forces and maintain family honor. In addition, a widow is seen as inauspicious and is not allowed to attend ceremonies in the community. Since the responsibility to maintain honor by chastity is associated with women rather than

with men, it is possible for men to remarry, widowed men do not need to perform any cooling practices and are not considered inauspicious.

5. Result and analysis

In this chapter I will show the results from my ethnographic fieldwork and analyze it with the tools I presented in the chapter "Theoretical concepts and analytical strategy" and with help from the academic literature in the chapter "Delineations, definitions and previous research". I have divided the ethnography into two categories, one to answer the research question "what does a marriage represent for English-speaking middle-class South Indians?" and the other to answer the two questions "what preferences does the individual have and what preferences does the family have in the choice of partner?" and "whose preferences carry authority in the process of partner selection?"

According to Srinivasan Shipman (2010), middle-class Indians in urban contexts place a high value on cultural traits like modernism and individuality, but mix this with traditional values such as being dutiful sons or good daughter-in-laws. Rather than replicating hegemonic ideals from Europe and the US, this group create new cultural hybrids, combining traits that are at the same time identified with notions such as being modern, traditional, Indian, Western and global. Throughout my research, there was a range of different replies regarding what a marriage represents and regarding spouse selection inspired from moving in ideoscapes dominated by individualism, freedom, rights, equality and romantic love. These were overlapping and often came into conflict with Indian ideoscapes that were widespread before the rapid industrialization and globalization began in the 1990's, which placed value on respect for the family's wishes, tradition and subordination. Altogether, my informants found innovative ways to create new, hybrid systems of what a marriage represents and of partner selection.

5.1. What does a marriage represent for English-speaking middle-class South Indians?

"Because I'm in a marriage, that means only one person"

(Interview with Radha 2013-02-03).

To answer the question I have selected responses from three of my informants whose reflections I find both representative, since there were many of my informants who replied in similar ways, but also because they highlight certain aspects of what a marriage represents

that I found interesting to analyze. Frequent replies to what a marriage represents were "to stay together for life", as in the way Radha in the citation above alludes to the idea of staying together with "only one person" for the rest of the life, no matter what. Another important value was that a marital union is important for more people than the two individuals getting married. It also became clear that there are certain duties that my informants associate with being a wife respective being a husband and that there is an authority pattern that one has to adjust to. On the other hand, my informants also expressed preferences regarding their marriages that go against tradition, such as not asking for dowry, preferring a wife who is working, and interacting with people of the opposite sex both before and after marriage.

This hybrid value system was the subject of my interviews with Rajul, a 44-yearold man from Kerala who is running a farm with volunteers coming from different parts of the world to help with the farming, and his wife Parvati, a 39-yearold mathematics teacher to whom he has been married for 15 years. When asking Rajul how a marriage is arranged, he replied:

> "Within the Hindu community boys get married at the age of 25-30 and girls before 25. The reason that boys are older than girls is that they need to be settled and have a good job. Lovers at the same age create a problem, it should be 3-4 years of difference. The reason for this is that if they are both older, the girl will have children later. Traditionally that created a problem because when she gets older, around 50, the child is not old enough to help the parents. Between 26 and 28 the woman has the best capacity for pregnancy" (Interview with Rajul 2013-01-18).

Rajul's answer points at the obligations that a child has towards its parents, that is to take care of and support the parents when they are no longer healthy enough to work. It also illustrates the duties that are associated with being a husband and being a wife, which are to provide for the family economically and to take care of children respectively. Despite the biological facts that he expresses as reasons behind the preferred marriageable age, it can also be a way to enhance the authority of men. Since authority increases with age in honor societies (Campbell 1964:160), the idea that the woman should be younger than the man can be a way to maintain the hierarchical pattern between husband and wife. Another way to maintain this pattern is education. When asking Parvati how a marriage is arranged, she replied:

> "The first thing is about caste. The second thing is education. The husband's education must always be higher than the bride's. He must have a good financial

background and a safe employment, girls don't like farmers" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27).

Her answer illustrates two things, first the importance to maintain the family's reputation and status in marrying within the same class and [sub]caste, since this due to religious reasons is strongly linked to prestige and honor (Mahalingam 2007:242). In the modernized, industrialized context, even prosperous farmers and landlords are nowadays considered unattractive husbands, and girls rather prefer professionals like engineers, doctors and lawyers (Fuller&Narasimhan 2008:745). Therefore, a farmer's profession indicates low status and is unthinkable. In this, the girls' wish regarding what kind of husband she would prefer carries some authority, especially if she is educated like Parvati, even if it also has to do with the girl's family looking for a man who can provide for her. Parvati's answer also has a gendered dimension, since the man's authority and role as "head of the house" in the family is not only maintained by gender but increases with a higher education.

According to Fuller&Narasimhan (2008:745), any sensible conversation about marriage must also be one of education and employment, and the idea of a marriage as a financial union has been prevalent in my informants' narratives. Even if dowry is prohibited by law in India, an informal transaction of wealth is in most cases derived from the wife's family as it is an exposure of the family's economic status to other members of the society and is also an incitement for the husband's family to treat his wife well (Nanda 2000:2). A family who gives dowry can also demand that the son-in-law has higher education and salary to make sure that he can provide for their daughter. Even if Rajul's family didn't require any dowry from Parvati's, the wedding is normally provided by the wife's family and the costly occasion is an opportunity to manifest the family's wealth. Parvati explains the process as follows:

> "The third thing [in the process of getting married] is that the whole family goes
> to the girl's house to "see the girl". The bride's family will inform about dowry.
> This can be gold, property or a bank account. The whole family comes, the girl
> well-dressed in sari, with a trey to serve tea. The girl will look at the boy's face
> and he will look at her. Then they can have a personal talk" (Interview with
> Parvati 2013-01-27).

She continues on the subject:

> "Before marriage, you cannot go out in public as a couple and there is no

touching. In a marriage, the dowry in gold has to be documented. In Kerala, at least one kilo of gold is required for a good family. Also, the minimum sari cost is 25.000 rupees. The sari is only used at that occasion and when the woman is dead and is about to be buried. The lady always moves in to the husband's house" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27).

According to Atmavilas (2008:8), even if men still are supposed to have a higher education than their wives, something that has changed in recent years is the men's attitude towards women's schooling. With working middle-class Indians adopting values such as individualism and social mobility, for many men the preferable wife would be one who also works, since they will have a similar lifestyle and can therefore have a closer personal exchange. For Rajul, marrying a woman who works was considered a personal wish but also an investment. When asking him how he met Parvati, he replied:

"My wife works at the same school as my mother. She is the 4th rank in her class in computer science and has a master in mathematics, very intelligent girl. My mother asks if the girl is interested to marry her son? She ask the girl's parents for history book [astrological chart], it is good. Then I can go and look at the girl. We can talk for 20 minutes. She is quiet but I ask her many things, about her education, job and interests. In the end I ask "do you like me?" She says yes. We go back and tell our parents. I tell my father not to ask for dowry because for me education is dowry. She will give birth to [raise] a wise child, that is better than dowry for me, it will improve the next generation" (Interview with Rajul 2013-01-18).

Rajul's narrative can be seen as a kind of model hybridizing notions from different but overlapping ideoscapes. It carries a traditional dimension, because it is still Rajul's parents who find the girl for him, and they are not allowed to meet before both of the families are involved. Though, these values are mixed with Rajul's personal refusal to ask for dowry which his parents respect. After his personal talk with Parvati he asked her "do you like me" which means that her personal preference carried some authority since she, at least in theory, had the chance to say no. Rajul's family also see a value in the woman's education "because she will give birth to a wise child" (Interview with Rajul 2013-01-18), which differs from the traditional valuable traits in women like modesty and adaptability. In addition, when asking

Rajul if he could talk with his fiancée after settling the engagement, he describes the period as one of romantic love between individuals.

> "We talk on the phone and I can meet her as well. Too much tension, I think too much about sex with her. At this time we don't have Internet, we don't have cellphones. I call her home from my office, two signals, then her family knows that Rajul is calling. Sometimes when her parents are out I go to her house. I love her heart so much. I kiss her everywhere and we do everything except having sex. She is nervous about her parents coming in. One time my parents go to a wedding, she comes to my house. Kiss, kiss kiss, her lips, her heart, everything. Very young age, I think too much about sex, now I think about future, job, taking care of family and healing people" (Interview with Rajul 2013-01-18).

For Parvati as well as for Rajul, marriage comes with certain duties. According to Nanda (2000:2), since the girls mostly move in with their new husband's family after marriage, the most important quality is, in addition to the girl's physical features, her adaptability to the new family. In arranging a marriage, a girl is being judged as a prospective daughter-in-law as much as a prospective bride (Nanda 2000:2). In Parvati's case, she is aware of both what is expected from her as a wife but also of the authority pattern she has to adapt to. When asking Parvati what duties she associates a marriage with, she replied:

> "The man is mine alone. Otherwise he might kill me or kill my lover. This is the most common killing in Kerala. Also, a wife needs to look after the children well. She has to be the best partner for everything a man wants in his life and the best daughter-in-law for her mother-in-law. I have the right to argue with my mother but not with my mother-in-law. I need to show respect" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27).

Parvati's answer indicates the importance of maintaining the authority pattern in the family, based on age and gender. In all cases, she needs to show respect to her mother-in-law. The subordination to her husbands' and mother-in-law's wishes can also be seen as a conscious choice in order to gain relative freedom. Parvati describes Rajul's family as quite modern, and in order to be accepted by them she did her best to adjust to their preferences. Once a family member, she gains a higher degree of freedom, as she expresses "for me it is different [from the other women in the community], I don't have much restrictions" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27). Subordination can also be seen as an exchange, since what the lady gets in

return is protection. When asking Parvati why marriages are important, she replies:

> "Marriages are important because a lady must always be accompanied by a man. He will be the only person for her in her life. If a lady cannot adjust to her husband's wish, it might be a divorce. If they have a problem, they don't tell to parents but try to solve it themselves. The lady will suffer, she will think that he is my husband, he is the father of my child, I will stay" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27).

It is obvious that Parvati is aware of the duties associated with being a wife. In the case of duties for a husband, the answer was slightly different. Even if she carries strong ideas about what makes a good husband, it is obvious that it is the wife rather than the husband who has to face negative consequences in the case that he doesn't live up to those standards. When asking Parvati what makes a good husband, she replies:

> "No drink, no smoke, no other ladies. Because we are devoted. No touch, no look. He has the opportunity to change, if not I can divorce. After divorce, a man can remarry but the girl cannot. Men prefer "fresh girls" [virgins]. If a lady is not married it is not good. Widows cannot attend marriages. The girl needs to suffer until the end of her life. A girl will think that "maybe it's my faith if I suffer". Today, this is changing when girls are better off financially. I have full faith. After marriage, no other person! " (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27).

Even if the question asked is about what duties a good man is associated with, the answer turns into what the consequences are for a girl who decides to divorce. From a perspective of agency as "*how people shape the world according to the possibilities of the context* " (Parker 2005:20), Parvati's answer indicates that even if there are preferable features in the selection of a husband, the options for a lady whose husband doesn't live up to those standards are limited since she is no longer a virgin. Since a girl's virginity is crucial for family honor and since divorce is considered a scandal and as a violation to family honor (Kay 2012:80), girls will do what they can to adapt to their husband's family's wishes and to keep the marriage together. Given the options, as Parvati expresses "after divorce, a man can remarry but the girl cannot … men prefer "fresh girls"" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27), the life after divorce is not necessarily preferable given the options a girl has. In addition to being blamed for the degradation of the family's reputation in the loss of family honor, the girl has to move back with her parents and, especially if she doesn't work, become financially dependent on them

(Atmavilas 2008). A divorced woman is often seen as equal to a widow, considered socially old and inauspicious and therefore banned from ceremonies in the community (Lamb 1997:293), as Parvati explains "widows cannot attend marriages" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27). Therefore, to resist the structure and have a divorce can in this context limit rather than increase a woman's relative freedom (discussion derived from Mahmood 2001).

One of the strongest notions inherent in the ideoscape of marriage in the context where I conducted my fieldwork was to keep the family together rather than divorce, something that is not as strong in individualistic ideoscapes where a marriage based on personal preferences is the hegemonic ideal. The clash that occurs when incompatible ideoscapes start to overlap was clearly expressed by Radha, a lady from Karnataka who has been married to an English man for 22 years. They live in a farm in the mountains in Kerala where they grow vegetables which they sell in England, and that's where I met her when I came to visit for a couple of days. At the farm, they also welcome volunteers to stay with them to help out at the plantations and with coffee-picking. At the age of 49, Radha got cancer and had to go first to the hospital and later to recover at her family's place for three months. When she came back to the farm, she found out that her husband was cheating on her with a French 23-yearold volunteer. In the beginning of our conversation, Radha spoke about what had happened in general terms which carried a sense of surrendering to the situation. The more I questioned her husband's behavior and suggested alternatives such as divorce, the more her sadness, frustration and sense of helplessness about the situation prevailed, but still the idea of divorce was not considerable.

> "Sometimes I think like that [divorce]. But he is the father of my children. The
> land is written on me, but he [her husband] knows the distributors in England and
> the computer work. I only know what to do here, and the cooking. Also, the
> neighbors will talk about me. They will say I go to town to have boyfriend. In
> India, divorce is very bad. Marriage means, stay together for life. I am 50 years
> old. In my country, 50 is very old. Then you take care of each other. Not to
> divorce, not have new boyfriend, like that. I will never have another man, even if
> many men tell me they have love for me. Because I'm in a marriage, that means
> only one person" (Interview with Radha 2013-02-03).

In meeting and falling in love with her English husband, gates to ideoscapes such as individualism and romantic love became possible for Radha to open, which made her move

into these scapes and practice notions such as adopting a mobile lifestyle and having friends from the opposite sex. The latter becomes problematic in the eyes of her community since they equal talking with flirting. In honor societies, it is the women's responsibility to maintain the men's honor (Mahalingam 2007:242), and since divorce is a violation to family honor, the woman is normally blamed for failing the marriage and not being good enough in the role of wife. As Radha expresses, "they will say that I go to town to have boyfriend" (Interview with Radha 2013-02-03), which indicates that she rather than her husband in the case of divorce will be blamed by people in the community, even if he is the one cheating on her. In the eyes of the community, her husband is unfaithful because she fails in living up to the standards as a good wife, which has to do with adjustment and modesty (Fuller&Narasimhan 2008:742-747).

For Radha, the ideoscape of love marriage is overlapped by that of Indian traditional marriage. Even if she expresses the situation as very difficult, she is devoted to the norm of a marriage as a lifetime contract, as she expresses "because I'm in a marriage, that means only one person" (Interview with Radha 2013-02-03). Except the concern for children, the reason Radha highlighted as the most important for staying in the marriage was financial support. She expresses that "I only know what to do here [in the house], and the cooking" (Interview with Radha 2013-02-03). Even if the huge area of farmland is written in her name and she has a constant flow of volunteers coming to the farm to help, the idea of being economically independent was foreign to Radha. Since divorce brings dishonor to the family, the risk of being cut off from the social network and resources like financial support, jobs and houses that the family normally provides (Nanda 2000:2), might contribute to Radhas reluctance to the idea of divorce. Therefore, she doubts that resisting the structure and divorce would increase her relative freedom (discussion derived from Mahmood 2001).

Throughout my interviews on the subject of what a marriage represents, it is clear that my informants move in ideoscapes that include hierarchical and collectivist Indian normative systems, with notions such as letting the family be involved in the choice of partner, adjustment to marital duties, that the husband should have a higher position than the wife and refusal to the idea of divorce. These values were also fuelled by the fear of gossip in one's community. At the same time as my informants' exercise of agency took the shape of subordinating themselves to traditional values they have also managed to navigate in new landscapes of ideas. My ethnography shows that the informants are opening gates in order to move in and practice notions from ideoscapes including romantic love, educated wives, social

mobility and the parents listening to some of their children's personal preferences. This creates new, overlapping marital ideoscapes where my informants navigate in different ways depending on the possibilities of the context.

5.2. What preferences does the individual have and what preferences does the family have in the choice of partner? Whose preferences carry authority in the process of partner selection?

"When I select, I can't only think about what I like but also who would be a good daughter-in-law for my mother. I can't be selfish".

(Interview with Venkatesh 2013-03-15).

When it comes to the personal preferences and the family's preferences regarding a marriage, my informants expressed their personal wishes as diverging from their parents' since they to a larger extent are exposed to ideoscapes including individualism, liberalism and romantic love. Even if this was the case, my informants' concern for their parents' preferences was crucial in the choice of partner, and many of them expressed reflection and mediation regarding personal wishes and parental support.

A common feature in honor societies is the hierarchical idea that the younger should always respect the elder. This can be expressed in different ways, for example by never questioning what the elders say, never have an argument with elders and that certain activities should not be done across generations, since that indicates equal status (Campbell 1964:158-160). There is also a gender-dimension to this since the father is regarded as "head of the house", and it is important that his authority is expressed to others so that his honor never is questioned (Campbell 1964:165). The importance to manifest the close ties within the family, which are central to family honor (Das 1964), was explained to me by Arnav, a 25-yearold engineer from Andhra Pradesh now studying in Gothenburg. In his extended family, they never call each other by the first names but instead use a specific name to differentiate between the relations and treat that person according to the authority pattern. For example, the name for Arnav's mother's sister means "little mother" in translation, which indicates the appropriate treatment for that relation. Inherent in the name that a wife uses for her husband is something similar to "sir", which indicates the respect that a wife should have for her husband.

According to Ghimire et.al (2006:1184), traditionally the children are their parents' juniors and should not question their superiority, but with schooling and activities outside the domestic sphere they learn things that their parents don't know and can therefore be a source of new ideas and resources which increases the parents' respect for their children. Throughout my research, the respect for elders in general and parents in particular has been highlighted as one of the core values of family organization in India, but also criticized and questioned by my informants. Venkatesh, a 26-yearold engineer living in Chennai, expressed that it is not possible for him to have a discussion with his father, since he is of the opinion that since he is elder, his son should learn from him. "The only time my father asks me something, it is to find out my opinion so that he can correct me. As for now, I avoid any discussions with my father" (Interview with Venkatesh 2013-03-15). The issue is similarly expressed by Arnav, who explains that his parents can in some cases, depending on the subject, let him be the source of new ideas that they adapt. This is mostly regarding technical issues such as teaching them to use the mobile phone or the computer. On the other hand, a discussion regarding religion will quickly end with his father commenting that "you are educated", in the sense that Arnav is leaving traditional and religious values behind when exposed to other norms. I had previously told Arnav what I had read about the religious reasons behind arranged marriages, and asked him whether he could discuss religious writings and the reason behind religious doctrines with his parents and in that way show an interest in the subject that could be a platform on which they could meet. Instead of seeing religion as a platform for discussion, he saw a dichotomy between questioning and religion itself.

> "My parents don't know the reasons why they conduct poojas[1] or go to the
> temples. They will just say that it is "good for the family". Everybody do that in
> my society because it is considered a good thing, and it is good for our reputation
> if we do it to. I also think my father enjoys the ritual. Every morning he wakes up
> at 6 am, cleans the house and does his pooja. It makes him feel calm. I think it is
> the same thing with arranged marriages. Nobody remembers that it has to do with
> that thing you [Karin] said about karma [2], everybody just follows that because it is
> our tradition and if we don't follow other people will gossip" (Interview with
> Arnav 2013-04-24).

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[1] Pooja is a religious Hindu ritual where the devotee makes offerings to the deities, A/N.
[2] that you are, depending on the karma accumulated in your previous life, reborn into a particular position and should therefore marry someone from the same position because it's otherwise considered disobedience to one's dharmic path (Sharma 2008).

The respect for elders becomes a crucial issue in the situation of arranged marriages, since the parents traditionally are in charge of choosing the life partner for the child. A child who wants to choose for his/herself is not only going against the rule of marrying within the same subcaste but it also indicates that the parents have not succeeded in transmitting the appropriate authority pattern to their children (Campbell 1964:165). In the eyes of the other members in an honor-society, this threatens the authority and prestige of the parents and challenges the social norms which are central to one's identity and reputation (Mahalingam 2007:242). Since honor is not something you achieve but rather something that others give you (Campbell 1964:165), the concern for what parents think has been of high importance throughout my interviews. When asking Parvati if she had any friends who were boys when she went to college, she replied:

> "I have fear to talk with boys because what would my parents think? It gives bad reputation. One boy likes me, he goes to my parents [to ask for my hand] without me knowing. They deny because he does not do it the proper way. First he has to talk with his parents and they can make and arrangement. I have faith, he was not for me, so I can drop it" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27).

In Parvati's case, the boy's suitability and his family's decency are being judged from his way of proposing. Since a marriage is the union between two families rather than between two individual's (McDonald et.al 2012:369), not to include the family in the proposal makes a marriage unthinkable for Parvati's parents. It is clear that her parents have strong authority in the selection of husband and that she, being a young girl, trusts their judgment in not letting her marry a boy whose family is not involved in the decision. According to Nanda (2000:1), choosing a husband is for Indian girls sometimes seen as such an important decision that they rather let their parents, who are more experienced, be in charge. As noted above, since the negative consequences if a husband doesn't live up to expectable standards will affect the wife rather than the husband, it becomes even more important to let the elders who are more experienced be in charge of the selection. In the case of Archana, a 23-yearold girl who I met in Gothenburg where she was studying, she has the opportunity to talk with boys in a way that was not possible for Parvati who was in the same situation 15 years ago. Still, her narrative makes it clear that her parents' preferences carry strong authority in her selection. It also describes how the idea of choosing a boyfriend for oneself in this case creates a difficult situation for the young people in its incompatibility with the traditional ideas:

"When I was 16, I had a boyfriend. We were in the same class. We always talked about everything, shared everything. We always talked on the phone in the evenings. But I saw how my parents reacted to other love marriages in my society. They really don't like it. And I know, that it would break my parents' heart if I came home with a boyfriend. Since I love them, I don't want to hurt them. So I tell the boy that I can't talk with him anymore. After that, I never talk with boys, not even as friends. Because I don't want a broken heart again" (Interview with Archana 2012-10-30).

Both Parvati's and Archana's ways of talking about boys indicate that they are seen as potential boyfriends/husbands rather than potential friends. Rather than having a boy as a friend and risking infatuation or that their parents' reputation is violated because of gossip, they prefer not to talk with boys at all. Another dimension to this is added by Rajul, who perceives that girls who fell in love with him in college did it because they felt that the love from their parents was not sufficient. He also expresses that respect for parents should always be more important than personal romantic wishes.

"When I'm in my bachelors, many girls are in love with me. They tell me I love you but I always tell them "please respect your parents, they gave birth to you". The girls are stressed because the parents tell them to study hard and they push them. They find in difficult and that's why they want my love. But the parents love their children, they pay for their studies and want them to do well" (Interview with Rajul 2013-01-18).

Another example which expressed the importance of maintaining the honor of elders in the family is the situation for Venkatesh, who I first met through a common friend in Gothenburg where he had been studying for three years. Two months before I went to India, he told me that he was going back to his home in Chennai. At the time, I didn't think very much about it, since there are many Indians in the student community in Gothenburg who come and go, depending on where they can find jobs. Once we met up in Chennai, Venkatesh told me the story about why he had to go back. When he and his brother were young, they went to a Christian school and after a couple of years his brother converted to Christianity. His parents, who are religious Hindus, didn't oppose his brother's conversion and he has been living with them all his life until now, when he is 29 years old. The problem has aroused lately, when his parents are retired and have decided that they want to become more religious. His father was,

at the moment I visited them, preparing himself to move out of the house to become a saint in a temple. Since his mother also wanted to increase her religious practices, she didn't wanted her Christian son to live with her in the house anymore, since he prays to Jesus and occasionally cooks meat, which is considered impure in the Hindu religion. This was the reason, Venkatesh told me, that he couldn't continue his studies in Gothenburg, since his mother can't stay alone in the house. She is over 50 years old and can't go out alone, so someone has to accompany her to the temple where she goes daily. Since his brother wouldn't marry a Hindu girl and therefore couldn't live in his parents' house, Venkatesh would get married within a couple of years, and his wife would move in with them. Since Venkatesh has been living in Sweden where he moved in ideoscapes with other norms regarding spouse-selection, and has earlier expressed his preference for love-marriage, I asked him if he would find a girl by himself or if it was up to his parents.

> "Since my elder brother became a Christian, I have to stay with them and therefore I couldn't choose for myself. They need me to pick a girl who is traditional like them. When I select, I can't only think about what I like but also who would be a good daughter-in-law for my mother, someone she can have a good communication with. I can't be selfish" (Interview with Venkatesh 2013-03-15).

To my ears, Venkatesh's considerations weren't even near to being selfish and it was clear that his parents' preferences in the family organization carried strong authority and that they were diverging from his personal preferences. I told Venkatesh that I would rather identify his parents as the selfish ones, since they wanted him to quit his education because his father wanted to go to a temple and his mother wanted him to marry a girl that she would like. Then he replied:

> "But I am the one who is educated, who got the chance to go abroad, to become broadminded. I can't expect her [his mother] to understand me, because she never had that chance. She has just spent her whole life taking care of family. That is the only thing she wants to do. She would feel very lonely if I didn't stay with her in the house" (Interview with Venkatesh 2013-03-15).

The situation is an example of the conflict that occurs when the ideoscape in which one moves is overlapped by another ideoscape with incompatible values. Venkatesh is moving in the scape of individualism which is overlapped by the ideoscape of love marriage. This scape

remains a field on the other side of a closed gate that is influencing him but is impossible to act in since that would create a problem for his mother. She is on the other hand moving in an ideoscape of arranged marriage where the norms inherent tells that the whole family, including her, is affected by her son's marriage and that her plans for the future should be to take care of her family. That is incompatible with letting Venkatesh choose a partner by himself because if he did, he would have to close the gate behind the scape of arranged marriage which would leave behind the social relations in that scape. In this case, Venkatesh's parents are acting as "gatekeepers", who keep him from opening the gate to the scape of romantic love. They are on the other hand also acting as "gate-openers" to scapes such as individualism since Venkatesh sees his opportunity to go abroad and move into new scapes as made possible by his parents' financial support. Venkatesh's choice to move back to India to live with his family cannot only be seen as a decision based on not making his mother feel lonely in the house, but also a way to manifest the success of the parents in transmitting the appropriate authority pattern to their children (Campbell 1964:165), to avoid that the family loses face in the eyes of the community. In this case, Venkatesh's choices and actions are an exercise of agency as occurring within social relations (Parker 2005:20) since resisting the structure and moving in the ideoscape of love marriage would not only have consequences for Venkatesh but also for his family's wellbeing and reputation in the society.

One example where the authority pattern was explicitly challenged after being influenced by people moving in ideoscapes including individualism, liberalism and romantic love is that of Lakshmi and Sandeep, a 37-yearold woman from Madhya Pradesh and a 35-yearold man from New Dehli who now live in Goa. Throughout his upgrowing, Sandeep told me, he never spoke very much with girls because of respect for his parents.

> "My extended family is a bit traditional. Therefore, I never talk with any girls, just small conversations, because I don't know what my family would say if they knew I spoke to someone. In my society, reputation is very important. I don't want to spoil that for my family" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

Even if Sandeep described his core family, living in New Dehli, as modern, his extended family who were highly respected landlords in Uttar Pradesh were concerned about maintaining the blood lineage and reputation. Therefore, Sandeep's idea for the future was to let his parents choose a suitable girl for him. This changed drastically one day when he met a

Turkish girl who now lives in Sweden, who had herself been through the process of getting married away, having children and finally moving to Sweden where she eventually divorced. As Sandeep expresses:

> "This is why Samina [the Turkish-Swedish girl] asked me if I had a girlfriend, if I will get married and so on. And she tells me that since I have the opportunity, don't end up like me, to be married away. She tells me not to follow my family's values, but to ask myself who I want to spend my life with" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

After the meeting with Sandeep in New Dehli, Samina travelled to Goa where she met Lakshmi who was working in a restaurant there. They started talking and became friends, and with her as well, Samina tried to find out whether her marriage plans were arranged or love marriage. Also in Lakshmi's case, there was a strong respect for her family's preferences.

> "We are close in my family, because we have always moved around. I come from Madhya Pradesh, but because of family problems I grew up in Gujarat, and then we moved here [to Goa] to run this restaurant. My family wanted to marry me away already at 21, but I just worked. I never looked at boys, never talked with them, because I don't want to disappoint my family. When Samina gave me Sandeep's telephone number, I first didn't want it, but then she pushed me and I called" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

The meeting with Samina and her story that strongly advocated love marriage made both Sandeep and Lakshmi question the idea of getting married away and Samina helped them open gates to other ideoscapes to move in, scapes that had formally just been spotted from a closed gate and not perceived as real possibilities. Though reluctantly, when Samina called Sandeep and told him that she had found a girl who she thought he should talk to, he agreed.

> "Then one day I have a phonecall from an unknown number, I say hello and she says "Hi, this is Lakshmi, Samina gave me your phone number". We just have a brief conversation, what community we belong to, what we do and so on. Just a short discussion. Then a couple of days later I call her back. And we talk and talk and talk. All the time we talk. But only in the nighttime, when she is free and I am free. We are always very tired. I don't know what we talk about. But constantly, we talk" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

After half a year of phonecalls, Sandeep and Lakshmi decided to tell their families in order to get engaged. After Sandeep had told his family, who didn't oppose the engagement, a proposal could be made. Although love marriage, the proposal had to be done properly with parents involved. As Sandeep narrates:

> "For my family, it's not a problem. Actually, my joint family doesn't like it. They are conservative. But my core family is quite modern. They agree. So I drive with my mom from Dehli to Goa. By this time, Lakshmi and I have never met. I have seen one photo. But I tell her, whatever you look like, even if you don't have arms and legs, I love you. Her parents finally agree. First they were against it because they are scared they will lose their daughter to an outsider, but since I come to Goa with my mom and propose properly, they see that I'm serious" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

Even if Lakshmi's family approved, her brother decided to investigate about Sandeep in order to find out what character and family background he had, so that he could be sure that his sister didn't marry someone with bad reputation. As Lakshmi and Sandeep explains the occurrence:

> Lakshmi: "My brother went to Dehli to investigate about Sandeep, like detective work. I knew about it so I told Sandeep before, otherwise he wouldn't have known what was going on" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

> Sandeep: "Her brother came to the hotel where I worked. He started asking questions about me, who I was, what I was doing. Then he said that his friend had a sister who wanted to get married to a man from New Dehli. We kept talking and I brought him to my house for tea. He took me to a pub and tried to make me drink, offered me whiskey. I said no. Then he took one whiskey himself and asked me to join. I said no, I don't drink. Then he kept telling me all sorts of untrue things about Lakshmi. For each thing he brought up I just said "I can live with that", or "that I can manage". He couldn't really find any problems with me (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

> Lakshmi: "But still, when he came back he started saying all sorts of negative things about Sandeep, to make me change my mind. But also I said "okey, I don't care, it's fine with me". So finally we could get married" (Interview with Lakshmi

and Sandeep 2013-03-12).

Sandeep and Lakshmi is a clear example of how an individuals' preferences changes when exposed to ideoscapes which were previously not seen as accessible, in this case in the meeting with Samina who has not only adopted many of those traits found in the ideoscapes of love marriage and individualism, she has also experienced to be in a system of subordination and to get married away and, by divorcing, close the gate to the scape of arranged marriage. According to Parker (2005:20)'s view of agency as ways to support one's interests according to the possibilities of the context, for Sandeep and Lakshmi these perceived possibilities transform in the meeting with someone who has herself resisted the tradition of subordination. Even if agency in this case takes shape of resistance to structure, in that Sandeep and Lakshmi choose a love marriage instead of letting their parents choose their partner, in order to increase their relative freedom, in this case to marry each other, they have to follow the customs provided by their context. Sandeep brings his mother to Goa to propose to Lakshmi, so that it is clear that the family is supporting the marriage and that the union is between not only the two individuals but between the other family members as well. Sandeep and Lakshmi also had a big wedding in Lakshmi's native place in Madhya Pradesh where, as she expresses it, "maybe 20 persons from his family came, and 500 from mine!" (Interview with Lakshmi and Sandeep 2013-03-12). The size of the wedding was, in addition to being a way to manifest wealth and prestige, a way to disguise the fact that Sandeep was not from the same caste and community. It was only a small amount of attendants who actually knew who he was – the rest simply assumed that he was a boy from the same caste but from a different community in Madhya Pradesh. In this case, a traditional ritual is used to disguise a modern way of mate selection. This is an example of how different incompatible ideoscapes are merging and transforming into a new landscape in which both the children and their parents start to move. These scapes include both visible and invisible parts, for example Sandeep's caste at the wedding, they include ideas and notions but also material representations of these notions such as the wedding ritual and the brother's "detective work". For Sandeep and Lakshmi, new and old ideoscape change, weaken and transform.

Throughout my interviews on the subject what preferences the individual has and what preferences the family has in the choice of partner, my informants expressed that their families' preferences were diverging from theirs. The ideoscapes that my informants were influenced by and/or moving in were those containing notions of individualism, critical questioning, self-choosen marriages, talking with people from the opposite sex but also

parental support of their marriage. Their parents on the other hand, according to my informants, placed high importance on religious practice, subordination to tradition, superiority based on age and gender, marrying within one's subcaste and living close to one's family. Regarding whose preferences carry authority in the process of partner selection, my informants placed a high value on parental support and nobody expressed the wish to explicitly challenge the structure if this meant a cut-off from their family. Instead, depending on the possibilities of the context, my informants found different ways to navigate in and between incompatible ideoscapes and to support their personal preferences within the frames of parental consent.

6. Discussion

In the globalized world, the ideoscapes in which people move are in transformation and there is a possibility to actively change them. For all my informants, the rapid increase of cultural flows across the globe has put them in direct contact with ideoscapes from liberal traditions such as romantic love, individualism and freedom. My informants' narratives illustrate that there is an ongoing social change in India today, where ideoscapes from liberal traditions start to overlap those from the patriarchal, hierarchal and collectivist tradition. In many cases, especially regarding arranged marriages and spouse selection, this gives rise to conflicts since values, practices and norms from these scapes are impossible to combine.

The results in this study are intended to contribute to a general debate on how cultural norms are selected, rejected and adapted in culturally specific ways depending on the context in which they are used and what conflicts that occur when incompatible ideoscapes are overlapping. The contribution of my study is clear ethnographic descriptions of how this change is actually happening, with young urban Indians and their parents as active agents strengthening, transforming, weakening and rebuilding different ideoscapes. Previous researchers have also seen creative combinations of hegemonic Indian ideals and love marriage, for example Netting (2012) who investigate how young Indians in urban settings create hybrid models of arranged marriage and love marriage. Fuller&Narasimhan (2008) see a transition to companionate marriage where parents and children cooperate to find a suitable partner in mediating different goals. Because of the rapid economic and industrial development since the 1990's, young Indians today have access to mediascapes, technoscapes and ideoscapes that was not the case for their parents when they grew up (Fuller&Narasimhan 2008:750). Throughout my research it became clear that this generation is more mobile not

only geographically but also within these different scapes, where they as active agents navigate in the landscape of ideas, opening up new gates and closing others. With their parents being more stationary within their scapes, and with the superiority that parents have in the Indian hierarchical tradition, the challenge for young Indians today is to navigate in ways that support their interests according to the possibilities of the context that their parents don't explicitly oppose. Throughout my research, this has been done in different ways, both in resistance to and within the structure or both simultaneously.

In the case of Parvati and Rajul, they had an arranged marriage where Parvati navigated in traditional ideoscapes with notions such as letting her parents choose her husband, moving in to her new husband's home and never having an argument with her mother-in-law. This can be seen as subordinating oneself in order to gain relative freedom (Mahmood 2001), since Parvati in order to be accepted by Rajul's family who she described as relatively modern, had to subordinate herself to the role of being a dutiful wife according to their expectations. Once a family member, she gained a higher degree of freedom, as she expressed "for me it is different [from the other women in the community], I don't have much restrictions" (Interview with Parvati 2013-01-27). The traditional Indian ideoscape was combined with Parvati having a profession, Rajul's family didn't ask for dowry and the period after engagement was described as one of romantic love between individuals, creating new, hybrid models of marital ideoscapes.

Venkatesh stayed abroad for three years and during this time he moved in ideoscapes dominated by individualism, free choice and self-development, but the scape of romantic love remained a field spotted on the other side of a closed gate. If Venkatesh had decided to move into a landscape of romantic love, he would have to close the gate behind the scape of arranged marriage which would cut him off from the social relations in that landscape. In viewing agency as occurring within social relations, Venkatesh's possibilities to open and close gates and to actually act inside different ideoscapes are strongly determined by his parents who have the role of "gate-keepers" since they didn't let him in to the ideoscape of romantic love. On the other hand, Venkatesh's parents also acted as "gate-openers" since they gave him the financial support to go abroad and contemplate in new ideoscapes, and he therefore felt that he couldn't use practices within these scapes in a way that was disrespectful to them. "But I am the one who is educated, who got the chance to go abroad, to become broadminded. I can't expect her [his mother] to understand me, because she never had that chance" (Interview with Venkatesh 2013-03-15).

In the case of Radha, the conflict occurred when she adapted norms and practices from non-traditional ideoscapes such as becoming socially mobile and independent and to have many friends, both men and women. These norms and practices came into conflict with traditional ideoscapes and had consequences for how she was viewed by the broader community. Despite the painful situation where her husband was cheating on her with a new girlfriend, divorce was not considered an option. Because of the fear of being ridiculed and gossiped about by her neighbors and to be cut off from her family's social and financial network, which she expected would happen in the case of divorce, she doubted that her relative freedom and satisfaction would increase if she decided to divorce.

Sandeep and Lakshmi found ways to support their interests both within and in resistance to structure, in having a love marriage that was arranged according to a traditional model. Although they fell in love without their parents' involvement, Sandeep brought his mother to Goa to propose in a way that was seen as culturally appropriate, Lakshmi's brother went to Dehli to make sure that Sandeep was not a person that would violate the family's honor and they had a large wedding in Lakshmi's native place in Madhya Pradesh. If Parvati and Rajul experienced romantic love after the arranged marriage, Lakshmi and Sandeep did it the other way around by arranging their love marriage according to traditional patterns, which creates new ideoscapes for both the children and their parents to move in. These are both creative ways to hybridize love marriage and arranged marriage and a way to mediate incompatible norms when ideoscapes are overlapping.

What made me interested in studying the phenomenon of arranged marriage in the first place was that many of the middle-class Indians I had met expressed frustration and suffering in the clash that occurs between personal preferences in the choice of spouse and their families' expectations. Therefore I wanted to contribute to an academic debate regarding the phenomenon to encourage young people in India to reflect upon their situation and also open up for questioning and discussing the issue. The relevance for my research increases with the observation that none of my informants had previous experience in discussing love, marriage or traditional values with their parents, because the practice of questioning was not seen as a traditional value. As Arnav expressed, some topics such as religion and tradition were not a topic for discussion with his parents since they dichotomize the very idea of questioning and religion itself. In many cases, this leaves my informants expecting the worst, and with fear of disappointing their parents they stay in ideoscapes where the norms and practices are compatible with their parents' preferences. This was the case for example for Archana who

broke up with her boyfriend because she didn't think her parents would approve, or Rajul who rejected girls because he thought that loving them would be considered an insult to their parents ability to give them love. Many of my informants expressed the fear their parents have for the potential degradation in the eyes of the broader community, since parents' superiority is a way to maintain family honor. In addition, the parents' fear seemed to have just as much to do with the risk of losing their children if they leave behind values such as respect for parents and religious moral guidelines. Therefore, the fear of how the parents might react was reason enough not to challenge the structure even if most of my informants were not sure of exactly how their parents would react. Evidently in my study, when actually faced with the reality of finding their children in a love marriage, the parental opposition was not always as strong as expected. In the case of Sandeep and Lakshmi, they were both convinced that their parents would never accept anything else than a partner of their choice from the same subcaste and community, something that turned out to be less of a problem when they revealed their romance and also showed respect for traditional patterns, for example how the proposal was made and how the wedding was arranged. This opens a door to a possibility for young Indians today and in the future to mediate between previously incompatible ideoscapes of love marriage and tradition, to find a partner of their own without losing the loyalty for their parents. For future research on the subject of marriages in India, I suggest gathering of deeper ethnographic material, with the researcher spending longer periods of time with their informants than I, given my time frames, had the possibility to do. This would preferably be complemented by quantitative and longitudinal studies, to investigate how the marital ideoscapes in India change and transform over time.

Throughout my research I have been amazed by the creativity that my informants are exercising in hybridizing overlapping ideoscapes from the Indian traditional hegemonic ideal and ideoscapes including individualism and romantic love. The determination to fight for the people they love and their ability to navigate between closed gates and new landscapes of ideas, their patience to subordinate themselves to traditional values in order to achieve future relative freedom and their ability to find new, innovative ways to achieve their goals impress me. Appadurai (2007) argues that linking imagination to hope is at the core of sustainable social change, and in navigating in new ideoscapes my informants can imagine romantic love, individual preferences and freedom of choice as real possibilities. One final example that illustrates this determination and change is one young man I met in Chennai, who had secretly

been seeing his girlfriend for eight years without his parents knowing, and when they now had revealed their romance they were opposed and even threatened by his girlfriend's father:

> "Now my girlfriend works in Chennai, that's why I moved here [from his former job in Uttar Pradesh]. Her family doesn't want to talk with her, they just call her for five minutes once a week to check that she is alright. She feels very lonely so that's why I wanted to find a job to stay where she is. We hope to get married next year. Hopefully her parents will agree. In the worst case, we will just register. I will never give up" (Interview with Ajay 2013-02-28).

With this kind of patience and determination, which is one example out of many that I have encountered throughout my research, I anticipate that the result of this study is just the beginning of a transcending although difficult social change in India. I believe that the stories that have been shared with me is just a start for young urban Indians to find new, clever ways to navigate in this evershifting landscape of ideas, transcend individualistic ideoscapes in culturally specific manners and find innovative ways to handle the conflicts that occur in the clash between incompatible norms, values and cultural practices.

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