

Educational Processes and Ethnicity among Women Hindu Migrants in Portugal

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Introduction

This chapter focuses primarily on Hindu migrant women residing in the metropolitan area of Lisbon.

The Hindu population are mostly settled in the municipal areas of Lisbon and Loures (Santo Antonio dos Cavaleiros, Chelas, Portela de Sacavém, Quinta da Vitória), and a small number in the Porto region.

Almost all of this population migrated to Portugal from Mozambique in the late 1970s, due to the uncertainty surrounding the process of decolonization. Later during the 1990s as a result of the process of family reunification another type of migration emerged directly from India, in particular from the Diu and Gujarat States, as well as from the Central African Republic (Malheiros, 2001).

This chapter aims to prove that the contingencies that have surrounded the Hindu migratory process towards Portuguese territory were historically and sociologically decisive in determining how that population socialized its members, particularly with regard to instigating female education. There is an overall agreement that culture, as well as the socialization process and education, are directly related to the construction of ethnicity. In this case the educational practices of the female Hindu population have had a strong influence both upon the structure of ethnicity and upon the way in which the ethnic minority has integrated. The educative pattern (both formal and informal) in Hindu society differs for both genders, because what is of importance is the utility of education. This implies that school attendance is only necessary when serving some practical purpose. In the case of men what is required is to achieve a socially and economically prestigious profession; whereas women need only learn enough to be a good mother and housewife¹ (Malheiros, 1996; Menon-Sem and Shiva Kumar, 2001). How do the immigrants deal with educational differences within a new social context? Is it necessary to ask if the migration process brings about any change in the concept of utility regarding the procedure of female education? How do they react in contact with other educational systems? Does this have any impact upon their role as a female? How does this population bridge the gap between formal and informal female education? Are the Hindu migrant women manipulated by the patriarchal system as the gatekeepers of tradition within a new cultural context or are they given more licence and self-control?

Methodology

The decision to undertake the study of Hindu women residing in Portugal encountered certain obstacles in obtaining examples. Where were these women? Since this is a heterogeneous group, which is neither confined to specific quarters nor confined to specific neighbourhoods and mostly of Portuguese nationality, because Hindu women are found living in large practically anonymous condominiums, made up of an invisible web of tight neighborhood relationships of the ethnic community (a community that both oversees and supports the life of all) and also because it is a population dispersed across an urban mosaic (and which in most cases is naturalized) it became neither feasible nor practical to carry out quantitative research.

The appeal was therefore to establish a network of female contacts which ranged across the greater Lisbon area. Intimacy has been negotiated slowly.

Encounters were far from easy and contacts were compromised, conducted out of sight amid the small invisibilities of daily life. Hindu women are distant beings. That distance is the result of being confined in large town apartments.

The decision to undertake the study was based upon qualitative research, where the combination of interview and ethnographic work being deemed the best choice.

The research design was conducted through ethnographic research with field work and life story interviews. The life story is a semi structured interview which focuses upon social, educational, career and development factors. This also allows for the exploration of the migratory, residential and relational universe, observing such characteristics as: household composition and the maintenance of network alliances as well as self-help and friendship (Denzin, 2000).

Twenty seven women and ten men participated in the interviews ranging in age from 18 to 75. Four of the women were born in Portugal, one coming directly from India to get married, and the rest from Mozambique. All of the men had lived in Mozambique before migrating to Portugal. The sample was obtained through a snowball method using their social networks. In some cases this meant, given the proximity of kinship

between women, that the interviews were conducted in the presence of other women. This engendered an interaction characterized by rich exchanges of experiences, memories and confessions.

Women in Mozambique: type of education

It was not until the 1930s that Indian women began to migrate to Africa, generating among the local population multiple family businesses, in which the woman would act as an active worker in the shop while simultaneously interacting with the local African population.

The female role slowly began to gain importance in the diaspora, not only in view of its influence upon the adaptation of the families of the *cantoneiros*ⁱⁱ and country merchants, but also when it came to the interaction between Indians and Africans (Ribeiro, 1930; Reis, 1973).

The progressive coming of women from India to the colony and the formation of extensive families took on an unexpected function. Since the stigmatization process had been started a few decades earlier, the formation and fixation of Hindu families as well as the need to preserve the caste system generated close endogamous relationships among the Hindu group (regardless of caste) resulting in seclusion from the Europeans (Castro, 1932; Rita-Ferreira, 1985).

Unlike the Europeans, Indian women learned the local language, habits and medical practices, which they combined with knowledge of popular Hindu (Ayurvedic) medicine occasionally acting as midwives or healers and their knowledge commanded respect and status among the ethnic groups.

Female interaction between Hindus and Africans altered feeding habits, adding new tastes and adapting cooking procedures, thereby increasing the capacity of adaptability between the two groups.

Mitha tells an example of such an important interaction:

In India I knew how to cook nothing but rotli, rotlá, fish and vegetarian food. Later I learned to cook African food, Portuguese food, Indian food, and even mithá (a traditional Indian sweet that is especially eaten during festivities). I learned from my mother-in-law who was already living in Africa and knew how to mix the two cuisines very well. She made the best achar in the whole region [Mitha, 1960].

The feminine presence in the colony stimulated associated and selective education among young Hindus, and it also stressed the socialization of children within the cultural models of Hinduismⁱⁱⁱ.

During the 1940s and 1950s, two private schools belonging to Hindu associations appeared: the Escola da Associação Hindu, located in Beira, which was mainly concerned with elementary education for the Indo-British, and the Escola Bharat Samaj, in Lourenço Marques, which is still open today (despite a short interlude during the civil war) (A.E.P.M., 1957-1970).

The Gujarati Hindus preferred to maintain private schools, ruled and subsidised by the Hindu religious associations, on a par with Portuguese schools, so that their children not only kept in touch with their mother tongue but could also benefit from a set of identity-forming principles, in order that “the culture would not be lost”.

Nevertheless, school attendance varied greatly between the two sexes. Girls studied very little, both in the Portuguese schools and in those belonging to the Hindu associations; their levels of study only rising during the 1960s and 1970s. Such girls usually ceased their education at elementary level.

Gujarati families with higher economic potentials sent their daughters to India after elementary education, placing them in private boarding schools, where they received a form of socialization completely in keeping with the values of Hinduism. They were brought up to be the guardians and transmitters of Hindu traditions, taking into consideration the migratory context within which the needs of adaptability frequently distorted the transmission of the purest sense of dharma.^{iv}

Women are socially prepared from infancy to fulfil their main goal: to become wives and then mothers. Becoming a wife demands a long apprenticeship, which the bridegroom’s family takes into consideration during the proceedings of matrimonial alliance, including such requisites as the familiarity with religious rites and the ability to pass them on.

According to the Hindu conception, no woman will find her place in society without fully adopting her role as a sexual partner, since women are considered as being complementary to their companions (Gosh, 1989; Dhuvaram, 1989).

Hindu tradition states that the main goal of marriage involves religious duty (dharma), progeny (praja) and finally conjugal love (rati). In that sense, marriage is an instrument for attaining the highest expectations in the life of a Hindu. It is a sacrament (samskara) of the greatest importance because only the married man can perform the religious rites correctly, since most of them must be performed by the couple before the sacred fire (agni). But whereas men perform several sacraments during their lives, women are consecrated at one single time – marriage: the event that truly bestows social status upon them. As an organic and mystical form of

complementariness, the union resulting from marriage is considered indissoluble and irrevocable (Ketkar, 1909; Mukherjee, 1978)

The importance of the matrimonial alliance in caste endogamy was so great that some young girls born in Mozambique were sent to India to honour and perpetuate the matrimonial alliances thereby maintaining the identity of cohesion between emigrant and autochthon Hindus. Such young women hardly attended school at all:

I completed the fourth grade in Mozambique and then I married and went to India, to the house of my in-laws, when I was 16 years old [Radha, 1962].

I married at 14. I had been asked to marry since I was 12 and then my mother said that I could marry when I was 14, and so it was. We had no say at all, because that's the way it is in our religion, mother would command and we had to get married. I only attended the first grade [Kirti, 1958].

The young women who studied in India usually stayed there from 9 or 10 years of age until about 18 or 20. They would return to Mozambique at the beginning of adulthood, when they had finished their studies and got engaged by parental agreement, or even after marriage.

Generally speaking, parents were not interested in their daughters studying for many years, simply enough to learn how to read and write and to be able to carry out domestic chores, in order to please their future husbands' families.

While in India they would stay with close relatives or, in the case of wealthier families, in boarding schools, and the prime objective was to prepare the girls to be the vehicles of cultural transmission within a migratory context. As guardians of Hinduism, women would be able to reproduce their maternal culture in Africa, just as they were to do in the second migratory cycle to Portugal.

It was important to stay in India for a few years. There was not much study, but we learned our whole culture, in the place where our parents and forefathers had been born. Afterwards, when we got married, we could hand down that culture to our children [Kasturi, 1946].

The Hindu woman's ideal is to be virtuous and dedicated to her husband, not only as a dogma or ideal set by men, but as a life rule internalized by women (Dhruvarajan, 1989; Biardeau, 1976; Mukherjee, 1978; Fuller, 2004). Although in the present context the *pativrata* is not the ideal model for the past, it still contributes to the self-esteem of women and to increase their prestige and power. Formal education was not a part of the life of Hindu women (in the recent past), this, coupled with them not having the capacity to achieve financial gain, as they did not work, kept them chained to domestic life. Gauri exemplifies the mentality of the Hindu woman through her mother, an immigrant in Mozambique:

My mother did not study and she didn't want to, because she used to say: Why should I study? I have to work at home, so why study? But it is no longer like that now. Who would work away from home 35 years ago? Now many women do, my nieces do because they studied. Even after getting married they can go on working. Nowadays with television everybody knows what goes on in the world, so women no longer have that *pativrata* ideology. Men are not like that any more either. Before women had to obey their orders but now each one has autonomy. For instance, when we have a marriage we bring the whole household together and we decide. If someone wants to travel, we decide everything together [Gauri, 1947].

Moreover, while girls studied only up until the first grades of high school, the education of boys, especially those from Diu, was not overly long either. Hindu boys were socialized in the sense of being secluded from the Europeans; they were educated mainly to become merchants within their half-closed universe, as Devraj states:

I nearly had to take a stand in 1950. But Hindus placed their sons to study near them, so they could control them and ensure that they would not go around with other people. Then there was the monetary issue. People often would not have the monetary capacity to support a son studying away from home, because at home if there is enough food for three, there is also enough for four or five. For that reason boys did not study much [Devraj, 1950].

Educational gaps

After the process of decolonizing Mozambique (in 1975) and particularly during the 1980s, thousands of Hindus migrated to Portugal and scattered communities of Hindus who had previously resided in Mozambique met and interacted, forming cores of interests, depending upon unstable balances and on the reshaping of social classes that took place in Portugal after the revolution.

The Hindus who migrated to Portugal would seek to reconstruct their identity while still reflecting upon the regionalisms, based on the differences in uses, feeding habits and rituals that separate sub castes.

Migration to Portugal brought important changes in the organization of the Hindu association movements and in the role of women in those movements. The territorial spread of the Hindu population in Mozambique changed in Portugal to the forming of mutual knowledge and help networks. Migration to Portugal also led to an increase in the preserving of identity in a more visible form, through the re-foundation of associations, clubs and organizations. These groups were set up within a network promoting ethnic social capital (Putnam, 2000) and their goal was to further socialization as well as to promote social and identity cohesion among their members.

During this second migratory period and because of the changes experienced by large families, Indian women began to initiate, in a more visible and sustained way, a trans-national movement which in turn led to a migratory ebb and flow, with the exchanging of wives, visits and even more extended contacts, in order to keep cultural ties ever present. The social environment in modern Portugal contains a greater risk of identity loss. Hindu girls and boys are now forced to attend Portuguese schools and to complete compulsory scholarships. Contacts with those from other cultures turned cosmopolitan Lisbon into a greater danger than that seen in Mozambique. Hindu families protect themselves from the cultural contamination from “others” by focusing themselves as a group in the neighbourhood or at the temple.

In addition, a Hindu youth may have some Portuguese friends at school, but the network bond is not a strong one. In this particular case the concept of social control is close to Durkheim’s concept of social integration. Durkheim (1897/1951) basically said that the greater integration of an individual into a group, the greater control the group has over the individual. Accordingly ethnicity is a source of social control that remains current through family education. Hindu children speak their native language – Gujarati, and their parents send them to school at the temple to learn and write Gujarati, conceptualize mathematics in Gujarati and also to attend classes of Indian culture and religion.

The children usually attend Portuguese classes in the neighbourhood before commencing secondary education. Although they may be enrolled at the beginning, for the early years of schooling, they do not always remain in school.

Babita recounts an episode which reflects the reality in many families of lower socio-economic status:

I raised three children alone. My husband never helped me either at school or at hospitals, or with enquiries. He didn't even know how old the children were. One day when Joshi was in the 9th grade and Lalli was in the 8th, my husband called me and told me: enough studies! Which grades are they in? Then you don't know? And I told him which grades they were in, but my husband decided that it was time to leave school and go to work. The eldest still finished the 12th grade at night and then gave up [Babita, 45].

However if it were a girl who could drop out between 2nd grade and 3rd grade, she would be the first to abandon the classes, as Kirti states:

When I was 14 I was in the 2nd grade and my mother said to me « You are going to leave school next year, I would prefer you to help me at home rather than do nothing outside». [Kirti, 18]

After a year Kirti became engaged to a young Hindu from the same caste, and never studied again.

The fact is that Hindu boys are encouraged to finish high school, although a lesser number go on to university. But the reduced access to higher education among the Hindu population does not necessarily mean there is an adaptative process with extreme monetary difficulties. The cause lies in the rules laid down in the family habitus, as the stock strategy for a professional path undertaken by male members of the family.

Nakul is the owner of a small grocery business in Santo Antonio. He has 3 children, 2 boys and a girl. In his view:

I would like it if one of my sons were to inherit the business. I've been working so hard to achieve it ...but I don't believe it any more. One of them wants to work at the airport, and the other, well he's still little but has a great talent for informatics. And what about your daughter, he was asked?

- My daughter is very good looking like me. She rules everything in our home, but as you know when she gets married she will live with her in-laws.

Poor families are also more likely to keep girls at home to look after younger siblings or to work in the family business. If a family has to choose between educating a son or a daughter because of financial limitations, typically the son will be chosen.

Education among Hindus is distinguished by caste/class together with gender. Hindus who live in slums have poorer levels of literacy and a difficult path through schooling. Girls in the same circumstances have a propensity to reach lower levels of literacy, marry very young and depend entirely upon their husbands and in-laws.

Valli's narrative is an example of the educational norm in poor Hindu families:

I raised three children alone. My husband never helped me neither at school nor in hospitals, or with queries. He didn't even know what year the children were in.

When Joshi was at the 9th grade and Lalli at 8th, one day my husband called me and told me: enough studies! In which grades year are they? Then you don't know? and told him where grades are, but my husband decided that was the time of leaving school and go to work. The oldest still finished the 12 grade at night and then gave up. THIS IS A DIRECT COPY OF BABITA'S ACCOUNT ON PAGE 11. IS THIS INTENTIONAL?

Bernstein (1975) considers that socially underprivileged families are carriers of a restricted code, i.e. with strong ties to the context and predominance of the collective over the individual. In this case the parents are the genuine holders of authority, and tend to educate their children in order to obey and accept the established order.

On the contrary, parents from higher classes are more flexible and more socially integrated. Following the same line of thought, Kellerhals and Montandon (1991) argue that parents from higher classes value autonomy and curiosity, and prefer children of a voluntary nature, while working class parents have a preference for order, discipline and ... cleanliness.

Although there is no sufficient research on this issue that simultaneously takes into account ethnic diversity, social class and education, certain similarities between the behaviour of the caste and the different classes in the Hindu population may be inferred.

Currently there is a tendency to overlap class and caste; this tends to dilute the statutory differences associated with the castes, especially in migratory contexts. The Hindus of higher castes also belong to higher social classes, or even the middle class, and this group reinforces the importance of maintaining studies in both sexes. Nevertheless the usefulness of a higher education for girls is simply to find an educated and rich husband. The fact is that even when girls have a higher education and they get married they usually stop working to devote their lives to motherhood.

On the other hand, during field work a Luso-Indian female university graduate spoke autonomously about choosing a profession:

I graduated this year and I'm applying for all the jobs that, but I still haven't found any work. But anyway I've decided not to go to work in my parents' shop. [Reema, 1985]

And Hansa, her friend says:

I've decided to open my own business. I've got a degree in management, I've been thinking why not have my own career? My parents do not quite agree, but we live in other times.

More traditional families fear that a young educated girl with professional ambitions may take some risks by opting for problematic solutions such as escaping from the cultural mainstream. So a young woman with superior academic training can be eyed with suspicion. Since she's more free-thinking this denotes a propensity for questioning the rule governing behaviour and socializing which are imposed upon women. In the short term

she will represent a threat to the familiar stability, insofar as she can deny her stridharma (Fuller, 2004; Biardeau, 1981).

Mitter (1995) asserts that a more educated woman will strive for changes in values: promoting the organization of women's right's movements; creating unions; editing magazines and newspapers and taking part in TV and radio programmes as well as denouncing the conditions in which women are victims and are the influences of a patriarchal regime against women's rights.

The author also detects that the representation of women in the mass media is almost always negative and stereotyped, where women have a low self-esteem. As Mitter says:

(...) Even if an increasing minority of working women in big cities are becoming more liberated, the majority still have no economic independence, no conviction of their worth and no acceptable social alternatives. They accept the way things are and learn some survival techniques (...) (1995:135/136)

During the field work it was possible to observe what kinds of survival techniques were developed by those women, particularly those who had little access to formal education.

Without education, without a profession and without the possibility of independence, the only alternative is the manipulation of one's own prison – tradition.

Women from the lowest social strata will peacefully recreate their own socialized models, reinventing tradition in order to readjust the gender roles in a patriarchal family.

Women of higher social classes/castes try to mitigate the influence of tradition by prioritizing roles. The roles of freedom daughters and daughters in-law, allow them an alternative way of life where family relationships have become more egalitarian, but there are too few them.

If we take into account that even those women who find themselves in positions where they are not able to exercise any power (not only political power, but also the power to act for their own ends but also the power to have an education and be free agents) still have alternatives at their disposal, then it can be seen that Hindu women have found a way of becoming free agents, released from their limited range of actions which is their influence on the domestic and semi-domestic front.

Once immigrated appear an opportunity to stress that agency throughout their role as domestic educators and main agents of socialization. In that sense, one might ask whether such women, acting accordingly to a generational hierarchical logic, where the eldest, mothers, mothers- in-law and grandmothers, might be responsible for the ethnicity of the members of the ethnic minority ? On the other hand , the maintenance of an ethicized behaviour , grounded in informal female education close the hindu girls hostage in a highly gender stratified society.

Education and Ethnicity. Why the woman?

During the colonial period the main aim of Portuguese policy was an assimilation model. However the Hindu community in Mozambique withstood acculturation and created a strategy of social encapsulation, keeping strict social rules and religious norms.

Hindus as an ethnic group tend to carry on with their endogamic characteristics, to generate patrilineal networks of parenthood that are restricted within the space of the group, coupled with avoiding consanguine relations with outsiders. Even so, immigrant populations, including those whose integration is defensive or ethnically self-centring, have the capacity to adjust to new realities, attempting to adapt their habits and customs, recreating other habits and customs or reinventing traditions. To use Cohen's expression, "the ethnic group uses traditional rules and ideologies to reinforce their distinguishing features in the context of a contemporary dynamic situation" (Cohen, 1978: 118). Hindus who have immigrated to Portugal show contrasts that are manifest at the levels of religion, language, self-centred sociability, matrimonial patterns characterized by strong endogamy, and residential concentration. Self-centred sociability favours residential concentration, and the networks of relationships of an inter-ethnic nature favour communitarization. Nevertheless, it is important to underline that ethnic conscience is an ambivalent phenomenon, as stressed by Quintino:

Ethnic actors are neither enforced to assimilate the dominant culture nor to develop a double identity, they can have a more expressive primary identity that is fed into the private sphere and a secondary identity that can be used to permanently negotiate with the outside world and that conciliates primordial fragments and circumstantial fragments." (Quintino, 2004a: 65)

Ethnicity combines interests and affective ties. There is, in ethnicity, a visible set of means of identification, such as language, eating habits, music and names. The ethnical identity of a Hindu in Portugal is also marked by differences in class and caste, which mark the social context of those individuals. Their religious background works both as a means of integration and group cohesion (although different groups belonging to as

many religious modalities may exist within one common ethnic group), allowing the individuals to understand that they belong to a common religious and ideological collective: to be a Hindu.

Hindus in Portugal, as well as in other countries where they have established themselves, maintain clearly defined customs and eating habits, despite the slight changes experienced by the need to adapt locally. And such distinct eating habits, ways of dressing, hairstyles, ways of decorating their homes, as well as physical gestures, tastes and cultural interests, constitute the cultural elements of an ethnic belonging, acquired during the process of primary socialization, continue for a lifetime and are mainly kept present by women (Romanucci-Ross and De Vos, 1995).

The products that serve the dietary needs of Hindus are so inherently different that the need to acquire them led to the setting up of specialized firms that import those very goods, as well as a whole set of small ethnic shops that serve the material needs of the group's culture.

With religion, language constitutes one of the major factors of separation and boundary that constitute ethnic identity. In Portugal, the language of the diaspora is Gujarati, which is spoken among the members of each household; it is taught by mothers as the first language and is taught in the existing Hindu associations. This is so that youngsters born in Portugal will not lose the roots of their identity. In the words of one of the teachers:

It is important to teach our children our language so that our culture is not lost.

The strong feeling of identity that comes from linguistic manipulation also produces effects of separating between the group and the outside population. A kind of linguistic isolation is achieved, a relative closing in of the group, whose members speak among themselves under the protection of a kind of barrier when it comes to being understood by "others", especially the Portuguese.

The national language is spoken outside, where boundaries merge. Inside the house the mother tongue predominates, a language from a distant, in some cases never visited, but eternally present, motherland. It is thus assumed, like in Parekh (1998), that the Asian communities are by nature ethnical, that is to say, that they are visibly differentiable, linked together by social ties stemming from shared practices, languages and inter matrimonial habits; they have their own histories, collective memories, geographical origins, world views and ways of social organization. Such ethnic traces separate the groups and make their distinguishing features emblematic (Romanucci-Ross and De Vos and Lola, 1975).

To implant the Hindu identity in the complicated post-colonial process it was necessary to emphasize tradition. In that case a reinvention of the past was developed to serve the interests of the caste and the gender, that is to say, partial interests. It is the older women who manipulate invented tradition, by means that are believed to be strategic, because according to Bond (1994) one of the ways for the manifestation of power in history is "the construction of individual and collective identities (for instance, racial, ethnical and national). Such social construction is part of the process of the invention of traditions" (Bond, 1994: 13).

Throughout interviews and field work it was possible to notice a number of indicators that hierarchically summarize the way older women recreate socializing models of Hinduism by manipulating religious, social and cultural levels. These, as a whole, represent the cultural dimension of ethnicity. The data, which was diverse in range depending upon the importance of the action, reflects a rather uniform position among all of the women who were interviewed, without any noticeable distinctions regarding generation, caste or social class.

From a macro point of view, some theories regarding gender discuss the poor capacity of agency and feminine power among Indian women but from a meso or micro point of view a new female role emerges within this sound migratory context, albeit limited by the patriarchal socializing structure.

Hindu women actively create integration networks by manipulating the rules that govern relationships of both belonging and meaning but their power rests mainly in generational factors and also in life cycle and instrumental roles.

With the exception of a very limited group, the female socializing model weakens or even nullifies their capacity for cultural integration. Most of these women, even the youngest, are relatively confined to exercising the means for adaptation and cultural transmission, which in ever more globalizing societies are emptied of their original meaning. To quote Machado (1992, 2002) the ethnic closure of the Hindu group in one sense exercises a levelling pressure, while also serving to castrate the potentials of feminine agency within the domain of emancipation, whereas in another sense that same strategy also serves to (re)create the imaginary Hindu identity portrayed by older women.

Generally, older women (who came from Mozambique) settle upon the fabric of a social structure they neither dare understand nor question and where the exercise of power mostly occurs, that is among their own gender. In this sense, Hindu society demonstrates similarities to the patrial system of Islamic societies¹, noticed by Lacoste-Dujardin (1993) among Algerian women. Since women are seen by men as being potentially

subversive², the way to exercise an effective control over what they do has been by “privileging and celebrating the maternal function”, because “once they are immobilized and dedicated to the task of procreating the paternal lineage, and are dedicated to raising their children, the mothers are converted to the interests of lineage along a male path, and therefore should no longer be seen as a threat” (Lacoste-Dujardin, 1993: 166).

The Hindu women under study still reproduce the primordial idea of a “feminine nature”, a notion that was quite fashionable during the time when studies on gender relative to the traditional female role began. They live in the urban area of the Lisbon Metropolitan Area, establishing wide relationship networks that cover the city like a net. However, it is a semiclosed net whose contacts are established almost exclusively among their peers. The way of life characterizing the Hindu group is the closest example of the model of encapsulation conceptualized by Hannerz (1980). Although the male group may be seen as having a wider social integration network, since its quotidian life demands frequent contacts with the rest of the population, either by being self-employed on a commercial level, or by working for someone else, the female group, however, demonstrates a tendency for selfcentring, as it is not allowed the fortune of upward professional and individual mobility.

Conclusion

When trying to answer the questions posed at the beginning of this article it can be said that the study has revealed that Hindu women in Portugal are faced with a gap between two types of education.

On the one hand women face an informal education based on socialization subject to the rules imposed upon them as women, which determines what kind of life they must follow, inhibited through the choices of fulfilling the demands of dharma. On the other hand, society offers them the alternative of formal education, professionalism and independence.

Is not an easy choice in some cases, and in others it is not even a choice at all. Still, there are very few young women who complete higher education or even reach intermediate level. The majority work in the family business not receiving any salary or they become housewives after getting married. Although with little formal education some of the women who were studied have opened businesses and have become entrepreneurs, on their husband’s behalf, but still maintain a high capacity of agency and for decision-making within the family business.

They run small shops on their own, while husbands engage in other businesses sometimes extensions of family business, or they are employed in small companies. The Hindu tradition imposed upon women as “captive” into domesticity has tended to decrease, but has not yet finished. There is a fashioning of the ideal woman married, at home, maintaining the secular traditions.

Nevertheless, the economic pressure, the desire to pursue a profession, and an increase in schooling has slowly led to a change in the position and visibility of women. The Hindu woman (mainly the youngest) wants to get a better education, wants to live outside of the neighbourhood and wants to accomplish different socio-cultural professional goals than those of the “imagined” female. Departs very gradually network control exerted by co-ethnic and family.

Notes

ⁱ See the Anuários Estatísticos da Província de Cabo Verde (1932-1970).

ⁱⁱ Cantineiro was an expression used to popularly define those merchants who opened their shops in the woods, near the villages of African populations. The largest number of cantineiros was found among Hindu and Muslim Indians. Despite the negative opinion of Portuguese rulers about the effect that Indians had on commercial traffic, totally contradictory to the economical interests of the State, their influence was extremely important. The presence of such populations was instrumental in diffusing monetary economy among southern populations and influenced spontaneous migratory flows to the new mining centres in South Africa.

The cantineiros sought to establish themselves strategically close to the borders with South Africa, profiting from the huge traffic of African miners returning to their villages.

ⁱⁱⁱ The word Hinduism only entered the English vocabulary during the 17th century, becoming synonymous with those who professed the Hindu religion and had not converted to Islamism. Hinduism is not the translation of a word and in India it still cannot represent a religious union, being rather a form of identity in view of the other ethnic and religious groups that inhabit the same territory. To be Hindu “(...) is not a primordial identity that can be changed nor made infinitely flexible. It is not dependent on will. It is an identity acquired through social practice and constantly negotiated in changing contexts” (Vertovec, 2000: 7). In that sense, Hinduism is a phenomenon of multiple definitions. To be a Hindu does not merely mean belonging affectively to a common religious collective, it constitutes a habitus with implications in all areas of individual and community life.

^{iv} The concept of dharma is associated with the idea of ritual purity. The purity/pollution duality has become a principle that organizes space and social relationships in Indian society, “a principle recognized in the

dharmasastras which sees social ethnicity as the maintenance of order and of limits between groups and genders, governed by degrees of purity and impurity" (Flood, 1996:57).

The hierarchical vision of Indian society recommended a different dharma for each human group and for each sex. Female socialization categorically imposes obedience to the dharma, this being an absolute imperative that cannot be mistaken for divine will or for individual conscience.

Dharma is above all a form of social control which leads towards the cohesion of social groups, in order to maintain a certain (ideal) social order for the whole of man's most important needs. The female dharma expressed in the sacred books also implies a dedication to the artha (made up of material interests, wealth and success in undertakings) and the kama (which includes sensation and the pleasure of the senses).

Kama appears (in the ancient texts) as the feminine svadharma. No woman will find her place in society without fully assuming her role as a sexual companion. Within that domain they are considered as being complementary to their companions. One's dharma affects the other's dharma. If every Hindu man's moral and religious obligation is to fulfil his dharma, then the woman's consists of expressing her service to her husband, as to a god, to whom she must respond in amorous terms.

^v The Prativratya ideology considers that female spiritual salvation is rooted in total devotion and subordination to the husband.

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