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Socio-Cultural Traits and Gender Elements: An Analysis through Indian Diaspora in Germany*

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Abstract: What makes a culture and what are the cultural traits identified by people are important questions to be developed more within diaspora studies. This article proposes a critical inquiry into the ways of defining socio-cultural traits through the discussions with Indian diaspora living in the context of Western culture. It suggests hypothesis that there is a possibility of hybrid cultures between the Eastern and Western. The ontological status of being 'Indian' would be different while living in India and abroad, and the cultural ontology in those subject positions would also vary to produce hybrid cultures. Theories of migration, culture and gender constitute a background and framework in this study. Reflections on cultural identity and cultural traits are obtained in this study through direct interviews with diaspora Indians living in Germany. In this process

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of analyses, the methodology of gender is adopted along with other methods of qualitative research to see how the socio-cultural perspectives change after migration to Western cultures, and how those are different among men and women. The preliminary argument derived in this article is that cultural traits can be traced in aspects of people's daily life, but not only through dominant art forms, literature or historical monuments. It is done with a critical perspective on the existing dominant methods of defining culture. This study has a critic on existing methodologies that are Eurocentric, male-centric and neglecting the individual and mundane experiences of people who live in varied cultural contexts with complex cultural identities.

Key words: Culture, Gender, Migration, Germany, Indian Diaspora, Hybridity

1. Introduction

Cultural integration has always been an issue among people who migrate to foreign cultures. May it be internal migration or international migration, people face cultural conflicts. It is an issue even among Indians that integrate in Western culture, despite having lived in a mix-cultural space like India where there are many regional cultures. We cannot assume that Indians would easily integrate in foreign countries due to their familiarity with living amongst multiple cultures. But still, we can see Indian diaspora all over the globe igniting insightful discussion on intercultural linkages. That doesn't mean the Indians living

abroad feel comfortable with cultural identities, or that they don't think much of cultural traits that bring them stress with complex life situations. This article analyses what defines culture and cultural traits, alongside how cultural traits are identified. Furthermore, it looks at what can be deduced as the traits on which the diaspora people might feel cultural differences, and even conflicts in life abroad. The article achieves this by looking at the data collected from the in-depth interviews and discussions with Indian diaspora in Germany.

The preliminary argument derived in this article is that the cultural traits can also be traced factors constituting the daily life aspects of people, but not only through dominant art forms, literature or historical monuments. It is done with a critical perspective on the existing dominant methods of defining culture by neglecting the individual and mundane experiences of people who live in varied cultural contexts with complex cultural identities. When we make such an attempt, we will get to know what people consider to be culture and how they feel about their cultural identity. It is quite natural that human beings will accumulate many socio-cultural elements into their life, while being exposed to new cultures which were alien to them in their native surroundings. This study attempts to understand such phenomenon by talking to Indian diaspora who are exposed to the Western culture in Germany.

In the process of migration and integration, there are some cultural transactions happening between diasporas and the host societies. It is also obvious that there would be some feelings of gain and loss in cultural aspects when people are exposed to a foreign culture. The diaspora Indians are bothered about their cultural loss, just as Indian people are in their own country. But at the same time, they are imbibing

interesting elements of the Western culture too. Moreover, the interaction between the diaspora and the people in the host country could cause the hosting Western society to inculcate some of the home cultural aspects of diasporas. This is very true with regard to Indian diaspora in most Western countries, due to the cultural richness and diversity that are inherent within Indian society as claimed by the diasporas too. This study provides an understanding on the kind of 'give and take' of socio-cultural traits between Indians and Germans, by analysing perspectives and experiences shared by Indian diaspora living in Germany.

Though the Indian migration to Germany only started around the 1950s, the history of the emergence of the Indian diaspora dates back to ancient time, and the evolution of it is traced through the medieval period. There are references which argue that the ancient Sanskrit texts include references that Indians had large-scale interactions with the countries of the ancient world as early as 2000 BC (Ray 2009). The ethnic composition of the Indian diaspora evolved and expanded from the merchant diaspora in the sixteenth century (Levi 2002: 85). Many dozens of semi-permanent Indian trading colonies existed in Eurasian areas and merchants ventured to travel there, adapting to the changing socio-political situations very easily. According to the references from previous sources they used to live away from home for many years for the purpose of trade. The Indian family enterprises that established trade outside the subcontinent was prevalent even in the thirteenth century. For example, during this period Multanis were widely known as important and dominant in the intermediary merchant class in North India (Levi 2002: 21). Their role in the Indian socio-economic arena and their subsequent role in the diaspora are essential knowledge for

any diaspora study in the modern era. In fact, the massive movement of people from the homeland to other countries increased drastically during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as never before in Indian history. Demographically, overseas Indians form the third largest diaspora, next to the British and the Chinese (Tiwari 2009: 281). But the references mainly consider the Indian diaspora to possess the elements of petit bourgeois, and so it becomes relevant to analyse the socio-cultural, economic and political perspectives of Indian migration. Here, we focus more on the socio-cultural aspects of migration and integration, as the other aspects have been central to earlier migration studies.

Not only the social and cultural, but the religious aspects are also very much relevant in diaspora studies, as religion and culture are closely intertwined. This is particularly true in India, where there are various caste and religious rituals that control the human life. As such, it is mandatory to understand the roles of religion in migrating lives to see the cultural aspects. In the 19th century, Indians of a particular religion and caste who went abroad were obliged to undergo elaborate purification rituals when they returned to their own socio-cultural space defined by religion. Today the problem is identified not as a religious or caste-based issue of loss of ritual purity, but as a loss of culture in general. No matter which religion or caste one belongs, the cultural loss of being Indian is discussed frequently among Indian diaspora. This works in conjunction with their worry on the loss of their regional culture, community culture and the Indian culture in general. The analysis in this article delves into the general cultural aspects followed by Indians as representatives of the culture of the country, rather than community or regional cultures. The borders of nation-state also blur in diaspora studies at times, which

can happen if we conduct an analysis of regional and cross-cultural aspects. Related literature mostly revolves around the explication of the victimhood of diaspora, or historical exploitation of the diaspora and the social constructionist theory of diaspora by postmodernist thinkers such as Cohen (2008). Cohen's theorizations deal with two of the major themes previously differentiating the diasporic idea, namely homeland and ethnic/religious community.

How the diasporas are generally trained to think of themselves as 'the other' in a migrated space, is a question that must be raised while discussing cultural identity and related conflicts. It is far more complicated for migrants from colonial histories, as discussed in detail by scholars such as Stuart Hall (1994). Such studies shed light on the hidden issues of color and race among diasporas, by pointing out the dominant discourses that would alienate the diasporas in a racist space. The kind of severe cultural issues faced by diasporas from Jewish, African or other Asian countries are not visible among Indian diaspora in Germany, although there are some shared experiences of discrimination due to color. Not only color, but language and other ethnic cultural traits could also cause racist discrimination. And thus, the discussion of socio-cultural traits itself brings forth the possibility to discuss the evils that must be eliminated for better situations in diaspora life.

A socio-cultural analysis would give a broadened outlook on India itself if looked upon from the diaspora perspectives. This is because the ontological status of 'the Indian' would be different while living in India and abroad. What kind of reality we would count as existing, while we discuss the entity called 'Indian', would be varying in the socio-cultural and temporal aspects. An inquiry into the aspects of culture and

cultural traits through Indian diaspora living in German society provides an opportunity to identify the cultural identity conflicts that Indians are facing in the Western culture, as well as the conflicts in Indian society. Reflections on such aspects are analysed in this study through empirical evidence from direct discussions with diaspora Indians living in Germany. The analysis evolves from the theoretical underpinnings on migration, culture and gender. Gender analysis becomes mandatory in diaspora studies since the existing literature and methodology of making such knowledge on diasporas were never sensitive towards how the perspectives of women diaspora could be different from that of male migrants.

2. Migration, Culture and Gender: Theoretical Background

Migration of people from their native place to other places would essentially give rise to the thoughts on the meanings of the cultural identities. The construction and reconstruction of cultural identities involves various give and take between the host culture and the migrants' home culture, and that would entail the evolution of a hybrid culture. Hybridity and cultural identity are to be studied through an empirical understanding of the everyday cultural practices and lifestyles of diasporas (Schirmer, Saalman and Kessler 2006). Discussing the possibility of hybridization between Eastern and Western cultures has been done by scholars in sociology, anthropology, and other interdisciplinary fields, too (Karla, Kaur and Hutnyk 2005). The theoretical background for hybridity discussions could only be developed

from various theories of migration, culture and gender that would apply to this study on cultural identities and cultural traits. The issue of ontological security, as raised by Antony Giddens, would revolve around the identification of cultural traits and integration into new cultures. The philosophical understanding on migration is done by debating what exists as culture and how it is being practiced and experienced. In this process of analyses, the methodology of gender is adopted to see how the socio-cultural perspectives are different among men and women, and how it differs after migration and integration to a foreign culture. This study provides a critical feminist theoretical stand point that would raise the issue of diaspora being considered as 'genderless' in the male-centred epistemological enterprise.

In popular migration studies, the shift of population and the changes happening in the economy are generally taken as the features of migration. But migration is very much linked with other relevant global development and cultural change within social systems. The interdisciplinary studies on migration and cultural integration bring forth a deeper level of inquiry into the issue, by asking questions such as how is culture defined and how does culture matter in human existence. The ontic status of a human being is closely intertwined in the ontic status of culture and the social systems developed through that. Both the reasons for and the results of migration would cause introspection on cultures.

Migrants are often the most entrepreneurial and dynamic members of society; historically migration has underpinned economic growth and nation-building and enriched cultures. Migration also presents significant challenges. Some migrants are exploited and their human

rights are abused; integration in destination countries can be difficult; and migration can deprive origin countries of important skills. For all these reasons and more, migration matters. (Koser 2007: 1)

Most of the theories on forms of internal migration such as rural-urban migration, and on international/intercontinental migration revolve around economic aspects. Though there are some arguments that people may migrate for psychological reasons (Oberoi and Manmohan Singh 1983: 25), more studies are needed to prove social, cultural and philosophical reasons in international/intercontinental migration.

Psychological, as well as philosophical aspects, could be read in terms of the migrants' comfort and ontological security in the migrated nation. Their ontological security is founded on the ability to be recognized in the new place (Noble 2005: 107-120). Their adaptation to an environment requires the 'acknowledgement' of other actors in the same environment. Antony Giddens talks about ontological security as the sense of comfort or trust people have in the world and the things people share in life (1990). The trust that they gain from the host country is also decisive in analysing how comfortable and relaxed they are in the new habitus. And being dependent or autonomous has deeper meanings in migration studies, according to some references.

Following Hegel's explanation of the emergence of self-consciousness, there is an argument that the possibility of releasing oneself as autonomous and individuated depends on the development of self-confidence, self-respect and self-esteem. And these could only be obtained inter-subjectively through getting recognition by others whom

we recognize. They are acquired through three domains of relationship-relations of love and friendship (family), legally instituted relations of respect (civil society) and relations of solidarity (the state). (Noble 2005: 107-120)

While discussing Germany and India, the two countries focused on in this study, Germany is generally regarded as a country with a tradition of emigration. In recent times where policy making, human rights and democracy are more visible, international migration has become self-chosen. The self-chosen migration and the presupposed ontological security of women migrants are generally not studied with a gender analysis. By assuming that the women diaspora is dependent on their male partners, their perspectives are not taken into consideration for understanding diaspora. A gender-based look at the migration history shows that the number of female migrants in Europe were higher than men recently, and references show that this is due to a modern trend of feminization of global migration (Andall 1999: 241). This kind of increased migration would be deemed as proof for the kind of ontological security that they experience individually in migrated life. However, it is very evident that it depends on what job they choose to do abroad. Furthermore, there are references that the sexual abuse and exploitation of women are involved in the increased mode of 'maid trade' in migration (Murray 1998: 58-59). This is particularly true of the migration of Indian women to gulf countries as maids. At the same time, there are issues of women diaspora in the Western space that have been raised by scholars like Spivak by mentioning the white-man's burden to save the brown woman from the brown man (Spivak 1999:285).

Studying these aspects of gender analysis becomes relevant since it also becomes closely connected to the analysis of cultures. The way in which women are considered vessels of culture while men are labour power in migration, has been in discussion for such gender analysis (Karla et al. 2005). Gender is constructed and perpetuated through cultural notions. The historical milieu of the gender analysis of cultures essentially derived from early feminism in the West. Feminism as an ideology against the oppression and discrimination of female individuals started taking its course a few centuries ago. But it gained momentum and was only recognized as a theory and movement for social change in the nineteenth century. And it didn't impact much of history writing with due political negligence, but came under the sway of the reformist and anti-colonial movements in Indian context. Anyhow, those theories and actions for women by addressing gender issues, initiated some sort of cultural analysis, too.

If we look at the philosophical implications of feminism, we can see that the modernist trend of binary thinking has affected gender conceptualization as well. As part of the discussions on the relation between gender and culture, the dichotomy of nature vs. culture has been a point of analysis in social sciences. The opposed categories of nature and culture arose as part of a particular historically ideological polemic in eighteenth century Europe and has been an elementary category under the dominant mode of European critical studies. This polemic is one that created further incongruities by defining women as natural and thus superior, but instruments of a society of men and thus subordinate (MacCormack and Strathern 1980). This controversial definition and usage may cause confusion in the context of discussion on

the construction and enunciation of gender. The term culture cognates the belief that human beings are different from animals for being civilized. The idea of being civilized had been considered by various philosophical debates, and the transition from savage life to civilized life has been analysed by cultural anthropologists and social anthropologists. The contentious investigation into the prospect of understanding male-female contrast as a further metaphoric transformation of an allegedly universal nature-culture contrast. Women were pictured as the repository of 'natural laws' and 'natural morality' but at the same time were deemed emotional and passionate, thus necessitating constraints within social boundaries. However, through gender theorization and criticism, even the way of thought based on oppositional categorization itself was questioned to some extent. The main criticism was that the nature-culture dichotomization was basically done to assert a 'difference' and establish the typical binary opposition.

Any link-up between nature and woman is a construct of culture, and the contrasts of raw-cooked or wild-tame also happened in the history of thought. Rousseau was probably the first person who made the opposition between nature and something else. Whether it is society, art or anything else rather than a fact of nature, was all developed later by various other theories according to their point of interest. Rousseau explained how we passed from a state of nature to become beings with language and culture, in his book *Social Contract* (1968). He argues that the natural human becomes corrupted by civilization and cultures. Following Rousseau, Levi-Strauss attributes this transition to our capacity for culture rather than to the manifestations of our culture. From the structuralism of Levi-Strauss, the stimulating argument that 'both

nature and culture are culturally constructed' became a key element to gender theorization (Levi-Strauss 1963, 1977). This new trend in anthropology with the method of social constructionism applied to nature and culture, would give us a more meaningful understanding about the ontological status of human beings in different cultures. A discussion on the construction of culture and gender would be fruitful with some empirical perspectives to understand the diaspora life. This might also lead us to make necessary social change in the host cultures and home cultures. And such discussion might also accelerate the solutions for the issues of diaspora life with policy making by the concerned authorities.

3. Methodology

The methodology adopted in this study is qualitative in nature, and quantitative methodology also entails as this is empirical research. In the social sciences, there are discussions on the possibility of going beyond the binary division of methodologies as qualitative and quantitative, and of viewing the research as done through both ways at different levels (Subrahmanian 2017). The debate focuses on whether there is a necessary connection between method-type and research paradigm that makes the different approaches irreconcilable. Some studies argue that there is a connection, and it is rhetorical (Firestone 1987). It is true to the studies based on gender analysis and the present study follows a participatory research method, for the same reason. An Indian woman asking questions about Indian culture also entails self-reflexivity and intersubjectivity.

The method in which the research was carried out include direct interviews and casual discussions. The fieldwork was done during 2010 and 2011, by meeting individuals from Indian diaspora in Germany. The interviews were conducted in various cities in Germany, selected as per the availability of diaspora Indians who were willing to participate in the study. The cities where the interviewees were available include smaller cities such as Freiburg and the suburbs of Cologne, alongside bigger ones such as Berlin and Frankfurt.

The contacts for interviews and discussions were received through Indian-German society, from some German friends in Freiburg city and at the university where the research was being conducted. Twenty four people were interviewed, though not all were eligible to be included in the analysis in this article. The active discussion sessions from first generation Indians who settled in Germany around 1950s or 1960s provided a substantial amount of information and various perspectives on the topics under study. The population under this study were identified as first generation and second generation. The analysis also coveted to see how differently the concept of culture is explained by the first-generation migrants, and the second generation who are mostly the children of them. The first-generation people in this study are between the age of fifty two and seventy six. The second-generation people included were the children of first generation and were around fifteen to twenty seven years old. Some respondents were ‘people who migrated later’ than the first generation to Germany, and they constituted the age group of thirty to fifty. Though the age group is included to evaluate their experiences of life in Germany, the concept of the age itself is different in different cultures, and age concept also enters into the socio-cultural traits

obtained.

Along with other aspects, the analysis of cultural and social norms is being done with reference to gender to understand the experiences of women and men which are different in content, irrespective of whether they live in the same culture. The analysis on what they think and feel about cultures in the process of migration and integration to lead a diaspora life is an important point of interest in this study. Therefore, the population under analysis constituted both male and female migrants, from which the point of views of female migrants are paid special attention in this article.

4. Socio-Cultural Traits and Diaspora Indians in Germany: An Analysis

The cultural traits in any society could be envisioned as material and mental/conceptual, as some sociologists and anthropologists have explained. Analysis of the data obtained in the field work through intensive discussions with Indian diaspora in Germany provides an example of how people perceive culture after migration. It gives us an idea about how culture is constructed, reconstructed and even deconstructed, while we identify the traits of culture according to people's perspectives. Along with the various sociological, anthropological and philosophical definitions and explanations about what culture is, it is possible to understand the traits by narratives on perspectives and practices of people. And that would obviously give a picture on the ontic status of culture as well as that of diasporas. What exists as culture and how

the existence of diaspora is being regulated through culture, would be embodied by such analysis.

The elements and traits of culture determined by the pre-established theories alongside those that have emerged in this analysis coincided at times, though not fully. The socio-cultural traits identified by the discussions could mainly be divided into concepts on age, dress, food, language, moral codes and mannerisms. The diaspora Indians also thought that the art and literature of the country provided them with a good status in terms of holding a cultural heritage. In a way, this gave them a kind of ontological status or identity, and so they were continuously organising Indian festivals and art performances in their German towns. This has helped them to gain respect in the foreign country too, in spite of their own struggles to integrate in the host culture for getting local acceptance. But when it comes to the issue of cultural integration into the foreign space, the traits that affect them are different on an empirical level. The arts and literature of the native country, which make up the cultural heritage according to the pre-established sociological and historical theories, would not help any migrant to integrate and face everyday life issues. Those traits that would give the diaspora a testing time to attain their ontological security, and traits that assist them to integrate into the new habitus are definitely distinct. And this testing time and process could be still more varied according to the gender identity of the migrant. The following points derived from the analysis of observations and discussions on these elements, such as age, dress, food, language, moral codes and mannerisms, give us a picture of the culture and cultural traits that affect the life of people and the possible ways in which native perspectives and subjective position on culture changes in diaspora lives.

4.1. Age

The prominence given for age and the behavioral norms ascribed for people of different ages are different in the Western culture as far as Indian diaspora is concerned. Addressing the elders by name, even if with the prefix of Mr or Mrs, is not considered proper in Indian culture. If they had a close relationship with them, there would be some similar words like uncle or aunt and the like, to address them. But in Germany, people don't have that practice, and so the Indian diaspora also think it is normal to call people by their names irrespective of any age difference. But this is applied generally while they address Germans, and only partly followed among Indians.

In the observational method it was noticed that Indian diaspora never showed the stereotypical aspects of ageing similar to that of those living in India. For example, most of the first generation seemed to be young in mind and younger in appearance, too. The second generation were much more mature than they would have been in India at their age. The middle-aged people were all discernibly smart and independent. Irrespective of gender, the diaspora people observed the individualistic trends of identity. The women in particular thought of this issue of individuality and lives a different, in a smarter way than they would have been able to in India. As they don't have to encounter gender disparities in Indian culture, the freedom has undoubtedly made them enthusiastic and independent. This is true for most of the first-generation women, too, who migrated to Germany in the 1960s and 70s. Most of them were open-minded on aspects such as love, sex, morality, family, relationships, and so on due to the influence of Western culture. Though the first-generation people had difficulty integrating in such cultural aspects, the people who came later

in the 90s had no issues in this regard, as per their opinion.

4.2. Food

Most of the Indians living in Germany mainly cooked Indian food at home. The participants in this research expressed their interest in maintaining their food habits. They took cultural pride in maintaining their Indian taste. In addition, there are Indian restaurants in most of the German cities for indulging their taste into the host culture. Generally, Germans like Indian food, though they wanted it to be less spicy. Indian food has special features that made even the Indian diaspora unique when compared to others. Although Turkish and Chinese restaurants are common in German cities, Indian cuisine was special according to some accounts. The first generation of migrants from India were not able to obtain the necessary ingredients to prepare Indian food when they migrated. Due to this, they moved away from Indian food habits to European food habits during their first years in Germany during the late 1950s and 60s. After they lived in Germany for many years, it is quite natural that their food habits have changed slightly. But when Asian shops and Indian restaurants were introduced in various cities across Germany, it became possible for them to revive their home cuisine. Nowadays, there is Indian food-stuff available in most German cities in special Indian/Asian shops. Even at present it is not the exact products that they get in the shops and whatever they get is very expensive. However, many Indians manage are always able to prepare some Indian food dishes. They thought they were holding on to their culture through Indian food, although according to some people, Indian cooking becomes tedious and strenuous as they get older.

Food has always caused gender discrimination due to the concepts on preparing and serving it. While talking with Indians in Germany about food in general, the food is cooked by both men and women at home. Holding the cooking responsibility as only a woman's is not much of a practice in diasporic life when they eat non- Indian food. But when they opt to have Indian food, most of the Indian families in Germany generally ascribed the duty to women, as it is done in India. Two of the first-generation men in this study took initiative in cooking and serving, but no middle-aged men seemed to be interested in that. The men who came later to Germany had more of an open mentality and they were not consciously sensitive to gender issues regarding the domestic work. Though they did some work at home for convenience, they were less insightful of gender, as the women who migrated during the same time period. This showed that women who migrated in their middle-age or early thirties were conscious about gender inequalities than the migrant men at their age. All the women with whom the discussions were carried out were conscious about 'women's work at home', which is taken for granted in both Indian and Western cultures. But it was evident that the middle-aged women are still making their men conscious about the gender insensitivity in domestic work. This proves the fact that diaspora women are still facing stress to make their men gender sensitive, though it had been experienced by the first-generation women, too.

The second-generation men in Germany are very independent and they have no issues in feeding themselves and living alone. In fact, they preferred it, and the issues on food preparation had never been a bother for them, unlike the boys of similar age in India. But the first-generation parents worried, just like the Indian parents, about such food aspects

while their sons go out to stay on their own. The second generation on the other hand didn't want to depend upon the parents or wife for their food and accommodation.

4.3. Dress

Dress is also an arena that creates and preserves the cultural identity. At the same time, dress is one of the most important factors which causes gendering in Indian culture. The Indian dress is regarded as very beautiful by many people who talked about it; they include both Germans and Indians in Germany. Indians in Germany like to wear the traditional Indian dress, though it was not practical in the cold climate. Few people expressed the view that Indian clothes were not very convenient (not only because of the climate) though they were very pretty and gave the feel of being decorated. Both men and women liked this feeling of embellishment. But it is conventionally believed that women are more into such feelings, and the growing consumerism subsequently targets them more by giving many different modes of dressing for women, compared to men.

The first-generation Indians in Germany had felt strange about changing the dress pattern when they came to Germany. The women didn't change from their saree (a five-meter cloth wrapped around with a blouse and skirt underneath) at the beginning. But because of the climate and inconvenience, they changed to the Western dress. The people who came later didn't have this issue, but they also preferred wearing Indian dress whenever they got a chance, especially for celebrations. It could also be just out of an aesthetic sense, as the diasporic women may they preferred Indian dress. Since there are no gender concepts

on dress prevailing in Germany very negatively, it is not necessary for Indian women to be bothered about dressing as in India. The reason for wearing the Indian modes of dress in Germany is generally out of aesthetics, but there is also an element of preserving their cultural identity, according to Indians in general. Nevertheless, many Indians were conscious of preserving identity, and they cherished the cultural variety. It is also exemplary to the existence of the concepts on gender in dressing, that made the women feel decorated in Indian dress while going for celebrations. Because it was more of women's dress they felt as decorating though men also wear Indian dress on occasions. It can also be interpreted that when men wear Indian dress it was of cherishing cultural heritage and if women wear it is also about decorating.

4.4. Language

Language as a means of communication has been playing a significant role in the lives of the Indian diaspora in Germany. Indians have many local languages, and it gives them the feel of cultural difference. The same fact might seem to be persuading Indian diaspora to make themselves divided into community groups in Germany as per their local language identity in India. It doesn't mean that they divide themselves into communities based on language for preserving their cultural and regional identity, but it gave them some feeling of ease and connectedness. In a way, the German language was found to be a unifying factor for Indians in Germany. Since most of the first-generation Indians didn't know English well, they found a common language in speaking German. But they all had to learn German to survive in Germany, and most of them who settled were successful in this task. In

most of the discussions, people said that foreigners only get acceptance in Germany if they speak the language. The comments from them showed the role of language in defining the nature and culture of human beings. And they reveal all the meanings on how language becomes a necessity for understanding culture and how it becomes a tool for cultural transactions.

The women who came first and brought their husbands from India, and the women who came as wives of working men, all studied the language faster than the men. The first-generation Indian migrants especially from Kerala were mainly women who came to work as nurses. They went back to Kerala and married there and brought their husbands to Germany. Those women and other women who migrated as dependents to their husbands were all more equipped with German language than the male counterparts. This opinion was shared by both men and women, initiating gender discussion on language use. The issues of gendering through language could not be assessed in the Indian diaspora visibly. The issues around the use of misogynistic language were not mentioned by anybody during the discussions. But the way that language politics plays out in German society is very visible if one consciously examines it that way. There is a process of a conscious learning of the culture along with learning language and vice versa.

4.5. Mannerism

Many Diaspora Indians asserted that they have learned some special sort of manners in Germany. They qualified them as good, which they found lacking in Indian culture. Straight forwardness and punctuality were the main aspects the Indians internalized from German life according to

some people, though others don't hold that opinion. Most of the people who discussed good mannerisms said that punctuality is a necessary trait that should be emulated by Indians from German culture. They complained that people don't get any services at the offices on time in India. People don't make appointments properly, and even if they make it, they don't stick to the time. Minutes and seconds are generally taken for granted in India. If one says for example, 'ten minutes to ten', sometimes it is ok to be considered as ten. And there is no fixed time such as 'ten hour nine minutes' in India, as prevalent in Germany.

The mentality and manners that the diaspora inculcates in them are important to them in other ways too. Some of them, who think deeply and understand about cultural differences, bring these manners home and cause a change among their relatives at home. In a broader sense they cause a change in their own culture and society. Most of them who discussed this aspect are conscious about bringing the good elements of Western culture to their home situations. For example, how they communicated between spouses and how they loved and respected each other, etc., was apparently a good thing that they wanted their relatives in India to take note of. The first-generation people talked about this point explicitly. The people who settled later in Germany were not very particular about this process. They were more open in talking about individual freedom, a concept that they could imbibe from the Western culture. But they also expressed implicitly that it is not necessary to take that culture of individual freedom to their native place, as they thought it won't work as a perspective or practice in India. So, they started to take up a 'divide and deal' method by knowing the differences in cultures. According to them, the cultural transformation in India shouldn't be

necessarily an agenda for the diaspora life. But many people identified that the process is happening, though some didn't identify or aspire to that. Those who aspire to this kind of cultural intervention disclosed crucial points of socio-cultural analysis. The Indian first-generation women who settled in Germany, particularly noted the way that both partners struggle to build their house and life as a primary quality that Indian partners should learn. In India, men generally hold all the money and they can even beat the wife. But in Germany, women are respected by husbands and wife-beating is very rare. This has been noted by many diaspora Indian women. In India, even the working women would not be assured of retaining their identity, integrity and freedom.

In Germany, nobody would provide money for the expenses of others for free. That means, there is no custom that men should/would take care of a woman for the sake of family welfare or status. And the women also won't provide care as an obligational virtue by sacrificing their individual freedom and rights, as they do in Indian culture. Though some of the diaspora thought there are positive elements to this cultural aspect, they also thought sometimes even some old people could get into trouble due to this individuality in life style. Since the care work and economic support etc are not done for the family's sake, and since family break-up due to divorces, it becomes a problem when people become old according to some opinion. In Indian family old people are economically supported by their male children and care work for physically ill people would be don't by the daughters-in law by custom and culture of virtue and obligation. But unlike in India, there are many old age homes for solving this issue. But the more attention is needed still, for especially women who were just home-makers, who would get into wretched

situations after they got divorced when the children grown up. Compared to the situation in India, the children and the parents do not always stay in touch, especially when they grow older or after a family break-up due to the divorce of parents. Old age homes are operating everywhere in a good way, but the Indian diaspora could never accept the attitude of sending their old parents there. But in Germany, there is no question of 'sending', but the old people decide on their own to 'go' to the old age home once they cannot take care of themselves.

The Indian diaspora explicitly expressed their views on family, which is different from the German culture. Although there are some strong relationship bonds between Germans too, the first-generation Indians have anxiety about the easy family break-ups among Germans. People who came later also had this issue in mind. Even the practice in Western culture that the grown-up children going out of the house to live on their own, results in stress in Indian diaspora families. The Indian parents are worried about teenaged children living away, and are worried about the prospect of people having to go to old age homes.

What seemed to be an important point of stress and anxiety for Indian diaspora is the marriage-break up in Western culture though tension of divorce or relationship break-up is not as severe as in Indian culture. In Western culture there is a tendency not to cause such stress by personal or social interventions. The first-generation Indians try to accept such healthy mentality in this host culture, while some in the second-generation have had divorced. The second generation showed a different perspective, in which they take relationships in a different way that suited the German life styles. They are culturally transformed in order to deal with break-up situations naturally. But yet they have to fear a little about

the Indian-type social interventions at least from within their diasporic community in Germany. This aspect of seeing the different modes of man-woman relationship as natural, make the second-generation consciousness a complex one. It is complex in the sense that they face a lot of conflicts, since they get the conservative perspectives on the same topics at home from their Indian parents. However, no perspectives emerged stating the relationship break-ups are more difficult for women than men - which is similar to the idea held in Indian culture.

4.6. Moral codes

Moral codes existing every society, though they differ extensively as per the cultural compositions. Questions such as what should and shouldn't be done are more severe when talking about a man-woman relationship in India. Values and morality in a culture are weighed generally by the laws and flaws regarding sex and relationship affairs. In India, this revolves more around women by regulating the concepts of virginity and chastity. Thus, the moral codes are much different for Indians living in their host country, Germany, but they didn't subscribe to them in a real sense. Most of the first-generation people who participated in this study were very much leading an 'Indian' family life. Only few Indian migrants thought about moral life differently, and lived as single and exercised non-marital cohabitation. And only few were leading mix-married family life and relationships. Divorces and second marriages were not openly discussed as those aspects of life were still seen as a problem. Open discussions about free relationships between men and women outside marriage were very rare. The kind of socio-cultural fear that exists in Indian culture persists with Indians in Germany too to

some degree. For example, they try to hide relationship issues from their diaspora community in Germany, in the same way as they would have in Indian society.

These points reveal that the moral codes are still strong among the Indian diaspora in Germany. But there were controversial comments, from both German and Indian friends who were interviewed casually. And it revealed that there are moral norms in Germany too, though there is freedom. The social fear is less in public displays of affection while in relationships, but in Germany too lovers don't talk about their relationship openly in all cases. This seemed to be a question that should be addressed and discussed more for better social health, whether love in between two people should get social acceptance or not. That means, probably the healthy way to keep normatively unaccepted relationship modes, would be to talk about it openly. Even the topics about pre-marital relationship and extra-marital relationship are not always discussed openly among couples in Germany. Some casual discussions on it revealed that it is not happening in Germany too in most cases. One German woman and an Indian diasporic woman also said it is all very complicated to deal with such emotional affairs. It shows that there is no stipulated norm that could be identified.

The question of opening up the man-woman relationships in a culture that believes in monogamy is very relevant. Having relationships other than marital ones becomes an issue only in such a culture. The Indian culture was developed into the existing form of monogamy after the influence of Victorian moral codes, according to historians. Actually, it becomes important for a sociological study to see if the existing moral codes are healthy or not. Thus, the discussion on the issues of conducting

polygamy and polyandry could be looked into further studies on social health.

The questions such as how the secrecy of a relationship causes ontological tensions, and how it is different in different cultures, are points for philosophical contemplation. The ethical aspects that control the ontic status of an individual living in Indian culture and Western culture are crucial. Being in love-affairs is considered as an expected and ethically right act in Germany, unlike in Indian culture where arranged marriages are the only preferred model. People in Germany can find partners at any age and the break up in relationship doesn't mean any loss of virginity or dignity. Nobody bothers about virginity or morality in the West, as in Indian culture. Some Indians in Germany even expressed that love affairs are more natural than the monogamous marriage. But the ethics involved in dealing with different love affairs was not really discussed by anyone. Although some discussions led to complications involved in dealing with changing relationships among men and women, the mode of ethical positions was not clarified. The argument that could be drawn here is that it is impossible to define and generalize morality even within one cultural system. It is very individual and the ethical standpoints could be different for different people in the same culture, particularly when dealing with man-woman relationships.

But in general, we could see that relations outside of marriage are done fearlessly in German culture, especially the pre-marital ones. People don't interfere in others' personal affairs, and so this has been influencing the diaspora people, too, to change their moral concepts on virginity and chastity. Since they thought gossip culture in Germany pales in comparison to the Indian society, the moral fear is less in degree.

Still, Indians don't conduct non-marital/extra marital relations openly and they try to hide it very much if they do it. But it is evident from some discussions that the diasporic Indians do it clandestinely, just like people do in India. Relationship break-ups are also hidden by Indians to an extent, unlike Germans. Therefore, we can deduce that the moral fear is still prevailing among the first-generation Indians and the Indians who settled later in Germany.

If we look at the thoughts on culture and ethics, there is a gender element to be identified. In the discussion about relationships outside/ other than marriage, more women talked about the issues involved in it. They were more bothered about the related deceptions and torture. But more men talked about the possibilities and pleasure as part of such relationships. The cultural construction of gender prescribes pleasure for masculinity and self-control for femininity in India. Diaspora women were conscious of these types of unwritten moral codes, that need to be addressed more critically to change the society into an egalitarian space with a healthy culture of gender sensitivity.

5. Conclusion

The preliminary argument derived in this article is that cultural traits are also to be traced in factors constituting the aspects of people's daily lives, but not only through dominant art forms, literature or historical monuments. The discussions with Indian diaspora in Germany elicited the fact that cultural traits are to be traced in those factors constituting the aspects of people's daily lives, such as mannerisms, language use,

community feelings, dress codes, food habits, morals, and so on. It is done with a critical perspective on the existing dominant methods of defining culture by neglecting the individual and mundane aspects of culture. In addition, a methodology of gender is adopted to see how the experiences and perspectives of men and women differ while leading a migrated life in the West. Since the dominant migration studies envisaged diaspora as genderless, this study was done with a proposal that the epistemological enterprises on migration and diaspora studies could pursue more on gender analysis. This contributed to the basic objective of this article, which was to make an in-depth discussion on the very existence of humans as male and female in cultures.

The analysis of empirical data on Indian diaspora living in Germany, produces a deeper level of understanding on the cultural ontology of Indian migrants. That means, what exists as culture according to Indian diaspora, would denote the realities about human experiences of cultures in general, as well as about Indian culture in particular. This analysis also provides us with new perspectives on the nature and scope of cultural traits, which constitutes a main inquiry in this article. The discussions and interviews with the diasporas of Indian origin gave the points of food, dress, manners, morals and concepts on age, as some elements with which cultural traits are to be analysed. Gendered identities are also constituting the points of analysis on cultural traits, and this makes the cultural and social norms debatable in both German and Indian contexts. The experiences of women and men are different, irrespective of whether they live in the same culture of the West or East. This is true in the case of Indian diaspora in Germany, as they expressed how the moral codes and family roles haunted them as women of Indian origin by causing

severe cultural identity conflicts.

Cultural conflicts were faced more by first generation Indian diaspora in Germany. And by discussing their perspectives on cultures, we could see the Indian culture and lifestyles are followed more by the first generation. The second generation followed that to some extent, and that was also only due to the compulsions from domestic trainings by Indian parents. The second generation of Indian diaspora population in this study opined they have more tension due to the cultural conflict they experience between family and other social institutions, such as schools or workplace and public places. Their meanings of existence are built more on the German culture, though they have to perform the Indian cultural elements preferred by their parents, too. But the fact that the girls of the second generation were more controlled to inculcate family values and morals and mannerisms, proves the gender elements in the diaspora lives of Indians. Though this might vary from their regional and religious backgrounds of homeland, the first-generation women also opined that Indian women migrants do preserve families for the sake of children.

The analysis on what the diaspora people think and feel of culture in the process of migrant life has been an important point of interest in this study. People of Indian origin who have lived in a Western cultural space for a long time give us new perspectives on the culture we follow in India, especially in terms of gender equality. Furthermore, it brings the identifying factors of good and bad in our culturally-oriented ethical stance, especially in terms of morals and mannerisms. Thus, the need for transition from some socio-cultural habits could be rectified from the perspectives of diaspora Indians. The thoughts shared by first-generation Indian diaspora on the existence of migrants and cultural exegesis, are

clearer as they held experiential knowledge of two oppositional lifestyles. And the cultural critique that they raise on their native culture would be beneficial for improving the culture and social life in India too. This also calls for a hybrid culture, which the diaspora Indians considered a better option.

Along with the critique on the socio-cultural traits in India, the discussion with Indian diaspora in Germany provides an insight into issues of Western culture as well. The way Germans themselves thought about some of the elements of Indian culture reveals the possibility of an Easternization process, alongside an emergence of a hybridized culture. The casual talks that took place between Germans who were friends or spouses to Indians, revealed the reality that they thought the hybrid mode as a possibility of changing lifestyles in a better way. The habitus that the diasporas live in could be of a new ontological status for creating a hybridized socio-cultural space. What exists as culture, and what is the existence of diaspora people and their German counterparts as cohabitators or community comrades, shows the existence of hybrid modes of cultures. The synthesis of various cultural traits becomes a new arena that has to be pursued by social scientists to transform the egalitarian society with more gender sensitive cultures.

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