

‘Arranged marriages’

Dealing with racist and heteronormative discourses in Germany

**Regierung beschließt verschärftes
Zuwanderungsgesetz**
Mi Mrz 28, 2007 4:39 MESZ

Diesen Artikel drucken



Berlin (Reuters) - Mit einer Verschärfung des Zuwanderungsgesetzes will die Bundesregierung eine bessere Integration von Ausländern durchsetzen und Sicherheitsrisiken beseitigen.

Der am Mittwoch beschlossene Gesetzentwurf soll Frauen über eine erschwerte Nachzugsregelung vor Zwangsehen schützen.

IN ANDEREN RUBRIKEN

„... the new law shall protect women from forced marriages by restricting family reunion ...“

Dr. Urmila Goel
Europa-Universität Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder
and University of Bergen
Oslo, 16th April 2007

Structure

1. Research project “The virtual second generation”
2. ‘Indians of the second generation’ talking about ‘arranged marriages’
3. Racist and heteronormative discourses in ‘Germany’
4. Need to deal with these



Urmila Goel

- researcher in cultural and social anthropology
- affiliated to European University Viadrina in Frankfurt/Oder, Germany
- visiting scholar at University of Bergen
- research projects
 - „The virtual second generation“
 - “Second generation Malayalis”
 - “Interdependent lines of difference”

‚Indians of the second generation‘

- my definition:
- have lived, live and will live in ‚Germany‘
 - are ‚Germans‘ in definition of Paul Mecheril
- but
- are marked as ‚Indians‘ in ‚Germany‘
 - ‚Other Germans‘ (Mecheril)
- diverse, for example
 - with two parents from ‚India‘
 - with ‚binational‘ parents
 - adopted from ‚South Asia‘



„The virtual second generation“



- on the internet portal <http://www.theinder.net>
 - founded in the summer of 2000
 - by ‚Indians of the second generation‘
 - for ‚Indians of the second generation‘
 - called the *Indernet*
- research topic
 - functions of this ethnically defined own space
- field research
 - interviews and participant observation

‚Arranged marriage‘ on the *Indernet*

in articles:

... wobei sie sich zunächst männliche Ignoranz und Privilegien zum Trotz zu einem Erfolg wurde - und weswegen sie dennoch oder gerade deshalb immer wieder strafprotestiert wurde. Die Autorin behandelt auch Themen, die in deutschen Medien Schlagzeilen machten wie Mitgiftmorde, Witwenverbrennungen, arrangierte Heiraten oder die so genannte Shah-Bano-Affäre, in der eine Muslimin es wagte, nach ihrer Scheidung Unterhalt zu fordern. Aber auch weniger Bekanntes wie die Homophobie der indischen Gesellschaft und die damit verbundene Ausgrenzung der Betroffenen wird thematisiert.

„... topics, which make headlines in German media, like dowry murders, the burning of widows, arranged marriages or the so called Shah Bano affair ...“

[„Indiens Töchter auf ihrem steinigen Weg“](#) (India’s daughters on their stony path)

Are you "arranged married"? What do you think of it and what do you think of true love?

No, I'm not arranged married. The right way to become happy is to find one's partner by oneself. I, for my part, have met my wife at school and I really love her!

[Interview with Apache Indian](#) 12/2001

Talking about ‚arranged marriages‘



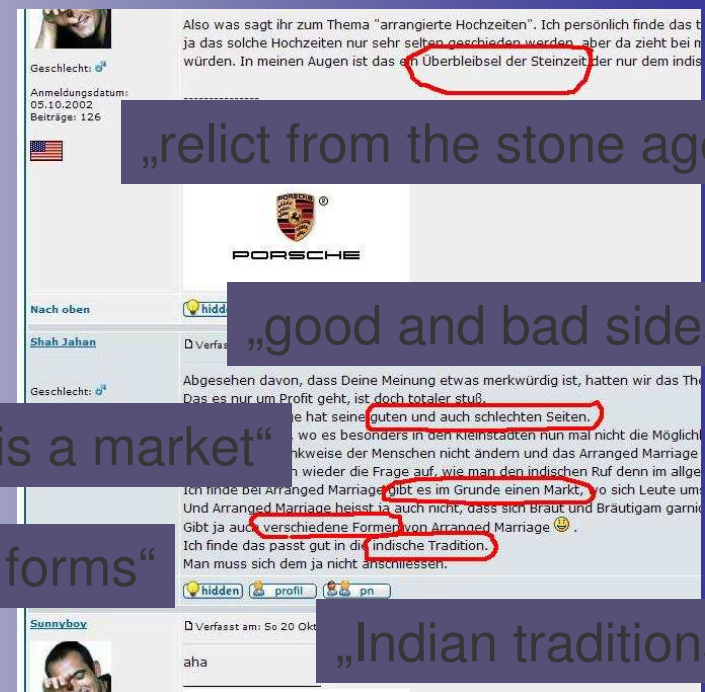
25.01.06 [„Selbstbestimmung bei der Heirat“](#)

- repeated discussions on the *Indernet* forum
- under such headings as
 - 20.10.02 [„Heirat oder Verkuppelung“](#)
 - („Marriage or match making“)
 - 02.01.04 [„Zeitungsartikel ‚Heiratsmarkt in Indien‘“](#)
 - („Newspaper article: Marriage market in India“)
 - 30.05.05 [„arranged marriage vs lovemarriage“](#)
 - 22.05.06 [„Heiratspläne?“](#)
 - („Marriage plans?“)
- also in interviews

Lines of arguments

- react in diverse ways to the topic
 - condemning
 - denying
 - differentiating
 - renaming
 - defending
- countering accusations

20.10.02 „Heirat oder Verkuppelung“



Contextualise discussions in public debates in ‚Germany‘

Regierung beschließt verschärftes Zuwanderungsgesetz

Mi Mrz 28, 2007 4:39 MEZ

Diesen Artikel drucke



„Government passes more
restrictive immigration law“

durchsetzen und Sicherheitsrisiken beseitigen.

Der am Mittwoch beschlossene Gesetzentwurf
soll Frauen über eine erschwerte
Nachzugsregelung vor Zwangsehen schützen.

IN ANDEREN RUBRIKEN



„... until death parts us“

Source: <http://www.zwangsheirat.de/>
(Zwangsheirat = forced marriage)

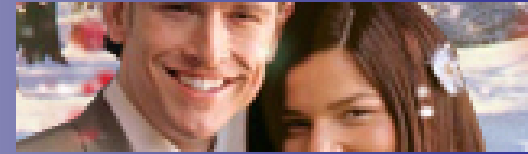
- condemnation of forced marriages
- equated with arranged marriages
- ascribed to ‚foreigners‘ (in particular ‚Muslims‘)
- impact on legislation

Public lines of arguments in ‚Germany‘

- condemnation of ‚arranged marriages‘
- issue of women’s rights
- violation of them based in cultural difference
- the ‚other‘ culture treats women badly
- ‚our‘ culture is more advanced
- ‚we‘ have to save the ‚other‘ woman from the ‚other‘ man
- by excluding them
- linkage of racism and heteronormativity

Racism and heteronormativity

- heteronormative:
 - ‚white German‘: (heterosexual monogamous) love marriage
 - vs. ‚Indian‘: arranged marriage
 - social pressure to conform
 - excluding: queer ways of life
- racism
 - cultural difference ascribed
 - ‚Germany‘: modern = developed
 - vs. ‚India‘: traditional = backward
 - difference naturalised
 - legitimising hierarchical order
 - implemented through exclusion and othering
- interdependent lines of difference



source: hochzeit.de



„children instead of Indians“

Exclusion and degradation

- ‚Indians of the second generation‘
- based in Germany
- denied natio-ethno-cultural belongingness there (Mecheril)
- ascribed ‚Indianness‘
- ‚India‘ portrayed as backward
- need to deal with this external ascription and degradation
- need to find positive self-identification
- in ‘Germany’
- outside ‘Germany’



Develop diverse strategies

- ‘Indians of the second generation’
- use safe space to discuss and negotiate strategies
 - eg. *Indernet*
- position themselves towards negatively connoted supposed ‘Indian’ traditions by
 - condemning
 - denying
 - differentiating
 - renaming
 - defending
- to be able to positively identify with ‘India’

20.10.02 „Heirat oder Verkuppelung“



„Arranged marriage“

- in „Germany“
- for „Indians of the second generation“
- not simply about marriage
- and heteronormative pressure
- but also about being positioned in racist structure
- has to be taken account of
- when analysing their talking about „arranged marriages“

Thank you!

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