

IMAGINING INDIA ONLINE: SECOND-GENERATION INDIANS IN GERMANY

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A positive image of India

I did not like this tone: “We Indians are totally amazing!” It’s a bit like: lets pump some self confidence into the second generation and portray... everything amazing Indians of the first, second, or whatever generation have done.¹

24-year-old Neha, like some other users I interviewed in the course of the research project “*The virtual second generation*,” is rather critical of the image of India created by the internet portal theinder.net. She dislikes the exclusive focus on the outstanding and positive which she already observed in the magazines of first-generation migrants from India in Germany. A closer look at the factors leading to the establishment of the theinder.net shows that this impression is not without cause. Devraj, one of the founders of theinder.net explains:

In the environment where I grew up I could see what image of India people have. The typical view, which is a pure cliché, is: first of all fakir, poverty, IT specialists, Hinduism and, I don’t know, incense, something like that. But this is an image which is not correct. Certainly, these are influences from India which have come here, and thus the image developed. But in many ways I consider this a negative image, and, in particular through the

¹ The interviews were conducted in German as part of the research project “The virtual second generation,” funded by the Volkswagen-Stiftung (for more details see <http://www.urmila.de/forschung>). For this paper I translated the interviews into English and anonymised my interview partners.

The original quote is: “*So ein bisschen gefiel mir dieser Tenor nicht: Wir Inder sind ganz toll! Das ist ein bisschen so: wir pushen der zweiten Generation mal ein bisschen Selbstbewusstsein rein, wir porträtieren mal auf dieser Plattform alles was Inder so in der ersten, zweiten und was weiß ich wievielten Generation Tolles geleistet haben.*”

discussion about the Green Cards, Indians have not really become popular in Germany. [...]here was a lot of scepticism there[...People asked:] do we really need these specialists? In order to show the other side of the image, we established theinder.net [...] to draw a positive image of India.²

The internet portal theinder.net has thus been created to counter the dominant images of India in Germany. The founders wanted and want to represent their ascribed country of 'origin' in a positive way. As Miller and Slater³ have shown in the case of Trinidad, this idealised representation is likely to appear on internet portals established by marginalised groups and is a reaction to the hegemonic and forceful discourses they face. In this article I will describe the images of India created and negotiated on the theinder.net and discuss which functions these fulfil. The analysis is based on methods of social and cultural anthropology and on theories on the construction of social identities⁴ and racism⁵. The study interprets material collected in extensive field studies both on- and offline.

² "Ich sehe immer anhand des Umfelds, in dem ich aufgewachsen bin, was für ein Indienbild die Menschen haben. Die Menschen sagen - diese typische Sicht, ist eigentlich ein pures Klischee, was hier eigentlich herrscht - erstens Fakir, Armut, GreenCardInder und solche Sachen halt. Hinduismus oder so, ich weiß es nicht. Räucherstäbchen, keine Ahnung, so was in die Richtung halt. Das ist einfach ein Bild, dass so nicht stimmt. Ich meine es ist klar, das sind natürlich Einflüsse, die aus Indien hierher gekommen sind, dadurch hat man auch dieses Bild. Aber ich finde in vielerlei Hinsicht einfach ein negatives Bild und besonders auch durch diese GreenCard-Diskussion sind die Inder nicht gerade beliebt geworden in Deutschland. Sind ja auch nicht, sagen wir mal so, es gab ja auch keine Schwemme von IT-Spezialisten jetzt unbedingt, aber es war auch viel Skepsis da, nicht in meinem Umfeld jetzt, aber ich habe auch viel gelesen im Netz. Da war auch, brauchen wir wirklich, brauchen wir tatsächlich diese Spezialisten? Dieses Bild auch von einer anderen Seite darzustellen, das ist so der Grund warum ich oder wir das Indernet gegründet haben oder auch machen wollen. Und dieses Indienbild ist einfach, das schon zu versuchen, das positiv darzustellen."

³ Daniel Miller and Don Slater, *The Internet: An Ethnographic Approach* (Oxford: Berg, 2000).

⁴ On the constructions of social identities see: Richard Jenkins. *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations*. London: Sage, 1997; Anthony Cohen, *The Symbolic Construction of Community*. London: Tavistock Publications, 1985; Fredrik Barth. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries*. Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1969 and Rogers Brubaker. *Ethnicity without Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2004.

⁵ On racism see: Stuart Hall, "Rassismus als ideologischer Diskurs," in *Theorien über Rassismus*, ed. Nora Räthzel (Hamburg: Argument, 2000), 7-16; Robert Miles

A space for the second generation

A click on www.theinder.net takes one to the self-proclaimed “*Indian Online Community*”, which also calls itself “*Germany’s Indian online portal*”. The internet portal, *theinder.net*, was founded by three students in the summer of 2000. The founders were all born and raised in Northern Germany, where even fewer Indians live than in the South⁶. They have known each other since childhood as their Indian parents met regularly at religious functions. The founders had been experimenting with the internet and creating personal websites for some time. In 2000, when the German news was dominated both by the planned introduction of Green Cards to attract foreign IT professionals as well as the conservative counter campaign *Kinder statt Inder* (children instead of Indians), the three decided to merge their websites to create their own *Indernet* (a neologism meaning ‘network of Indians’ which merges the German word for Indians (*Inder*) with *internet*). Their initiative was the right one at the right time, and satisfied the emerging need of a demographically growing group of second-generation Indians. Since then the number of users has grown to many thousands, new editors have joined, old ones have left, the media take notice of the internet portal, and most members of the second generation know it. The portal is by now well established, as evidenced by the number of users and the degree of publicity it has gained. Nonetheless, it is still run on a voluntary basis and is financed through advertisements. The *Indernet* offers both editorial content on India and Indians in Germany as well as interactive elements for online discussions. It is a self-organised

“Bedeutungskonstitution und der Begriff des Rassismus,” in *Theorien über Rassismus*, ed. Nora Räthzel (Hamburg: Argument, 2000), 17-33; Paul Mecheril, *Prekäre Verhältnisse. Über natio-ethno-kulturelle (Mehrfach-)Zugehörigkeiten* (Münster: Waxmann, 2003) and Maureen Maisha, Grada Kilomba, Peggy Piesche and Susan Arndt, eds., *Mythen, Masken, Subjekte: Kritische Weißseinsforschung in Deutschland* (Münster: Unrast, 2005).

⁶ For the history of Indian migration to Germany see: Christiane Brosius and Urmila Goel, eds., *masala.de—Menschen aus Südasien in Deutschland* (Heidelberg: Draupadi Verlag, 2006); Elisabeth Dessai, *Hindus in Deutschland* (Moers: edition aragon, 1993); Jose Punnamparambil, “Die indische Gemeinschaft in Deutschland,” in *Handbuch ethnischer Minderheiten in Deutschland*, ed. BIVS (Berlin: Berliner Institut für Vergleichende Sozialforschung, 1995); Heidemarie Pandey, *Zwei Kulturen—eine Familie: das Beispiel deutsch-indischer Eltern und ihrer Kinder* (Frankfurt/Main: Verlag für Interkulturelle Kommunikation, 1988), as well as <http://www.urmila.de>.

space of second-generation Indians,⁷ a space which allows them to become what they think they really are, as Miller and Slater have described. In this space, the editors and users can negotiate their identity as second-generation Indians, fill this identity with content and represent it.

Second-generation Indians need this virtual space to become what they believe themselves to be since in their daily lives their 'ethnic' identity and belongingness⁸ are constantly questioned. To use Mecheril's terms,⁹ they are Other Germans (*Andere Deutsche*). Mecheril defines Germans independently of citizenship or ancestry as those who were socialised in Germany, have lived, and will live there. But as the Other Germans are considered to deviate from the fictitious ideal image of the Standard-German they are constructed and treated as Others. According to Mecheril, their sense of belonging to more than one national entity does not fit the mainstream views about univocal belongingness to only one.¹⁰ Thus both from the majority society and their parents, who both position themselves as belonging to one country unambiguously, they are considered to be in a precarious situation of unclear identification and are pressured to declare a unique affiliation. Multiple belongingness or hybridity¹¹ are considered abnormal and dangerous. Given the dominant racist and essentialist understanding of German as 'white'¹² and descending from German

⁷ See Urmila Goel, "Fatima and theinder.net—A refuge in virtual space," in *Import Export—Cultural Transfer—India, Germany, Austria*, eds. Angelika Fitz, Merle Kröger, Alexandra Schneider and Dorothee Wenner (Berlin: Parhas Verlag, 2005), 201-207. See also Kathleen Heft and Urmila Goel, *Räume der zweiten Generation: Dokumentation eines Workshops* (Frankfurt/Oder: Viadrina, 2006).

⁸ The term belongingness refers to Mecheril's analysis in *Prekäre Verhältnisse* of the complexities of, and reasons for senses of belonging and denial of belonging, as well as the consequences of the resulting interactions in racist contexts. Belongingness is more than a sense of belonging or an affiliation to some institution. According to Mecheril belongingness can only be established when the individual's sense of belonging is met by acceptance by those to whom the individual feels to belong. In *Prekäre Verhältnisse* Mecheril develops his theory of belongingness and shows how the denial of belongingness is a central experience in the lives of Other Germans.

⁹ Mecheril, *Prekäre Verhältnisse*.

¹⁰ See also Avtar Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora: Contesting Identities* (London: Routledge, 1996).

¹¹ For a development of the concept of hybridity, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York; London: Routledge, 1994). See also Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, eds., *Debating Cultural Hybridity: Multicultural Identities and the Politics of Anti-Racism* (London; New Jersey: Zed Books, 1997).

¹² Based on Critical Whiteness Studies (see Eggers et al, *Mythen*) I use the term 'white' to mark the normally unmarked hegemonic position in a racist system.

blood,¹³ second-generation Indians will not be considered Germans by the majority. They are rather defined as in essence Indians, who by ancestry are Others. Because of this dominant ascription and consequent self-definition,¹⁴ I use the terms second-generation Indians as well as Other Germans for them. The former term is a self-description while the latter is an analytical category.

Terminology is a major problem in this article. Having chosen to write about the category of second-generation Indians in a geographical space referred to as Germany I am caught in a terminology which constantly refers to nations as if they existed unambiguously, even though I set out to question these notions. I refer to Indians, Germans, India and Germany, although I question the meaningfulness of each of these terms, argue that they are understood in many different ways and that their inherent ambiguities are the basis of exclusion and othering. Every time I use one of the terms I should mention that I use the term only as a social construction, which is only seemingly unambiguous. Neglecting to do so lets me and the reader slip into the norm of considering the terms meaningful. But language and style conventions prevent me from marking each term, for example by inverted commas. I thus have to rely on the readers to remember throughout the text the ambiguity of the terms.

Other Germans experience in their daily lives constantly the dominant belief in essential national identities, which are considered to be genetically inherited. Battaglia has analysed how they are faced with seemingly innocent questions which are based on a belief in unambiguous national belongingness.¹⁵ As Ferreira argues, these questions are rooted in racist structures.¹⁶ When Other Germans are asked where they come from in most cases the only accepted answer is the country from which their ancestors are believed to have come. When they have to answer that they do not know the language of their 'foreign' parent, they are pitied. It is presumed that they feel allegiance to the other country and they are expected to know everything about it. Whether in school, at work, or

¹³ See also Eggers et al, *Mythen*.

¹⁴ See also Richard Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity: Arguments and Explorations* (London: Sage, 1997).

¹⁵ Santina Battaglia, "Interaktive Konstruktion von Fremdheit. Alltagskommunikation von menschen binationaler Abstammung," in *Journal für Psychologie* 3.3 (1995): 16-23.

¹⁶ Grada Ferreira, "Die Kolonisierung des Selbst—der Platz des Schwarzen," in *Spricht die Subalterne deutsch? Migration und postkoloniale Kritik*, eds. Hito Steyerl and Encarnacion Gutierrez Rodriguez (Münster: Unrast Verlag, 146-165), 146-165.

among friends, second-generation Indians are considered experts on India. They constantly need to give information about the caste system, the bindhi or spirituality without regard for whether or not their Indian parent is actually Hindu or for whether they have at all contact to an Indian parent. This function as an expert, however, is very difficult for the Other Germans to fulfil. Like those who ask them, they have been socialised in Germany; they have studied and consumed media there. Some have never travelled to India, and most know almost only the home town of their Indian parent. To admit this lack of knowledge vis-à-vis 'white' Germans is, however, an act of degradation. Thus and because they know more about India than most of the other Germans many second-generation Indians give information about India and start to believe themselves that they are experts. An example for this is also the *Indernet*. The editors have assumed the role of experts on India: they publish articles, answer inquiries, believe in their competence to do so, and because of their ascribed ancestry, are considered competent in this field.

It is only natural that second-generation Indians wish to represent a positive image of India. They are identified with India by the others and thus want this to be something 'positive'. The external categorisation as Indians is for most so powerful that they internalise it in the transactional process of 'ethnic' identity construction.¹⁷ They imagine themselves as part of an Indian community and contribute to imagining India. Doing so they react to the dominant images of India with which they are faced in Germany.

India as the Other

Ok, my interest in India is founded on a three-part story. First, you hear that in India the cows roam the streets. This sounds like... well I said it before... At such an age, when you are told that in the Orient there are flying carpets and in India cows roam the streets. And so at first you think: wow, must be a crazy thing.¹⁸

Rasmus, a 'white' German user of the *Indernet* in his late twenties, thus explains his interest in India. The cow is one of the central images and

¹⁷ See Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity*.

¹⁸ "Also gut, das Interesse an Indien basiert auf so einer dreistöckigen Geschichte. Erstens hört man so, dass in Indien die Kühe rumlaufen, das hört sich so an, ja, das habe ich früher gesagt, in so einem Alter, wo man gesagt bekommt, im Orient gibt es fliegende Teppiche und so und in Indien laufen die Kühe rum. Da denkt man erst mal: jojo. So, muss ja schon ein verrücktes Ding sein."

exotic markers of India in Germany. It signifies the Other, the incomprehensible, a lack of order, backwardness, and also the spiritual. Second-generation Indians are often asked about it, about its holiness, and about whether cows really roam the streets. In constructing a difference between the West and the Orient, the organised and the unorganised, the civilised and the natural, the rational and the spiritual,¹⁹ the image of the cow is also a symbol for the yearning of many 'white' Germans for the Other, the supposedly warmer and more easy-going Indians. They imagine India to be a place where they can find values and emotions they are missing in Germany. Rasmus is thus both disgusted and fascinated by (his image of) India.

Jule, another 'white' German user of the *Indernet* who is just finishing her schooling articulates this fascination with the Other in a more detailed account and thus displays her implicit reproduction of racist images about the Other. In her view, Indians have a different mentality. She considers them as more 'traditional' and conservative which, in her perspective, can lead to conflicts with supposedly more progressive Germans like herself. But at the same time she says, "*on the other hand, I think it is also nice. The family counts more. And they are very, very warm, very kind. Any Indian to whom I go would immediately give me the last food he has, immediately, very hospitable ...*"²⁰ She cherishes these perceived values and warmth and generalises them for India. She is also fascinated by the ascribed fact that "*all Indians are more attached to their country than many, many Germans are*"²¹. Positioning herself implicitly as the objective 'white' observer within the norm,²² she also criticises a tendency to portray India too positively: "*... in my boyfriend's case it was also like this. Concerning poverty he said, 'we are not at all that poor,' but one certainly knows how many, many thousand poor people there are in India.*"²³ In this question she considers the second-generation Indians in Germany to be more objective: "*Maybe—it is always difficult to judge—*

¹⁹ See also Edward Said, *Orientalism* (New York: Vintage, 1978) and Eggers et al, *Mythen*.

²⁰ "*Andererseits denke ich, na gut das ist aber eben auch schön, die Familie zählt ein bisschen mehr und so. Und da sind sie auch sehr sehr warm, sehr freundlich. Also jeder Inder, zu dem ich hingehe, die würden mir sofort das letzte Essen geben, das sie haben, sofort, sehr gastfreundlich.*"

²¹ "*ist jeder Inder mehr verbunden mit seinem Land als viele viele Deutsche.*"

²² See also Eggers et al, *Mythen*.

²³ "*Also bei meinem Freund war das halt auch so, dass der eher gesagt hat ja Armut, wir sind gar nicht so arm, dabei weiß man ja wirklich wie viele viele Tausend Arme es in Indien gibt*"

but maybe some of those who can judge India the best are those who live in Germany and have the whole culture from India. They are maybe the most objective. I can never be as emphatic as I have not lived there, and the Indians from there are anyways a bit partial."²⁴

These two random images of India articulated by 'white' Germans illustrate the nature of the images the second-generation Indians are faced with in Germany. Dominant among them is a construction of India as less technologically developed, less organised, more in tune with nature, more 'traditional,' more spiritual, and based on 'values.' In contrast to typical 'white' images of Africa,²⁵ these orientalist images are not obviously connoted negatively. Instead, they are ambiguous, and display both a longing and a distaste for India. Common to them, however, is inherent othering. These images construct India as fundamentally different from Germany. They do so in a hierarchical and hegemonic structure, where Germany is the unmarked norm²⁶, India deviates from it and thus is marked as the Other. The Indians, also those of the second generation, are identified with this image of India and are thus placed in the same hierarchical and hegemonic relationship to Germans as India is to Germany. The Other Germans are thus not only denied their belongingness to Germany but also are placed in an inferior position. This forceful categorisation and positioning has to be dealt with by the second generation; they cannot ignore it and must position themselves in relation to it. Like Mecheril, Jenkins²⁷ has argued that this othering experience can influence the 'ethnic' self-definition of the second generation in several ways depending on the particular circumstances. In extreme cases, the external categorisations can either be fully internalised or totally

²⁴ "Vielleicht sind die, so zu urteilen ist immer schwierig, aber vielleicht sind welche von denen, die Indien vielleicht noch mit am besten beurteilen können, die in Deutschland gelebt haben und haben die ganze Kultur von Indien. Die sind vielleicht am objektivsten. Ich kann mich nie so reindenken, weil ich nie dort gelebt habe, und die Inder von dort sind sowieso ein bisschen voreingenommen."

²⁵ See also Susan Arndt, ed., *AfrikaBilder: Studien zu Rassismus in Deutschland* (Münster: Unrast, 2001).

²⁶ For discussions of the unmarked 'white' norm see Critical Whiteness Studies. In Germany, see especially Eggers et al, *Mythen*.

²⁷ See Jenkins, *Rethinking Ethnicity* and also Paul Mecheril, "Die Lebenssituation Anderer Deutscher. Eine Annäherung in dreizehn thematischen Schritten," in *Andere Deutsche: Zur Lebenssituation von Menschen multiethnischer und multikultureller Herkunft*, eds. Paul Mecheril and Thomas Teo (Berlin: Dietz, 1994), 57-94.

rejected.²⁸ This can be seen in the context of the *Indernet*. Some of the dominant images of India in Germany are rejected, others are adopted, and yet others are adapted.

The *Indernet's* nationalism

The internet portal, the *Indernet*, allows the (re)imagining of India in many different ways, in diverse subspaces, and by several actors. The design and the concept of the internet portal, as well as the articles written by editors and users, display and construct images of India. In the interactive elements the users negotiate their images in a framework provided by the editors and adapted by the users themselves. The *Indernet* thus does not present only one purposefully constructed image, but rather provides a space where several images are continually constructed and changed. These images interact with each other, alternately reinforcing and contradicting each other.

The basic framework of the *Indernet* was developed in the summer of 2000. Although there have been changes in the design, the concept, and the elements, the basic idea of the internet portal and the images of India remain. The domain name, *theinder.net*, refers to a network of Indians. The logo is a stylised Indian flag, and the design uses images from India and the Devanagari script. Already in 2001, a special report on India, “The discovery of India,” was put online (and has not been updated since). It provides information about the Republic of India focussing on national and nationalist symbols. Similarly, most of the editorial content deals with India in the borders of the Republic. There is hardly any information about other South Asian countries. India’s diversity is acknowledged but no focus is put on it. The articles rather refer to national topics or those of interest in international relations. The *Indernet* thus links itself to the geographically and politically well-defined Republic of India and its symbols of nationhood. But despite this focus on the Republic, the founders understand India as a culture which encompasses the whole of South Asia. Devraj explains: “*I would say we need to define India in two ways. On the one hand, as for the facts, it is the country in its clearly*

²⁸ See also Mareile Paske, “*Andere Deutsche*”—*Strategien des Umgangs mit Rassismuserfahrungen* (Frankfurt/Oder: Viadrina, 2006).

³⁰ “*Ich würde sagen Indien ist, ja man kommt aber nicht darum herum das auf zwei Arten zu definieren. Einmal ist es tatsächlich rein, jetzt von den Fakten her, ist es der Kontinent, nicht der Kontinent, sondern das Land und mit dem klar definierten Grenzen und so weiter und sofort. Aber rein kulturell betrachtet ist es der Subkontinent.*”

defined borders, etc. But from a cultural perspective it is the whole subcontinent."³⁰

This view is shared by Deepak, who goes even further than his co-founder Devraj in the interview and displays a clear allegiance to Hindu nationalist ideology. When I ask him about his closeness to Hindu nationalism, he distances himself from the violence but not from the ideology. He argues: *"I can, for example, support the argument that the Indian culture is a Hindu culture. But this does not restrict other religions, because, for example, an Indian Moslem is culturally in fact a Hindu, but his religion is Islam."*³¹

Deepak influences the images of India conveyed by the *Indernet* not only through the sanskritised Hindi he uses, but also in articles and anonymous postings as a user. In these writings he discusses issues like Hindu India or Hindi as the national language. Nonetheless, the editors claim to have a politically neutral approach. As far as my observation goes, this neutrality, however, shows itself primarily in the fact that no party political statements are made and no political censorship is pursued. Both in articles and in the interactive elements, contributions which reproduce Hindu nationalist and communalist ideologies are tolerated. For example, a thread about the failing success of the BJP in Kerala starts with:

Hello, at the moment there are elections in some Indian states. What I find sad and surprising is that in Kerala the BJP does not succeed at all. Why is this so? Aren't the majority of the population in Kerala Hindus? Are Hindus in Kerala suppressed by Muslims and Christians? I once heard that more than anywhere else the South of India is a safe haven for Muslim terrorists. They commit terrorist attacks in Kashmir and then flee to the South, where they live well and safely. I am not against Kerala, but I consider the results of the elections a bit fishy. Everywhere else the BJP is in Parliament, but not in Kerala. What a shame!³²

³¹ *"Kann ich zum Beispiel vertreten, dass eben die indische Kultur eine hinduistische Kultur ist, dass das aber eigentlich andere Religionen nicht einschränkt, weil zum Beispiel auch ein indischer Moslem kulturell gesehen quasi ein Hindu ist, aber seine Religion ist halt der Islam sozusagen."*

³² *"Hallo, zur Zeit sind Wahlen in manchen Bundesländer in Indien. Was ich traurig und überraschend finde ist, dass in Kerala die BJP überhaupt nicht reinkommt. Wieso ist das so? In Kerala leben doch auch noch am meisten Hindus? Werden in Kerala die Hindus unterdrückt von den Muslims und Christen? Ich hab mal gehört, dass vor allem der Süden von Indien immer ein sicherer Ort für muslimische Terroristen ist. Die machen Attentate in Kashmir und flüchten dann ganz in den Süden und leben dort ganz gut und geschützt. Ich hab nix gegen*

While several users have argued against this poster's views, he has not been prevented from continuing his extremist posts. The moderators do not intervene, even though I have asked them to do so. The dangers of this apolitical approach, which by not questioning an extreme ideology in fact supports it, were discussed by participants from India at a conference on cultural transfer between India and Germany.³³ The Hindu nationalist subtext of the internet portal is neither noticed nor reflected upon by most editors and users. In most interviews, my interview partners deny any such tendencies. In fact some have criticised me for claiming its existence and consider this a misrepresentation of the internet portal. I concur that the *Indernet* is not conceived as a space promoting Hindu nationalism, and that most of the editors and users would distance themselves from any such overt attempt. But my impression is that most editors and users are not trained in critical analysis of nationalist rhetoric and lack critical background information about Hindu nationalism. Thus it is difficult for them to discover aspects of Hindu nationalist ideology behind nationalist articulations. Nationalism is something normal and positive for them, something they are pressured to adhere to by the dominant discourse on 'ethnic' identity, and something they long for in their search for belongingness. Hindu nationalism at first glance makes them some attractive offers. They accept these without knowing and reflecting upon the extremist ideology from which they stem. Thus Hindu nationalism is reproduced and gains supporters without conscious propagation by the majority. When discussing with the MA student Savitri about Hindu nationalism on the *Indernet* she said:

It is possible that somebody with certain tendencies can be convinced without noticing. Frankly, in my case this would be difficult. I did read the posts and thought them interesting, but with me it is difficult, because [...] I always hold against such positions, because India cannot be equal to Hinduism.³⁴

Kerala Leute, aber ich find die Ergebnisse von den Wahlen halt bisschen komisch. Überall sonst ist die BJP im Parlament nur in Kerala nicht. Schade!"

³³ See Urmila Goel, "Das Indernet und die indische Community—Diskussionen bei Import Export am 12.08.05 in Berlin," in DIG Mitteilungsblatt 3 (2005): 17-18. Also available online (http://www.indien-netzwerk.de/navigation/ereignisse/artikel/import-export_05_nb.htm).

³⁴"*Es ist, glaube ich, insofern möglich, wenn jemand schon so eine gewisse Neigung dahin hat, ihn dann davon zu überzeugen, dass er es gar nicht mitbekommt. Bei mir wäre es ehrlich gesagt schwierig, ich hab mir zwar die Beiträge immer wieder durchgelesen, fand sie auch interessant, aber bei mir ist es schwierig, weil ich eben von vornherein eine Einstellung habe die so etwas*

Imagining a modern India

The design of the *Indernet* not only refers to nationalist ideas of India but also can be described as ‘modern’, ‘young’ and ‘dynamic’. Most of my interview partners praised it as professional and attractive; it thus appeals to the target group. Many users long for such an image of an ‘advanced’ and ‘energetic’ country.

Maya, a user from Switzerland who works in an international company, criticised in her interview the idealised view of India held by the first generation, an India which she believes does not exist anymore. In her view, the *Indernet* provides a space to portray the ‘actual’, the ‘new’ India. It provides and develops images of it in the different editorial parts of the internet portal. The news and media section deals primarily with India as an actor in world politics, the business section focuses on high technology and technical progress, and the entertainment section concentrates on the popular Bollywood industry. This fascination with Bollywood is the closest the *Indernet* comes to dealing with issues relating to the everyday lives of the majority of the Indian population. There is otherwise little information about India beyond the metropolitan cities and outside the high tech industries. The site thus offers few representations of the sort that dominate ‘white’ German images of India, in particular about the images of poverty Jule refers to in her interview. Although, like many others, Maya wants images of a progressive India to be represented on the *Indernet*, she at the same time sees this gap in coverage: “*What I am missing on the Indernet is a clear political positioning, taking a clear stand on certain issues. I mean, there are a lot of things in India which could be improved. One should maybe report more on this. Okay, we do employ many Indians from India here. But the whole economic growth which we have in India is relevant only for a small percentage of the population.*”³⁵

Nonetheless, critical articles about social or political problems in India are almost totally lacking. The few contributions dealing with the less

Wobei ich mich immer gegen so welche Positionen verwehre, weil Indien nicht gleich Hinduismus stehen kann.”

³⁵ “*Was mir vielleicht ein bisschen fehlt, ist doch eine klare politische Stellungnahme oder auch klar Position zu beziehen zu gewissen Themen. Ich meine, es gibt ja nach wie vor in Indien viele Sachen, die verbesserungswürdig sind, und dass man da vielleicht mehr drüber berichtet. Okay, wir holen jetzt zwar selber viele Inder aus Indien hierher, aber das ganze Wirtschaftswachstum, das wir in Indien haben, betrifft doch nur einen geringen Prozentteil der Bevölkerung.*”

glamorous and advanced aspects of India instead highlight a particular achievement of someone or something considered as a curiosity from a Western perspective. They thus focus on the “*amazing*” and outstanding as Neha, quoted above, has argued. Such articles can be found particularly in the section entitled “women.” Here the ‘outstanding’ achievements of Indian women like Kiran Bedi are portrayed. This seems to be partly an attempt to counter the dominant ‘white’ German image of the suppressed Indian woman. The image of the beautiful Indian woman, on the other hand, is not rejected but rather supported on the *Indernet*. Many visual images are based on this, depicting long dark hair, a bindhi, revealing clothing, and a seductive gaze. In the women’s section (rather than in entertainment or culture and society) there are reports about Indian dancers, another positively connoted ‘white’ German image of Indian women. There is a subsection on fashion, which for example contains an article about the *sari*, something that fascinates many ‘white’ German women. These typical features of the women’s sections of magazines are, however, not what the editor in charge wants to focus on: “*I said from the beginning, I will not publish recipes, to make this clear, that was the first thing I said. And I will not establish a fashion corner for some Indian dolly-birds. ... I said one can portray Indian personalities, female Indian personalities, and reports on the women’s movement, about organisations which are active in India or here.*”³⁶ While presenting a positive image of India, she thus did not want to reproduce the typical gender roles in both German and Indian society. Her attempt, however, is only partly successful as the *Indernet* as a whole is heteronormative.³⁷ In the women forum section this is even more obvious: here sexist and homophobic remarks are found regularly. A new user complained about the focus on “*hair oil and bangles*” in the thread “*what about feminism?!*”³⁸ Her demand for feminist discussions was answered by rude sexist attacks using

³⁶ “*Ich hab dann auch von Anfang an gesagt, also ich werd hier keine Kochrezepte veröffentlichen, damit das schon mal klar ist. Also das war auch das erste, was ich gesagt habe, also denkt bloß nicht daran. Und ich werd hier auch keine Modeecke für irgendwelche indischen Püppchen einrichten. ... Dann hatte ich auch gesagt, indische Persönlichkeiten, weibliche indische Persönlichkeiten kann man mal darstellen, ja und dann aktuelle Berichte von Frauenbewegungen, von Organisationen, die in Indien oder hier sind.*”

³⁷ See Urmila Goel, “‘Kinder statt Inder’—Normen, Grenzen und das Indernet,” in: *Jugend, Zugehörigkeit und Migration - Subjektpositionierung im Kontext von Jugendkultur, Ethnizitäts- und Geschlechterkonstruktionen*, eds. Thomas Geisen and Christine Riegel (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, 2007): 163-181.

³⁸ The original quote: “*Haaröl und Bangles*”

vulgar language, reproducing heteronormative images, and insulting the poster.

Negotiating India

The *Indernet's* editors can influence the discussions in the forum only to a limited extent. They provide the framework, which is then adapted by the users to fit their needs. While at the beginning the editors based the structure of the forum on that of the editorial sections, they have by now changed it to mirror the actual usage. Most importantly they added a subforum for small talk, which has by far the most postings. In the early days of the *Indernet*, the space for this informal chatting was the guestbook. But this was closed years ago because insulting postings—known in internet terminology as flaming—were becoming unmanageable for the moderating editors. Once in a while they also moderated the forums, deleted a posting, relocated a thread, and demanded more serious discussions. But in recent years there have been periods of several months where no indication of any attempt to moderate has been evident. This has since changed somewhat. Since the restructuring of the forum in the spring of 2006, there are moderators who occasionally censor postings. But so far this seems to happen rather haphazardly. In my observation, primarily personal insults are targeted. I once complained about a sexist thread, which was then deleted. Other sexist threads like the one referred to above stayed online. My criticism of a Hindu nationalist thread did not even receive a reply.

In the forum discussions one can identify the same longing for a positive image of India which is defined through progress or technology as in the articles. Like the editors, the users reproduce the values inherent in racist discourses. Attributes associated with the West—e.g. modernity and civilisation—are considered positive while attributes associated with images of the Orient—e.g. traditional and linked to nature—are considered negative. But in contrast to the edited articles, the images of India in the forum are less univocal. While some users claim that India is advanced etc., others reproduce 'white' German images of India that focus on poverty and backwardness. The former group refers to achievements like the IT sector and the atomic bomb and argues that India is equally or even more advanced than Germany. The latter group talks about the lack of infrastructure, the social problems, India's inability to deal with these problems itself, and the resulting need for Western developmental aid. Similar discussions can be found in a series of articles by users called "Mein Indien" ("My India") which is advertised as follows:

India is the country of extremes. It is diverse like hardly any other nation of this world. To understand India is also a philosophical issue, with which everybody has to deal himself. Thus everybody has his own idea of India. Curry, computer, holy cows ... No matter how you understand India, whatever India means to you, put it on the screen with an image or in the form of an article.
Give us an understanding of your India.³⁹

So far about ten articles have been put online in this section. Most of them display a struggle between nationalist pride in the country and problems of understanding those issues which from a Western perspective are considered shortcomings. The first article was put online in 2001. The author starts by regretting that India hardly won medals at the Olympic Games in Sydney and then continues: *“Where does this lack of good sportsmanship of the Indians come from? The population shows more interest and pride when the Indian government does nuclear tests. It seems as if the people are not aware that if some Indian politician goes crazy, a culture which is more than 5000 years old could be destroyed. ‘My poor India’! Just like that. It is not a great achievement to build a nuclear bomb. A much bigger achievement would be to offer the 300 million people below the poverty line a humane future or perspective.”*⁴⁰ He goes on to accuse Indian politicians of corruption and not finding a solution to the Kashmir conflict. He praises the country itself, its diversity, and peacefulness. He criticises Bollywood for being too shallow and the IT specialists for leaving the country, and ends with a plea to the Indian government and population to be more progressive. The next articles in

³⁹ *“Indien ist das Land der Gegensätze. Es ist facettenreich wie kaum eine andere Nation auf dieser Welt. Indien zu begreifen oder zu verstehen ist auch eine philosophische Sache, mit der sich jeder für sich auseinandersetzt. Daher hat jeder seinen eigenen Begriff von Indien.*

Curry, Computer, heilige Kühe... Was auch immer ihr unter Indien versteht, was auch immer Indien für euch bedeutet, bringt es als Grafik (jpeg oder gif-Datei) oder in Form eines Artikels auf den Bildschirm! BRINGT UNS EUER INDIEN NÄHER!”

⁴⁰ *“Woher kommt diese ‘Sportlosigkeit’ der Inder? Die Bevölkerung zeigt mehr Interesse und Stolz, wenn die indische Regierung Atomtests absolviert. Anscheinend ist es den Menschen nicht bewußt, falls irgendein indischer Politiker durchdrehen sollte, eine über 5000 jährige Kultur zerstört werden könnte. ‘Mein armes Indien’! Einfach so. Es ist keine große Leistung oder Kunst eine Atombombe zu bauen. Eine viel größere Leistung ist es, wenn man 300 Millionen Menschen, die unter der Armutsgrenze leben, eine menschliche Zukunft bzw. Perspektive bieten kann.”*

the section “My India” more or less react to this article. Like the first author the following want to be proud of India but at the same time are irritated by many things.

Like in the forum discussions, the articles often display contradictory views: users frequently stress the modernity of India in one section of the article and then in another section express regret at its perceived backwardness. The interview with the MA student Savitri offers one example of this ambivalence. On the one hand, she criticises other second-generation Indians who reproduce the ‘white’ German images about India as a poor and dirty country. She regrets that they do not have a “*real relationship to their own country*”⁴¹ and argues: “*I think India has more to offer than being only poor and dirty, and belonging to one of the threshold countries—it really is no longer a developing country; it is a threshold country.*”⁴² On the other hand she is aware of social problems, has for example written her BA thesis about girl mortality in India and condemns communalism. Later on in the interview, she implicitly offers a way to resolve this seeming contradiction. Commenting on homophobic remarks on the *Indernet* and in the community she says:

I think we have the possibility of living differently, because we are not in India. Although I have to say, in India homosexuality is also gaining more publicity. People dare to do something, they are also organising a movement. I think sometimes people are not really aware about such structural things in India, about what is changing there, what kind of movements there are. Who knows that there is environmentalism in India, that women go to the streets for their rights, or that gays and lesbians organise themselves? It is a pity that this is not within the perspective. It would also be an issue where the *Indernet* could do a bit more. Not only report about business, politics and tourism, describe journeys through India, and Bollywood, but really look at the society.⁴³

⁴¹ “*keinen wirklichen Bezug zu seinem eigenen Land*”

⁴² “*Ich denke Indien hat schon mehr zu bieten, als dass es nur arm ist und dreckig, und noch zu einem der Schwellenländer –es ist ja nicht mehr wirklich ein Entwicklungsland, es ist Schwellenland – gehört.*”

⁴³ “*... wir die Möglichkeit haben, hier etwas anderes auszuleben, weil wir eben nicht in Indien selber sind. Wobei ich sagen muss, in Indien kommt die Homosexualität jetzt auch stärker zum Vorschein, die Leute trauen sich auch etwas zu machen, die machen jetzt auch solche Bewegungen. Ich glaube, manchmal bekommen die Leute solche strukturellen Sachen innerhalb Indiens gar nicht so wirklich mit, was sich da verändert, was es für Bewegungen gibt oder so. Also, wer wird sich denken, dass es in Indien Umweltschutz gibt, oder dass Frauen auf die Strasse gehen für ihre Rechte, oder dass Schwule und Lesben sich zusammen tun. Das ist eben, wie ich schon vorher schon gesagt habe, Schade, dass man nicht den*

In this argument Savitri shows how the longing for a modern image of India and the perceived social backwardness can be brought together. Rather than focussing only on the most common popular indicators of modernity, one could look closer at the social development of the country. The Indians in Germany would then also notice that India is more progressive than they are. Such a change of perspective is found, however, rather seldom on the *Indernet*.

Experts on India

A reason for this might be that many of the editors and users have little knowledge of the country. Some hardly ever travel there, most know only the 'home' town of their parent(s), others have no contact with Indians at all. India is a holiday place, a place to relate to emotionally without knowing too much about it. Seba, who was adopted as a small child in Sri Lanka by 'white' parents from Germany, is one example. He tells me that he does not distinguish between Sri Lanka and India: "*It is all the same for me.*"⁴⁴ Like other second-generation Indians who know little about India, Seba often asks the other users for information on India. One of his first posts was an inquiry about the meaning of his second South Asian name. I get the impression from the forum and the interviews that users like Seba believe that they are the only ones to know so little, experience this as a sense of failure, and reproduce the mainstream ascription that all members of the second generation should be experts on their ascribed country of 'origin'. Seba like all the other users of the *Indernet* is not representative. In fact his ignorance about India and his naivety are quite extreme. But he is not alone in his quest for information and his belief in the competence of the others. Peter, who grew up without his Indian father, shows the same attitude when he asks in the forum: "*Does the fact that my father belongs to a caste make me a Hindu? Or is there more to it? Are there any rituals like baptism, communion, and confirmation in*

Blick dafür hat und das wäre schon ein Punkt, wo das Indernet auch mal ein bisschen mehr dafür tun könnte. Also nicht nur über Wirtschaft und Politik und Tourismusorte berichten und Reisen in Indien beschreiben und Bollywood, sondern auch mal wirklich die Gesellschaft betrachten."

⁴⁴ "Das ist alles für mich dasselbe."

Catholicism?”⁴⁵ This question both illustrates his lack of knowledge and his belief that second-generation Indians should know the answer.

The reliability of the answers to such questions varies. My participant observation suggests that rather few users have sound knowledge about India and provide answers which can pass critical analysis. As I have not done any quantitative analysis of the *Indernet*, I cannot specify the percentage of such users. If in the following I use the quantifiers ‘some,’ ‘many’ or ‘most,’ these classifications are based on impressions from my field research. Some users—neither the majority, nor a negligible number—have a clear political or ideological bias, but represent their answers as ‘objective’. Most users seem to answer on the basis of personal experience or opinion without reflecting that these might not do justice to the whole. From my interviews, I know that several potential users who have a sound knowledge of India, or are trained in critical assessment of information, do not rely on the information provided on the *Indernet*.⁴⁶ It however appears that most of the users seem to take the information provided to be ‘true’, ‘objective’ and ‘neutral’. They appear to found their image of India at least partly on what they are told on the internet portal. So, for example, a teenage user whose parents are from Kerala and speak *Malayalam* followed the discussions about Hindi as the only national language and joined in this political demand. He probably is not aware of the internal debates in India about what makes it a nation, which role *Dravidian* languages like *Malayalam* play, and the feeling of many South Indians that the national language Hindi is part of North Indian dominance over them.

Indian values

As in most other youth internet portals, relationships are a central topic of discussion. On the *Indernet* this includes not only the usual flirting and small talk; it touches also a major aspect of their othering experiences. According to my interviews, when users have two Indian parents, these parents in most cases had an arranged marriage. Arranged marriages, however, are a difficult topic to discuss in Germany. Most ‘white’ Germans consider them an ‘archaic tradition’, which in particular suppresses women. Often the term forced marriage is used as a synonym

⁴⁵ “*Macht mich die Tatsache, dass mein Vater einer Kaste angehört rein formell bereits zu einem Hindu oder gehört da mehr zu. Gibt es irgendwelche Initiationsriten ähnlich der Taufe, Kommunion und Firmung bei den Katholiken?*”

⁴⁶ See Goel, “Kinder statt Inder.”

for them, implying that these arrangements are always established by force. Second-generation Indians thus know that an arranged marriage can hardly be explained to 'white' Germans. Individuals from families in which arranged marriages are the norm face a predicament. If they condemn the institution like their 'white' friends do, they reject their families. If they, however, support it, they not only come into conflict with their 'white' friends but also have difficulty explaining why they then do not want to have one. The *Indernet* offers a space where they can discuss this issue with others who have had the same experiences, and who also feel this ambivalence.⁴⁷ While in my observation the number of marriages that have been arranged according to the 'traditional' rules is rather low among second-generation Indians in Germany (there seem to be only individual cases), the expectations of the parents are nonetheless shaped by this institution. Many hope for a spouse for their children who is from the same community, speaks their language, and has the same religion. Even if they realise that the whole process of arranging will not be possible, they hope that their children will stay more or less within the rules. There might also be attempts to introduce a suitable partner as discussed in the thread "Wedding plans?", where a male user relates his relatives' attempts to introduce him to suitable girls and asks the others about their experiences and advice.

Another strand of discussion in this context regards the question of premarital sex and multiple relationships. Here, many second-generation Indians are again in a quandary. On the one hand, they are brought up in a society where public discourse suggests that one needs to have sexual intercourse early and often. On the other hand, many Indian parents believe that sexuality should be controlled until marriage, and that there should be only one partner in life. This topic, like the issue of arranged marriages, is difficult for second-generation Indians to discuss with 'white' friends. Those who think within the German norm would most likely not understand the problem⁴⁸ and thus would recommend that second-generation Indians ignore 'tradition' and do whatever they please. This, however, would not resolve their contradictory aims of parental approval and personal choice in matters of sexuality. The *Indernet* seems a better place to discuss this issue. Many second-generation Indians consider the control of sexuality, respect for their parents, and conservative family values in general as part of Indian culture. They would like to adhere to these values both out of respect to their parents and in an effort to preserve

⁴⁷ See Goel, "Fatima and theinder.net."

⁴⁸ See also Paske, *Andere Deutsche*.

their ascribed Indian identity. Like Jule, many of them have learned to consider this notion of Indian culture not only as essentialist but also as superior to German culture. They thus support the image of the caring, warm, and conflict-free Indian family. In the interview, Binod, a business consultant, asserts: “... *one learns to appreciate Indian culture more, learns to appreciate the values, learns to appreciate the values concerning family, something that is lacking in German culture today, which gets lost.*”⁴⁹ He especially refers to divorces between Indian migrants and their ‘white’ German wives. This motivates him to look for an Indian spouse himself and to use the *Indernet* to meet suitable girls. During the entire interview, Binod emphasises that he has never experienced racism. At the same time, he describes many instances that can be decoded as racist.⁵⁰ His strategy to deal with racist experiences seems to be to negate them, to locate cultural differences as the causes for othering, and to position himself as an actor rather than a victim.⁵¹ Considering Indian culture as superior to German culture and thus reproducing the images of ‘white’ Germans like Jule can be interpreted as part of this strategy. Binod internalises ascriptions and fills them with a positive meaning.

India as an idea and a reality

Two discussions in the culture and society section—“I want to go to India because ...” and “Move to India?”—illustrate the ambiguity of users’ images of India. In the former thread a 17-year-old Sikh starts with the following post:

I opened this thread because I am interested in what is so special about India or our other desi countries. Why exactly do they attract us?
I always want to go to India because I am fascinated by the fresh morning air in the villages. This is simply a miracle in itself. Especially the family is something which does not exist in Germany. Especially the freedom to do what one wants to do. Also the diversity of cultures and music draws me to India. One just needs to go to India to have the whole world in front of one’s door. But especially I like how the people live together, how they sit together at the fireplace in the evenings on winter nights. To dance,

⁴⁹ “... *man die Kultur, die indische Kultur mehr schätzen lernt, die Werte schätzen lernt, die familiären Werte schätzen lernt, was in der deutschen Kultur mittlerweile fehlt oder immer mehr abhanden kommt.*”

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Compare “Rava Mahabi” in Mecheril, *Prekäre Verhältnisse*.

sing, and make music together is just something which attracts me and makes it impossible for me to let loose of India. ...⁵²

The contributor's holiday experiences of India provide him with an image which is full of warmth, togetherness, and freedom. These are feelings he probably experiences only to a limited degree in Germany as he lives in a predominately 'white' German environment, is othered as a turban-wearing Sikh,⁵³ and pursues the chores of everyday life. The first replies to his post all agree with him and stress the superior values, warmth, and togetherness of the family. The weather and food are also mentioned. Later, the users start to discuss the corruption, incompetent politicians, and disorganisation which make life in India more difficult. In general, however, his paradisiacal image is perpetuated.

A contrary image is drawn in the second thread. Here, a presumably 'white' German user asks the others whether she should move with her Indian boyfriend to his village in India. The immediate reply of several users is "No". Many tell her about the lack of infrastructure, especially in rural India. They warn her of the closeness of a joint family. They argue that if one wanted to move to India at all, then one should move to one of the metropolitan centres because there one can have the same standard of living as in Germany. Others join in by saying that one should only move to India if one is rich and can afford an even better standard of living than in Germany. There is some discussion about how bad the infrastructure is and about how much money is needed to sustain a Western standard of living. From the discussion it is clear that living in Germany is the norm to which living in India is compared. The users would like to participate in

⁵² "Ich habe diesen Thread auf gemacht, weil ich mich interessiere, was gerade an Indien besonderes ist bzw. unsere andere Desi Country's. Warum uns die gerade anziehen.

Ich will immer nach Indien, weil mich die frische Morgenluft der Dörfer (Pind) so fasziniert. Einfach nur ein Wunder für sich. Vor allem das Familärliche find ich etwas auch, dass es in Deutschland nicht so sehr gibt. Besonders auch die Freiheit alles zu machen was man will. Auch die Vielfalt der Kulturen und die Musik zieht mich immer wieder nach Indien zurück. Im Grunde braucht man ja nur nach Indien gehen und man hat die ganze Welt vor der Tür. Aber vor allem das Zusammenleben der Menschen finde ich gut, wie man abends zusammen am Feuer sitzt in den Winternächten. Zusammen Tanzen, Singen und Musizieren, das zieht mich einfach an und lässt mich nicht los von Indien."

⁵³ Compare Michael Nijhawan, "Bin Laden in der U-Bahn und andere Verkennungen: Beobachtungen in der Sikh Diaspora," in *masala.de—Menschen aus Südasien in Deutschland*, eds. Christiane Brosius and Urmila Goel (Heidelberg: Draupadi Verlag, 2006), 98-122.

what they consider superior in India, but they do not want to lose the standard of living they are used to in Germany. They want the best of both worlds. In advising the 'white' German inquirer they are much more realistic about this than in imagining the ideal India together with the others. As long as India remains a dream, a place of refuge from the othering experienced in Germany,⁵⁴ the romantic images dominate. Once India becomes a possible option, more pragmatic questions are raised.

Rejection and internalisation

An analysis of the ways in which India is imagined on the *Indernet* confirms Neha's criticism cited at the beginning of this article. The images produced seem intended to support the self-confidence of second-generation Indians in Germany. In their everyday lives they experience othering regularly, are constructed as Indians, and thus look for a positively connoted India with which to identify themselves. The ambiguous images produced are part of this process. The Other Germans who make and use the *Indernet* struggle with their denied belongingness to their country of residence, their ascribed affiliation to the country of 'origin' of their parents and with the images of India constructed in both. They are socialised primarily in Germany through educational institutions and the media. They have been raised with German discourses about the West and the Orient, about modernity and tradition, about progress and backwardness. These discourses provide them with tools to understand and to deal with the images produced. Since they have been raised in Germany, these discourses and values are closest to them. They can relate to them more easily and are influenced by them at least subconsciously. Thus they also judge the German images in these terms. Whenever a German image of India is connoted negatively they tend to reject it, and try to disprove it. Whenever it is positively connoted they tend to internalise it, and to make it part of their own image. But they also notice that the dichotomies constructed by the 'white' German discourses do not fit their realities, and that evaluating India according to them misses many facets. Thus they struggle with the 'white' German images and the discourses underlying them in an effort to find something with which they can identify.

Through this struggle, influenced by the images handed on by their parents and as a consequence of the negotiation with other second-generation Indians, a new image of India is constructed: an image which

⁵⁴ See Goel, "Fatima and the inder.net."

they can proudly present to others, and with which they are happy to be identified. This image, however, is not constructed consciously, purposefully, or with political awareness. It is a simplified image of India which fulfils its immediate aim of positive identification without reflecting on its further consequences. Among these are the reproductions of exclusions like those of Hindu nationalism or of heteronormativity.⁵⁵

Contrary to Jule's impression, second-generation Indians are not the most 'objective'. Living in Germany does not provide them with the benefit of the 'objective' observer as Jule seems to imply. Most importantly, providing an 'objective' image, whatever that might entail, is not what the second generation desires. They need a positive image just like the 'white' discourse needs an othered image of India, and each of them constructs what they need. This might also be the reason why, just before she criticised the deliberately positive image of India represented on the *Indernet*, Neha explained why she thinks the internet portal is something valuable. I asked: "*What do you like about the internet portal, when you often dislike the articles?*"⁵⁶ Neha answered: "*Primarily that it exists. ... Certainly that it exists.*"⁵⁷

⁵⁵ See Goel, "Kinder statt Inder."

⁵⁶ "*Wenn du aber Artikel jetzt häufiger nicht so gut findest, was findest du dann gut an der Seite?*"

⁵⁷ "*Das es sie überhaupt gibt als allererstes Mal. ... Das es sie gibt auf jeden Fall.*"