

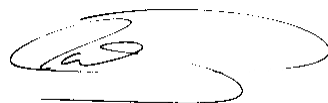
Social and Human Sciences Faculty

DOCTORAL THESIS

**LIFE HISTORIES OF THE EMPOWERMENT OF
SOUTH ASIAN MIGRANT WOMEN IN THE
BASQUE COUNTRY.
GENDER ROLES, CULTURE, IDENTITY AND
TRANSFORMATIONS**



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INTRODUCTION

“our backs
tell stories
no books have
the spine to
carry”

Rupi Kaur

This study aims at portraying the personal empowerment of women from South Asia in the Basque Country¹. The study also attempted to present the path towards the empowerment of migrant women. Attention was given to the roles assigned to women in their countries of origin, identity as a changing quality of the person and the migratory process as an empowering and transformative instrument.

The idea for this research emerged from a previous study, a Master's Degree work² by the researcher where the focal point was the cultural identity of migrant women in the BC. The aim was to understand if and how their perceptions changed towards their own identity after the migratory process. Living in the new society, different from their own, lead to transformations on several levels: acceptance of some values of the host culture, consciousness-raising about their cultural values and, finally, learning how to balance the values of both the host and the home culture. In the Master's Degree study, the extension of the research was limited due to writing space and time deadlines for the accomplishment of the requirements for obtaining the Degree. As a consequence of that, the idea for a research project with one specific group of women, women from South Asia, led to the need to extend the study and research more profoundly the life experiences of these women.

Trying to reflect on the general situation of women as half of the worldwide population, the deduction is that many women lack fundamental resources for a dignified life. According to Nussbaum (2000), the quality of nourishment is worse than that of men. Women are less literate and less likely to opt for technical education. Should they intend to apply for a job, they experience more obstacles. The outcome of these unequal circumstances is women's restricted opportunities to be free. Thus, fear and hierarchy disfigure their sociability.

A review of the bibliography on migration reveals that female migration has been neglected, women's reasons for migration not considered. Women were seen as the passive participants in the migratory process. It was not until the 1980s when these viewpoints made academic researchers contemplate women migrants as the protagonists

¹ An autonomous community in the north of Spain comprised of three provinces: Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa and Araba, whose capital city is Gasteiz. We use the abbreviation "BC" to refer to the Basque Country in the study.

² The researcher obtained a Master's Degree in Intervention in Cases of Violence against Women at the University of Deusto on the following theme: "The Cultural Identity of Migrant Women in Bizkaia".

of migration and raise the question: What happens with women migrants? How do they cope with the new situation? How do they feel? Do they undergo transformations? Does migration liberate women or deteriorate their condition as women in a foreign country, etc. (Vicente, 2006; Keumjae, 2008, Carrasco, 2012).

In this research, the intention is not to portray migrant women as subordinated and vulnerable participants in the host society but rather as agents of change. As a matter of fact, we considered female migration from the perspective of an asset rather than as a handicap.

The qualitative study here presented intends to contribute to a better comprehension of the empowerment of migrant women from South Asia in the BC through the narration of their life. Thus, in this study, a current phenomenon is contemplated. The presence of women from developing countries and racialised women in research is valuable not only for acknowledging their issues, but also because these issues play a significant role in the production of feminist knowledge (Geiger, 1986). The growing number of Asian women who migrate to the BC and the lack of knowledge about their experience as subjects in the BC formulate the following questions: How is their life in the host country and how was it was in their native countries?

A point that needs to be considered is that the BC is a place with a long migration tradition³, but Asian migration is a new phenomenon not only in the BC (George & Ramkissoon, 1998; Martins & Reid, 2007; Maitra, 2015). Furthermore, studies that address Asian female migration to the BC are scarce, although the number of women from Asia that migrate to the BC is continuously growing (Ikuspegi, 2018).

The general objective of this study is to portray the personal empowerment of migrant women from South Asia in the BC through the life history method. The specific objectives of this research addressed the construction of gender roles in the native culture, the transformations that a person undergoes through migration and, finally, the visualisation of women. These type of studies are valuable because they serve as a reference for the production of scientific theories about women's migration and empowerment. They also

³ The BC has been a place of migration "from" and a migration "to". During the Spanish Civil War (1936-1939) this territory experienced the migration of Basques to other places and later with the industrial boom (1959-1973), the reception of Spanish migrants from different provinces. The migration flow has been increasing since 1990s and the BC has received many migrants since that decade (Larroque, 2006; Vicente, 2006; Otxoa and Esnaola, 2013).

question the androcentric perspective upon which the Social Sciences were traditionally built (Royo Prieto, 2008).

The study is divided in two parts: the theoretical part and the empirical part. The theoretical part consists of the theoretical framework and conceptualisation of the study. It is divided into five chapters. **Chapter 1: The Role of Feminism and the Feminist Approach to Research** encompasses the feminist movement as a political movement in the West and in Asia; a typology of Western and Asian Feminism was elaborated. We present a section that discussed Feminism in South Asia. The last part of the chapter is dedicated to the feminist approach to research as an approach that is adequate to be used in the Social Sciences, emphasising the importance of intersectionality.

The social construction of gender and gender roles is a harmful construction for women and their freedom. The discussion of the social relations between the sexes leads to the assumption that gender oppression is real and strong. The oppression intertwines with cultural norms that assign roles to women and men on the basis of their biological sex. Given the fact that the study is focused on work with women from South Asia, **Chapter 2: The Social Construction of Gender and Gender Roles** discusses the role of women in the South Asian context apart from that mentioned above.

The third chapter centres on culture and identity. At the beginning of **Chapter 3: Culture and Cultural Identity**, the patriarchal system as a system where values and norms are created is explained. There, some factors that challenge the stability of patriarchy are presented. Afterwards, identity construction is discussed and attention is given to the culture and creation of identity in South Asia. Religion was also covered.

Chapter 4: Migration and Migratory Processes defines the term migration and explains the difference in the use of words “migrant” and “immigrant”. Then, the importance of considering gender when migration occurs is discussed. This leads to the next section, which explains the phenomenon of feminisation of migration giving a thorough explanation of the characteristics of the female migrant and the reasons for female migration. After that, the discussion goes in the direction of migration in the BC, South Asian migration to the BC and women from South Asia in the BC.

The core of the final chapter of the first part of the study is empowerment. Before conceptualising empowerment, the term power is defined in accordance with the different viewpoints the term has. Then, empowerment as a feminist concept for the improvement

of the well-being of women is introduced. The key features for women's empowerment are given and the alliances between women are explained. In addition to this, **Chapter 5: The Conceptualisation of Empowerment**, mentions the disempowering factors that obstruct the empowerment of women.

The empirical part is an approximation of the subjective experience of life of the participants by the use of qualitative methodology, which consisted of defining the state of art of the study, designing a methodology chart and guideline for the interviews, the actual fieldwork and the interpretation of the gathered data. **Chapter 6: Methodology**, explains the methodology used to carry out the research. First, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies are introduced and a justification for choosing qualitative research methods is provided. After that, the narrative approach and life history method are described. An explanation for the decision to use life history method for the study is offered. The main objective, the specific objectives, the hypothesis and the research process are also clarified in this section.

Chapter 7: Individual and Group Analysis of the Life Histories, analyses the experiences of life of each participant. Each story is divided in three sections; the experience of life in the country of origin; the migratory process and transformations and empowerment. After the individual analysis the data is compiled for the group analysis and eventually, for drawing the **conclusions**.

PART I:
THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND
CONTEXTUALISATION

CHAPTER 1

**THE ROLE OF FEMINISM AND THE
FEMINIST APPROACH TO RESEARCH**

“a political struggle that does not
have women at the heart of it, above it, below it,
and within it is no struggle at all”

Arundhati Roy

INTRODUCTION

We open the theoretical framework of the study with a discussion focused on feminism and the feminist approach to research. First, we describe the basic notions of the philosophy and current feminist ideas. Given the fact that South Asian women are the central figures of the study, we offer a brief discussion of feminist thought in South Asia. We close the chapter by discussing intersectionality.

Feminism is a political philosophy whose aim is to achieve equality and liberty for women. The term “woman” has been associated with the term “the other”, a term discussed by many authors, such as (Amorós, 1985, 2000; Karl, 1995, Dominelli and MacLeod, 1999) and others who are referenced in the following section. The pursuit of emancipation through the category of “woman” is one of the challenges of current feminist thought. Feminism questions the boundaries that act as obstacles against women’s development and aims at transforming social relations (Patel & Khjauria, 2016). This social change would bring a reordering of social relations for the eradication of patriarchy, transformation of culture and creation of conditions for equality (Dominelli & MacLeod, 1999, Lagarde, 2000). The elimination of the causes of women’s oppression would act upon the empowerment of women at all levels of society.

The typology of Western feminisms is presented in Chart 1, through the three waves. The first wave identifies that rights were a men’s privilege. The second wave recognises the precarious labour conditions and the lack of decision-making about their own bodies. The third wave is centred on the inequalities based on different social class or caste, ethnic group, race, differently abled women, etc. (Rodríguez, 2002; Patel, 2016). The typology of feminist movements is depicted in Chart 2. It encompasses social and liberal feminism, cultural feminism, essentialist feminism, lesbian feminism, practical feminism and radical feminism (Castells, 1997; Quintos-Deles, 1990).

After the general discussion of feminism, we move forward with feminism in South Asia. South Asian feminists criticise the West for the appropriation of the term as a Western concept. The struggles of South Asian women are different and they critique European capitalism and its effects on post-colonial countries (Basin & Khan, 1989). The

movement is characterised by diverse ideas for women's improvement (Patel & Khajuria, 2016). Their struggles portrayed the demand for widow marriage, ban on polygamy, education, legal emancipation of women, etc. The three waves of feminism in the South Asian context portray patriarchy as the main cause for women's subordination. In the first wave, only educated women had the possibility to raise their voices against injustice. The second wave is characterised by radical, psychoanalytical, ecofeminism and black feminism. Middle-class women criticised the work of high-class women. The third wave encompasses the marginalised communities (Patel, 2016, 2017, 2018). Nowadays, the marginalised women are organising themselves to fight against injustice.

The typology of South Asian feminisms is presented in Chart 3. We end this section with a discussion of Eurocentrism and criticism towards women in the West that often interpret non-Western norms as erroneous (Nussbaum, 2000; Rodríguez, 2002, Mosedale, 2005).

The penultimate part of the section discusses research from a feminist perspective in the social sciences. Female anthropology was not given enough attention and this raised questions in research because women's experiences were necessary. Research from a feminist perspective looks thoroughly at the experience of women from their own viewpoint, breaking with androcentrism, ethnocentrism, classism and the gender binary.

Finally, we conclude Chapter 1 with intersectionality or the ways in which the different categories of oppression are articulated. The key figure of the term is Kimberlé Crenshaw. The concept looks through the different aspects of women's subordination considering class, caste, race, ethnicity, age, ability, etc. Intersectionality is a transformative tool for justice (Ortega, 2019).

1.1. DISCUSSION OF FEMINISM

Feminism is a political philosophy that strives for justice for women's rights as human rights, the equality between the sexes and liberty. It is the discourse of women for themselves and their presence in the social reality as the presence of "the Other". The noun "the Other" is used because it is the discourse of the estranged and the unknown, about themselves (Amorós, 1985, 2000; Karl, 1995; Valcarcel, 1997; Dominelli and MacLeod, 1999; Lagarde 1996, 2000; Rodríguez, 2002; Astelarra, 2006; Carrasco, 2012; Patel and Khajuria, 2016). Feminist thought has come across affirmations that the difference in power, dignity, authority and knowledge is an inherent feature of every male and female. This means that women and men are not equal by nature in terms of the ability to do and act, self-respect and the right to decide and erudition. Thus, women are the inferior subjects.⁴ Valcárcel (1997) says that there was an overlap between the idea of the natural male hierarchy and equality: "The male hierarchy and equality were the same, so that naturalism was necessarily affirmed. Rousseau triumphed completely. If political equality was only attributed to some people according to their sex and nothing else taken into consideration the inequality that was established must be declared as natural" (p. 60). Therefore, the conception of equality was established by the dominant power structure. Having the power, they affirmed the natural order of the things, according to sex.

1.1.1. CURRENT FEMINIST THOUGHT

The endeavor of feminist philosophy as a part of the current political tradition is to understand the ways in which the category of women is produced and then restrained. It is the pursuit of emancipation through categorisation of the term "woman". Thus, the conceptual questions of feminism are: How equality between women and men be achieved?; How can women be free? (Valcárcel, 1997). Feminism constantly questions today's world and the boundaries that limit women's development. What is more, this philosophy aspires to transform social relations: "The more we understand, the more we are able to build a narrative for change. There are innumerable new energies arising from different positions transforming the feminist field: new contestations of patriarchy, and

⁴ A reference to Rousseau's consideration of women's political and ethical being and Wollstonecraft's response to the supposed naturalness of the subordinate condition of half of the world population. For further information see Gatens (1984).

new contestations of the normative feminism itself. It will be the interplay of fields that might change the system altogether” (Patel & Khajuria, 2016: para.5).

Feminism strives for equality in all social dimensions and primary importance is given to the attempts for social change and reordering of the social relations. Thus, identification, challenge and redefinition of social relations would allow feminists to proceed with further steps. These steps are the elimination of the patriarchal order in the social structure, the transformation of culture, and the creation of conditions of equality for women and men as an opposition to the hierarchisation in the society (Dominelli & MacLeod, 1999; Lagarde, 2000). Feminism pursues the eradication of the causes of women’s oppression, to empower women at all levels of the society and to transform society. In addition to this, feminism refuses the exploitation and the oppression in the private and the public spheres and questions the pillars of male dominance within these spheres (Karl, 1995; Patel, 2016).

1.1.2. TYPOLOGY OF FEMINISMS

A better understanding of the feminist philosophy may be summarised through the three waves of feminism. During the first wave, feminists fight to find their place at the time when nations and states are created. These are the times when women’s nature and men’s nature are considered to be different and the fundamental rights are exclusively given to men. The outcome of all this is the imposition of the social order in equality with other men and an exclusion of women from the public sphere. The second wave of feminism witnesses the dissatisfaction of women in labour opportunities, a lack of possibility for self-determination in taking decisions over their own bodies in the use of contraceptives, and the role of women as caregivers. Second-wave feminists become conscious of the dichotomy sex-gender, contending that that dualism is not only unnatural but also harmful for all women. The third wave of feminism envisions the inequality among women from different social classes, castes, ethnic groups and race. If the former contemplates the dualism sex-gender, the latter becomes apperceptive of the dichotomy, questioning the dualism and recognising the “why” and “wherefore” of the disunity and the conflicts between women (Rodríguez, 2002). Third wave feminism represents the marginalised and those excluded from the prior waves, such as women from the lowest casts, different colour, religion or ethnicity, differently abled women, women with alternate sexuality

and post-colonial women (Patel, 2016). The following chart presents the three feminist waves as explained by Rodríguez (2002):

CHART 1: Typology of Occidental Feminisms

	FIRST WAVE	SECOND WAVE	THIRD WAVE
	Approaching sex-gender dichotomy	Effects of sex-gender dichotomy	Questioning sex-gender dichotomy
PERIOD	1789-1930	1965-1989	1989-2000
Socio-political context	Creation of modern states	Welfare States	Crisis in Welfare States
Predominant agency	Educated bourgeois women and nobility	White women from middle classes	Women at the social margins (black, migrants, sex workers, domestic workers, trans women; women from the South/Center (Western white, middle class women))
Central demands	Right to vote Access to education	Sexuality Contraceptives Abortion Social services (childcare services)	Recognition of cultural diversity Citizenship

Source: Rodríguez (2002)
Prepared by the author

Castells (1997), under the influence of Alain Touraine, offers a typology of all of the feminist movements based on his own observations.⁵ This typology emerges from the diversity of feminist movements, a diversity that is able to bring women together and look at the features they have in common. The author starts the typology with *social* and *liberal feminism* as movements that, despite their differences, consider that women's rights are

⁵ French sociologist, director of Manuel Castell's doctoral dissertation.

human rights and women shall have equal rights with the opposite sex, in the areas of the economy and reproductive rights. The former looks upon capitalism as the major source for women's oppression. The latter is mainly centred on women's welfare and not enough on suppressing capitalism. This type accepts the system as it is, but its aim is to gain individual civil rights for women and their access in each part of society. According to social feminists, society needs a transformation of the capitalist system and the implementation of a gender perspective (Quintos-Deles, 1990). Another type of feminism is *cultural feminism*. Its aim is to build an alternative space for women where they would be able to create a community through autonomy, despite the differences among them. This is further developed in *essentialist feminism*. This type recognises the essential differences between women and men. *Lesbian feminism* encompasses diverse women's experiences as non-followers of the heteronormativity. Then, the author makes reference to a *multiplicity of feminist identities* where women construct their personal identities, transforming themselves from what they are to what they want to be. The last type of the typology is so-called *practical feminism*, referring to the women's struggles in developing countries and working-class women. The author raises a debate about whether women who declare themselves as feminists are sufficiently aware of the question how to oppose patriarchy.⁶ In addition to the typology by Castells (1998), Quintos-Deles (1990) mentions *radical feminism*. Gender oppression is the main issue for radical feminists. They strive for a woman-centred culture focusing on women's qualities and capacities as women. The typology is presented in the following chart:

CHART 2. Typology of Feminist Movements

TYPE	IDENTITY	ADVERSARY	GOAL
Liberal/Social	Women as human beings	Patriarchal state and/or patriarchal capitalism	Equal rights
Cultural	Women's commune	Patriarchal institutions and values	Cultural autonomy
Essentialist	Female way of being	Male way of being	Matriarchal freedom

⁶ For further information see Castells (1998).

Lesbian	Sexual/ cultural sisterhood	Patriarchal heterosexuality	Abolition of gender
Women´s specific identities	Self-constructed identity	Cultural domination	Degendered multiculturalism
Practical feminism	Exploited/abused women/ housewives	Patriarchal capitalism	Survival/ dignity
Radical feminism	Redefinition of social relations and consciousness	Gender as a form of oppression	Woman-centered culture

Sources: Quintos-Deles (1990: 23); Castells (1997: 1995)
Prepared by the author

In the chart explaining the typologies of feminism we did not include the fourth wave of the movement. This is a result of the fact that the reference cited is from the year 2002. Here, we present the contemporary feminist thought or the fourth wave.

Munro (2013) states that contemporary feminism is highly influenced by the Internet. In that way, the third wave feminism has switched to a fourth wave: “[...] with its focus on micropolitics and challenging sexism and misogyny insofar as they appear in everyday rhetoric, advertising, film, television and literature, the media, and so on” (p. 23). The existence of this fourth wave has been challenged by those who claim that the use of the Internet is not enough to create a new wave. However, the Internet is a tool that has connected feminists globally and has been used as means for debates and for activism, as the author explains. She identifies intersectionality as one of the key points of contemporary feminism. We discuss intersectionality in the following section. Munro claims that in contemporary feminism: “[...] women’s understanding of their position in the world and their political struggles is changing. With more and more young feminists turning to the internet, it is imperative that academics consider the effects that new technologies are having on feminist debate and activism” (p. 25). The fourth wave centres on the visualisation of women that are still in shadow as a result of the mainstream.

Zimmerman (2017) relates the fourth wave of feminism to technology and the use of social media, especially Twitter. The identification of privilege, difference, representation and racism is an important part of contemporary feminism: “Thus, intersectionality as a theoretical framework is most suitable for the fourth wave movement because it strives for political intervention and visibility, but not at the expense of silence, erasure,

segregation, and/or marginalization” (p. 64). The autor says that this framework is creating collaborations, alliances, political actions and sense of non-totalising solidarity.

Silvestre Cabrera, López Belloso and Royo Prieto (2020) observe that the fourth wave of feminism is full of contradictions that need to be confronted. In agreement with the previously cited authors, they claim that the new wave has emerged as a result of the growing use of the social media, the new generations of women, gender mainstreaming and intersectionality.

1.1.3. FEMINISM IN THE SOUTH ASIAN CONTEXT

In this part of the study, the situation of Asian women in the three waves of feminism is briefly explained and the current feminist struggles in South Asia are described. A definition of Asian feminists on feminism is given and criticism towards the West for the appropriation of feminism as a Western concept is also exposed.

Feminism in Asia seems to be limited to the academic circles and despite all measures for the improvement of women’s rights, women suffer discrimination in the private and the public spheres (Castells, 1998). The women’s movement in the South Asian context is characterised by a diversity of ideas and organisation of women that strive for justice and the recognition of their capabilities (Foreword of Ruether, Sridharan, Mandvi in Patel & Khajuria, 2016). Basin and Khan (1990) state allegorically that South Asian women did not reach the point where they would have burnt their bras like their Western companions. For South Asian women, feminism is a process of transformation that emerged in the 19th century and even if some people say that it is a Western concept, the authors explain that feminism has not been brought to the Asian continent but developed because of the injustice towards one half of the population in Asia. In essence, the definition they give to feminism as understood in the South Asian context is: “An awareness of women’s oppression and exploitation in society, at work and within the family, and conscious action by women and men to change this situation” (p. 3). Thus, South Asian women raised awareness for the injustice towards them in the private and the public spheres and organised themselves to take actions to fight against that injustice (Basin & Khan, 1990; Quintos-Deles, 1990). South Asian women realised that they were in a situation of subordination and the first signs of raising their voice were: “ [...] a demand for the

possibility of widow remarriage, for a ban on polygamy, the practice of sati⁷ and purdah,⁸ and demands for the education and legal emancipation of women” (p. 5). Some of the outstanding Asian women from that period as stated by Basin and Khan (1990) are:

Pandita Ramabai: an independent Indian woman who raised her voice against Hindu religious orthodoxy and fought for women’s freedom ever since the 1880s.

Kartini: a woman from Indonesia who started a school for girls and fought for women’s emancipation and education.

Qurrat ul Ayn: a woman from Iran who refused to use the veil and left her family.

Jiu Jin: a Chinese woman who was killed for fighting in the revolution and in favour of women’s issues.

Sugala: a woman from Sri Lanka who defended her kingdom.

Gajaman Nona: a Sri Lankan poet who wrote poetry on women’s issues.

In the first wave of feminism, Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism and social feminism share a common view that patriarchy is the major cause for women’s subordination (Patel, 2017). In the course of that time, the educated women showed their first struggles against child marriage,⁹ widow burning, female infanticide, education for women and the right to vote. The impact was only on upper-class and upper-caste women. Thus, these women were the creators of the new movement in the 1970s (Patel, 2018). In the second feminist wave, the radical feminists see contradictions between men and women. During this period, psychoanalytical feminism observes that each person has an individual life journey. Ecofeminism looks at the relationship between women and nature. Black feminism highlights the fact that Black women suffer not only for being women but because of their skin colour (Patel, 2017). In the second wave of feminism, the presence of middle-class women began to be visible. They refused paternalism, criticised the charitable and philanthropic social work of high-class women as elitist and destined only to the privileged women. They perpetuated the unequal relations among women because they did not transcend the feminist social order, but they maintained caste discrimination

⁷ For further information see Yusuf (2014); Purdah is the “[...] requirement for women to cover their bodies and conceal their form” (p. 239).

⁸ For further information see Nehaluddin (2008); Sati is defined as the burning of “any widow along with the body of her deceased husband or any other relative or with any thing or article associated with husband or such relative, or any woman along with the body of any of her relatives” (p. 5).

⁹ In South Asia, nearly 40% of marriages are child marriages (Patel, 2018).

and did not change the status quo (Patel, 2018). The third wave of feminism starts from the perspective of the marginalised and excluded communities such as Dalit¹⁰ women, tribal women, women of colour, women from post-colonial countries, women from ethnic and religious minority groups, differently abled women, and the LGBTQ population. As the main protagonists of the wave, they are thankful for all the previous work by their female companions but they are also critical towards the fact that they only dealt with issues that concerned upper-class and upper-caste women (Patel, 2017). From the 1980s until the recent 2000s, tribal women, Dalit women, peasants and poor women have organised themselves to fight against rape, violence against women, domestic violence, etc. In this current stream, women fight against any form of sexual oppression, casteism, religious chauvinism, sexism, etc. (Patel, 2018).

The struggles of South Asian women in the 1980s are related to the dowry, violence against women, the wage gap, discrimination, and the abuse of religion for restricting women's freedom. Women are behind men in every aspect of life and even if they are economically independent, they are still subordinated to their husbands and family. Hence, economic independence is only one small feature of South Asian women's struggle in the 1980s. Another important aspect that Basin and Khan (1989) mention is that while their Western companions raised their voices for the diversity of sexual orientation, these issues were not considered by feminists in Asia because they did not find the struggles of Western feminists familiar with their struggle: "In fact South Asian feminists seldom adhere to (most are not even aware of) Western feminist ideology, nor do we get into theoretical debates and divide ourselves by forming alliances with specific ideological positions taken by Western feminists" (p.7). The authors criticise European capitalism as a system that affects the colonised countries from the past, strengthening even more the patriarchal structure both in Europe and on the Asian continent and making the colonial tie even stronger. Aquino (1990), states that in Asia, women have their own vision of feminism, attributed to the characteristics of the cultures on the Asian continent.

¹⁰ Dalit is a member of the lowest caste in India. They are referred to as the "untouchables". The literal meaning of the word is "oppressed", "suppressed" and "exploited". It became popular in the first half of the 20th century as an opposition to the offensive "untouchable" or "Harijan" (Moon, 2001, Waldrop, 2004): "Dalit activists have expressed that the term "untouchable is derogatory and discriminatory, as it is derived from Hindu notions of purity and pollution and suggests that untouchables are so polluted that they should not be touched. The term "Harijan" means "Children of God" and was introduced by Gandhi in order to uplift the position of the "untouchables". Dalit activists have argued that "Harijan" is a revisionist term because it does not imply any revolutionary changes of the caste hierarchy (Waldrop, 2004: 276–277).

She invites Western feminists to learn from them and not to forget to adapt their agenda in accordance with their needs. The contradiction is that many Asian women have taken their place in politics, becoming crucial figures for development and democracy in their countries, working in the patriarchal system. Nonetheless, the impact they have on other Asian women cannot be underestimated (Castells, 1997). In the following chart, the typology of South Asian feminism is presented:

CHART 3. *Typology of South Asian Feminisms*

	FIRST WAVE	SECOND WAVE	THIRD WAVE
Characteristics	Patriarchy – main source for women’s subordination	Unequal relations among women Maintenance of the caste discrimination	Capitalism – system that strengthens the patriarchal structure
Predominant agency	Limited to upper-caste and upper-class educated women	Middle-class women	Marginalised and excluded communities: Dalit women, tribal women, women of colour, women from post-colonial countries, women from ethnic and religious minority groups, differently abled women, LGBTQ population
Central demands	Against child marriage, widow burning, female infanticide In favour of education for women and the right to vote	Against paternalism, critical of the charitable work of high-class and high-caste women, unequal relations among women In favour of recognition of the relation between women and nature, visualization of	Against rape, violence against women, domestic violence, any form of sexual oppression, casteism, religious chauvinism, sexism, critical of Eurocentrism In favour of economic independence, visualization of

		discrimination of women of colour	sexual orientation diversity, presence and visualisation of women in politics, adaptation of Western feminist agendas to their needs
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Source: Patel (2017, 2018)
Prepared by the author

Feminism has often been criticised for its Eurocentric standpoint (Nussbaum, 2000; Rodríguez, 2002; Mosedale, 2005). Mosedale (2005) claims that women from the West did not consider class and ethnicity in their struggle. Thus, Southern women have different struggles and have different ways of organising to defend their rights. Western feminists are guided by the thought that women may have had reasons in the past for “[...] dissatisfaction with their social and political identities [...]” (Mosedale, 2005: 245) and they consider that this is no longer a motive for discontent because supposedly these problems are already surpassed. The irony according to Mosedale (2005) is that Western feminists are actually from countries that in the past or even nowadays have oppressed or are still oppressing these so called “third world countries”.¹¹ In addition to this, Western feminists look upon “third world women” with inferiority, assuming that non-Western norms are the erroneous and unfruitful ones for the improvement of the situation of women (Nussbaum, 2000). This is due to the fact that cultures that are alienated from the general Western norms are considered to promote other norms that suppress female progress. Rodríguez (2002) debates what is to be considered as “Western” and claims that just as the Western world fought for the liberation of women, new inequalities in the social order arose: “[...] Islam is not the synonym of chauvinism as Fatima Mernisi rightly claims, just as the West is not a synonym of feminism” (p. 260). Patel (2016) thinks that it is the third feminist wave that enables South Asian feminists to define what feminism is and what identity is, from their own perspective.

¹¹ The term “third world countries” is unsuitable and inconvenient: “[...] (itself a critically contested category)”, Mosedale, 2005: 245. The use of this terminology in the work is attributed to the fact that it has been adopted to refer to women from countries in development. Mosedale (2005) considers that the expression is unfortunate although makes use of it.

1.2. RESEARCH FROM A FEMINSIT PERSPECTIVE IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES

As some studies suggest, it was not until the 1970s with second-wave feminism, when attention to female anthropology was given. Women were traditionally forgotten and excluded until then. From that moment on, women's exclusion from participation in social life and their behaviour started to be visible. This opened questions for social research (Ortner, 1974; Rosaldo, 1980; Harding, 1987; Thurén, 2005; Carrasco, 2012). Considering women's testimonies on their life experience is necessary for the sake of acquiring new knowledge in research. In spite of the fact that the 1970s seem distant, it is a very recent past that portrays the lack of representation in research of half of the nation.¹² Carrasco (2011) thinks that there was not a space for critical interpretation of reality because of the negligence of the relationship between science and dominant social values. The result of that was the fostering of patriarchal norms: "[...] sacralise the dominance-subordination relations, both generic, ethnic and class, etc." (p. 53).

In the Asian context, Women's Studies as a discipline that provides knowledge that shall empower women appears in the 1990s. Women's Studies demands social transformation and approaches to processes that bias women, sexism in media, gender blindness in science and technology, the health needs of women, violence against women, domestic violence, rape, prostitution, etc. Women's Studies is interested in the subjective experiences of women through listening to their voices. Thus, commitment to social change is primary (Patel, 2018).

Harding (1987) remarks that women's participation in social life has not been embraced in research, which leads to a misunderstanding of the activities of women. The feminist response to this situation is that feminist research, unlike previous research in science "generates its problematic from the perspective of women's experiences" (p. 7). What is more, the experience of interest is the subjective one, giving importance to the quality of that experience and not the quantity (Donkor, 2000). Escudero Espinalt (2015) remarks that research from a feminist perspective comprises perceiving women's experiences

¹² Cited from Sokolovska, S. Silvestre. C. M. (2018). Life History Method as a Tool for the Exploration of South Asian's Women Empowerment. *Crítica y Resistencia. Revista de conflictos sociales latinoamericanos*, 8, 44-61. ISSN: 2525-0841.

from their position as women. This is the opposite to the androcentric thought that contributed to the internalisation of man being the measure of the human and to women's segregation. Therefore, by including feminist perspectives, research breaks with the androcentric, ethnocentric, classist and gender-binary established practices. Nawyn (2010) states that the most important contribution of feminist migration scholars is in the study of the migrant's households, relations and networking. The author emphasises the fact that women are often ignored in migration research: "Perhaps the lack of attention is caused by sexism, in that non-feminist migration scholars do not take women or their experiences seriously, and thus do not give women migrants or gender serious scholarly attention or incorporate gender into their migration theories" (p. 758). The political subject of feminism is the woman, either native or migrant woman. What they have in common is the oppression based on sex. Migrant women undergo additional difficulties that are part of the feminist agenda with the aim to overcome them. If it was not for the feminists, who would have spoken about the problematics of migrant women? In addition, in this study empowerment is discussed and the empowerment is an ultimate goal of feminism.

In this particular study, women are the central figures. If quality rather than quantity provides the information, then the fact that the sample for this study is composed of five participants is not problematic. The quality of the stories told and not the number of women allowed for the construction of the life histories. Accordingly, this study fits into the realm of feminist research.

1.2.1. FEMINISM AND INTERSECTIONALITY

In an attempt to highlight that women are diverse and not a homogenous group, the term intersectionality is introduced in the last part of this chapter. This section contemplates inequalities and how different components impact on the ways in which differences are manifested. The term has been coined in the 1970s and 1980s by Black feminism in the United States. One of the most important figures is Kimberlé Crenshaw. Notwithstanding, prior to her contribution, the Combahee River Collective¹³ discusses the simultaneity of oppressions. Crenshaw makes a revision of this "simultaneity of oppressions" and

¹³ *The Combahee River Collective* was a Black feminist organization active in Boston from 1974 to 1980. *The Combahee River Collective* formed in response to the lack of inclusion, recognition, legitimacy and affirmation they encountered as Black feminist within white feminist and patriarchal Black liberation movements (Nayak, 2019:360).

discusses the ways that the different categories of oppression are articulated: the central concepts of oppression based on race/ethnic group, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, class, religion, nationality, and differently abled people (Ortega, 2019).

Crenshaw (2018) draws attention to intersectionality as a metaphor for understanding the ways that multiple forms of inequality or disadvantage compound themselves and create obstacles that often are not understood within conventional ways of thinking about antiracism or feminism or any other social justice advocacy structures within society. Intersectionality is a prism for understanding certain kinds of problems such as race stereotypes or gender stereotypes.¹⁴

In an effort to find a solution to the gender question, Patel (2016) highlights that only through the intersectionality of caste, class, ethnicity and gender in the oppression of women would the system be challenged. The attempt is to crystalise how caste, class, ethnicity, race, age and ability mold women's experiences of life and how they interact with gender. Intersectionality is the result of the creation and recreation of inequalities in the system, reflecting that there is no exclusive identity category that describes how people respond to the social environment: “[...] intersectionality seemed a generally applicable descriptive solution to the multiplying features that create and define social identities. It is not race-class-gender, but also age, ableness, sexual orientation, to name the most salient” (p. 303). This concept takes into consideration all aspects of women's subordination, not only those related to gender hierarchy. Looking through the lens of intersectionality, researchers take into account different identities such as caste, class, race, ethnicity, age, ability and how they intertwine among them. Hence, intersectionality requires a different way of thinking because women are diverse and have different needs. The context in which they live may cause very different problematics for them. A typical example of this would be the difference among middle-class white women in the United States of America who fought for the right to work and earn the same as men, on one hand, and racialised women, whose primary need was not the same, on the other. Furthermore, other women have distinct issues from the previous two; they need access to healthcare and clean water, and the right to live in safe conditions (Kang, Lessard, Heston and Nordmaken, 2017). The intersectional approximation analyses identities with

¹⁴ Citation from the video “What is intersectionality?” (Crenshaw, 2018, 22 June).

the aim of dissecting how they relate among each other in their own experiences, cutting across race, class, gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation, age or ability (Kang et. al, 2017).

In this study, the intersectional approach is used for carrying out the analysis of the fieldwork. The participants are from different social classes and, in our case, different castes, different ethnic groups and ages, with different abilities and capacities. The cultural context where they are raised cannot be neglected either. George and Ramkissoon (1998) acknowledge that when working with racialised women, the intersection of race, class and gender ought to be taken into consideration. Thus, this study contemplates both the differences and the similarities among the women interviewed. Finally, intersectionality is a research tool that analyses power structures, the relationality of social systems and their complexities. It is a transformation tool for social justice. As such, it positions racialised women as subjects (Ortega, 2019).

CHAPTER 2

**THE SOCIAL CONSTRUCTION OF
GENDER AND GENDER ROLES**

“for me, my work is my god,
and the faith to do work
is my dharma.”

Manasi Pradhan

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 discusses gender roles as an obstacle to female liberation. We begin with the discussion of gender theory and then we continue with the examination of gender oppression. After that, the cultural appreciations of the sexes are presented. Finally, we come closer to our study and we discuss the role of women in South Asia through the characteristics of South Asian societies.

This section commences with the social construction of gender roles (Lindsey, 1990; Lagarde, 1996; Pyke, 1996; Amorós, 2000, etc.). Authors such as Stolcke (2004) state that the differences among women and men are not a result of biology but are because of socio-cultural phenomena. Thus, in order to understand women's exclusion, gender needs to be analysed (Thúren, 2005). Trinder (2000) observes that research barely ever dealt with gender and gender relations. As a result of that, a new feminist standpoint emerged whose focus was specifically on gender.

Carrasco (2012) discusses the conceptual dichotomies of what is to be a man and what it is to be a woman, and Puke (1996) states that power relations in the macro structure are asymmetrical and society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity. Glick and Fiske (1999) claim that sex has been categorised in society even before gender has been constructed. Then, we present Ortner's (1974) viewpoint on biological determinism; if there is something biologically inherent in men that makes them feel superior and there is something biologically inherent in women that makes them feel inferior, this is due to the built structures in society. In continuation, we discuss the captivity of women (Lagarde, 2005). Furthermore, the cultural appreciations of the sexes are given space. There, two different studies by Zimbalist (1979) are presented. They show that in every culture, men's activities are more valued than women's activities. This is not due to biology but to the cultural and social organisation of the human groups.

This chapter is concluded with a discussion of the role of South Asian woman, highlighting the fact that we did not intend to generalise for women's position in South Asia, although our participants come from socially, culturally and politically similar environments. The characteristics of the South Asian societies are introduced and special attention is given to the Pativrata principle (discussed in this chapter), for a better comprehension of the social hierarchisation in South Asia. Finally, Naidoo (2003) portrays South Asian women as strong women, whose strength arises from the concept

of Shakti, the Hindu conceptualisation of the cosmos. Her power is the creation and transcendence for personal balance.

In this particular chapter, gender and gender roles are being discussed due to the fact that these social constructs shape the expected behaviour assigned to women according to their biological sex. The intention was to see whether the assigned roles strengthen, affirm or lose intensity with migration.

2.1. GENDER ROLES – AN OBSTACLE TO FEMALE LIBERATION

Gender and gender roles have become an important issue in the work of experts such as Lindsey (1990), Lagarde (1996), Pyke (1996), Amorós (2000), Stolcke (2004), Díez Mintegui, Gregorio Gil (2005), Thurén (2005), Astelarra (2006), and Knapp, Muller & Quiros (2009), whose findings have led us to assume that these roles are socially constructed.

In the 1970s feminists in academia used the term *gender* to bring attention to the fact that the inequalities and oppression of women in relation to men are not a result of biological differences of the sexes but rather a result of socio-cultural phenomena: “The intention was to demonstrate that ‘biology is not destiny’ but that the socio-symbolic identities assigned to women in their relations with men in the organisation of the life in the society, being cultural, are variable, and, therefore, capable to be transformed” (Stolcke, 2004: 78–79).

What is known about gender roles before the 1970s, as argued by Thurén (2005), is largely based on the fact that the social sciences neglected women from research. The privileged role was given to men, as if women were not interesting enough to be heard. Thus, feminist anthropology introduced the need to include women in the social sciences and opened questions for research. It was the time when the second wave feminists recognised female exclusion and attempted to find the answer to this situation: “But to understand well, why they had been so excluded, one would have to understand the gender order as a whole, the relations between women and men” (p. 187). In their 2005 paper, Díez Mintegui and Gregorio Gil noted that the social order previously mentioned has been naturalised with its androcentric and hierarchical traits. Trinder (2000) states

that debates among researchers in social work have hardly ever dealt with gender and gender relations. For that reason, a critical feminist standpoint¹⁵ emerged. This standpoint, unlike *empirical and evidence-based practice (post-positivist experimental methods)* and *pragmatism (realist epistemology)*, which pay little attention to gender, is mainly focused on gender (p. 44). The aim of this standpoint is to challenge unequal relations in society. How can power relations be challenged? Trinder (2000) considers that when women's voice is heard, the inequalities and women's oppression are revealed.

2.2. GENDER THEORY

This part seeks to address gender theory as a social phenomenon that observes social reality from a feminist standpoint, becoming conscious for patriarchy and the androcentric worldview. The theory “[...] uncovers the conceptual dichotomies that construct the scientific thought: reason/emotion, mind/body, culture/nature, the self/the others; objectivity/subjectivity” (Carrasco, 2012: 55/56). This dichotomy provides an antagonistic worldview where reason, mind, culture, the self and objectivity are believed to belong to men, while emotion, body, nature, the other and subjectivity are associated with women (Carrasco, 2011). Vallejo (2014) contemplates that if the dichotomy is responsible for the roles women and men are given, the matter goes further than simply assuming that the man is the oppressor and the woman is the oppressed. The author emphasises that the power relations in all the areas of society ought to be considered. Pyke (1996) claims that gendered power relations are reproduced because “[...] culturally appropriate ways of producing gender favor men's interests over those of women” (p. 530). So, in the macrostructure, power relations between women and men are asymmetrical: “In this manner, power dynamics often are obscured and legitimated as “essential” and “natural” (Pyke, 1996: 530).

¹⁵ Critical/standpoint research differs from empirical practice and pragmatist research in two key and related ways: first, it has an explicit gender focus informed by radical feminism, and second, a belief that research is about politics and change rather than attempts at dispassionate neutral recording. For critical/standpoint researchers the research act, like social work practice, is about power and empowerment. Research is not posited as a neutral fact-finding activity. Instead, research, researchers and research participants are located within a world where power is unequally distributed between genders (Fawcet, 2000: 44).

The sex/ gender system, or the dualism as has been mentioned in the previous lines of this section, refers to “[...] the set of arrangements by which a society transforms biological sexuality into products of human activity [...]” (Rubin, 1975: 159). In her cutting-edge paper of 1975, Rubin wonders if there is any possibility to hope for a sexually egalitarian society. This comes as a result of the observation of the causes that create the gender hierarchy. In her review on the works of Karl Marx on one hand and Sigmund Freud and Claude Lévi-Strauss on the other, Rubin (1975) outlines that the former did not consider sex as an important feature in the social world. For Marx, both men and women were subjects that performed a certain role in that world, with no importance given to sex. The latter recognised the different experiences that men and women undergo in the same social world. Thus, the question that Rubin asks is: what is that makes *women become oppressed?* (p.158). She points out that a woman is born as a woman and she only becomes a housewife, a spouse, a prostitute, etc., as a result of social relations. In the system of relations, women’s and men’s behaviour is conditioned by their socially assigned positions.

Zimbalist (1980) argues that it was feminist philosophy that visualised the ways in which the condition of being a woman or man impacts *social life and experience* (p. 389). Therefore, gender is composed of a variety of social factors, where the presumed differences between women and men are created by gender relations: “[...] women’s place in human social life is not in any direct sense a product of the things she does (or even less a function of what, biologically, she is) but of the meaning her activities acquire through concrete social interactions [...]” (Zimbalist, 1980: 400). This means that gender needs to be addressed both politically and socially, paying attention to social relations and not biology (Zimbalist, 1980). Similarly, Glick and Fiske (1999) claim that gender needs to be considered in a social structural sense. Thus, before gender was constructed, sex had already been categorised in society and society is organised in such a way that roles are determined by gender. Likewise, Valcárcel (1997) considers that women experience inequality because they have lack freedom, which is the result of the biological sex that they belong to.

In her critique of biological determinism, Ortner (1974) tries to find a logical explanation for the inferior status of women in society. If biological determinism stands behind the belief that there is something genetically superior in men that gives them privileged social

status, there is also something genetically inferior in women that not only subordinates them, but also makes them feel accomplished with that position. The example that the author provides is the idea of maternity as the major life goal of every woman. In order to find a coherency for women's subordination, the author recognises another universal truth: the built structures in culture. This statement incites the question: "What could exist in the generalised structure and conditions of existence in culture that leads every culture to undervalue women?" (p. 71).

2.2.1. GENDER OPRESSION

In pursuit of explaining gender oppression Lagarde (2005) uses the term "captivity". She defines captivity as a category of patriarchal society whose function is to deprive women of independence, power over themselves and the liberty and capacity to make their own choices: "Captivity characterises women in terms of power of the vital dependence, the governance of their lives by the institutions and other individuals (the others), the obligation to fulfill the duty to be feminine as assigned by the group, concretised in stereotyped lives, without options" (p. 152). The solution to this captivity from the author's standpoint is women's independence. If the "self" was put aside in captivity, then, through the autonomy of women, each woman would be able to centralise herself. Lizana (2014) claims that roles, social status and gender identity are related to the norms that produce and control the division between what is to be considered feminine and what is to be considered masculine. These social norms establish and delimit the possibilities women and men can have along their life trajectory. Similarly, Escudero Espinalt (2015) explains that: "The meanings associated with being a woman or a man are referred to the concept of gender. Likewise, this idea must include the development of identities, expectations, behaviours and power relations that arise from the social interaction between people (p. 13).

One of the aims of this work is to understand the gender roles in the native countries of the women interviewed. Later on, the role of the South Asian women is introduced. When the lived life of the participants was discussed, an important part of the interview sessions was dedicated to the comprehension of what is the role of a woman born in a South Asian country. After that, the objective was to come to know if and how the participants managed to cope or even break with these assigned roles when they migrated.

2.2.2. CULTURAL APPRECIATIONS OF THE SEXES

As an anthropologist, Zimbalist (1979) observes that there is a sociological tradition to subordinate women in every human culture: “It may be possible that women are important, powerful and influential, but it seems that, in relation to men of their same age and social status, women, everywhere, lack a universally recognised and culturally esteemed authority” (p. 153). The author identifies a structural problem in human societies that bestows a privileged position to men and somehow, women always end up with fewer resources and in precarious conditions. Culture shapes the expectations for how a woman or a man shall behave and how they are supposed to relate between one another (Canadian International Development Agency, 2001). Zimbalist (1979) says that in every culture women and men have roles that distinguish them from one another. Traditionally men’s activities are more valuable than women’s. She exemplifies this statement by making a reference to a previous work of hers in the Philippines. Women there were working in horticulture and men were hunting. Although women were the main food providers for the family, the meat hunted by men was always more appreciated than the cultivation of plants by women. Another illustration of men’s superior position is the fact that in New Guinea women cultivate sweet potatoes and men grow yams. While sweet potatoes are considered an ordinary alimentary product, yams are valued as a prestigious food.¹⁶ In an attempt to find an answer to the question about the asymmetry of the sexes, Zimbalist (1979) directs her attention to the universality of things and biology, directly stating that it would not be plausible to justify the subordination of women as a result of universal cause and biological characteristics but rather, the social and cultural organisation of human groups. In that organisation, an opposition between the public sphere, traditionally attached to men, and the domestic sphere, usually associated with women, exists.

¹⁶ For more examples on the cultural subordination see Kaberry (1939), Mead (1935, 1971), Lloyd (1965), Murdock (1934), Keenan (1974), Zborowski and Herzog (1955). Zimbalist (1979) makes a reference to these works and concludes that there is a great connection among them. In every society starting from the most egalitarian ones, men have more important role than women: “Corolario de esta observación sería el hecho de que en todas partes los hombres tienen una <<autoridad>> sobre las mujeres, que tienen un derecho – culturalmente legitimado – a la subordinación y sumisión de éstas” (p. 157).

2.3. THE ROLE OF WOMEN IN SOUTH ASIA

In this section, the role of women in South Asia is discussed. It is of great importance to clarify that the intention is not to generalise about the position of women in South Asia. Although the participants come from socially, culturally and politically similar environments, South Asia is a broad term. Thus, it is not possible to make the roles of all women from India, Nepal, or Bangladesh generally applicable.

Three South Asian countries have been encompassed in the study. Despite the similarities because of territorial proximity, history and cultural features, they are very different even within the countries themselves¹⁷. Thus, it is necessary to clarify that what is presented here is only a small part of the literature review, always keeping in mind the fact that South Asia is the southern region of an entire continent.

- *Characteristics of South Asian Societies*

Traditionally, South Asian societies follow the patriarchal belief system. This is highly supported by the state, institutions, and religion. In the South Asian family, women are the care providers, those who provide nourishment and those who do the domestic chores. The role of women in the Indian subcontinent is determined by their caste, class, religion, gender-based division of labour, geographic location and ethnic origin (particular community or tribe) (Patel, 2018). An interesting viewpoint on whether South Asian migrant women are the reflection of their female counterparts in their native countries comes from George and Ramkissoon (1998). The authors claim that migrant women from South Asia have multiple tasks to do after migrating. In addition to this, they have to familiarise themselves with the new country. In her study with Hindu Asian migrants on cultural retention and transmission, Dhruvarajan (1993) discovered that the majority of the participants (both males and females) consider that family care is a sacred duty of women while men take all decisions because they are the head of the family. Being heads of family, they should protect their wives. Women on the other hand, should devote themselves to their husbands. In addition to this, women are obliged to obtain the level of

¹⁷ The PHD candidate has spent three months in India at TATA Institute of Social Sciences with the aim to contextualise the work and become familiar with the diverse Asian culture.

“Pativratya”¹⁸. The Pativratiya principle is going to be explained in the following subchapter of this chapter. It would serve to give a better comprehension of the roles assigned to men and women in South Asia. Going back to the study, the interviews with the women reflect the fact that women assume the traditional gender roles even if they do not believe in male supremacy or at least they are not in agreement with male domination. In a previous study, Dhruvarajan (1988) explains that the Pativratiya principle is rooted in an androcentric worldview that limits women’s position in the social structure. What is more, future generations are prepared to practise its principles. In this study, the author interviewed both men and women in Musali, a village in India and first-generation migrants from South Asia in a cross-cultural context, situated in Canada. Before moving forward with the discussion of Pativratiya, we would like to focus on the Social Relations Approach by Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996). In their work, they claim that the processes by which gender inequalities are socially constructed are not only the result of household and family relationships but also, due to their reproduction across the institutions and policy making agencies. They have developed a framework for the analysis of gender inequality focused on the institutional construction of gender relations and the institutional construction of gender inequality. The authors define gender relations as an aspect of broader social relations created through rules, norms and practices: “[...] by which resources are allocated, tasks and responsibilities are assigned, value is given and power is mobilised. In other words, gender relations do not operate in a social vacuum but are products of the ways in which institutions are organised and reconstituted over time” (p. 4). The key institutional sites identified by Kabeer and Subrahmanian (1996) are the state, the market, the community and the family or kinship: “Thus the state is the larger institutional framework for a range of legal, military and administrative organisations; the market is the framework for organisations like firms, financial corporations, farming enterprises and multinationals; the community is made up of various supra-family groupings, including village tribunals, political factions, neighbourhood networks and non-governmental organisations, which exert considerable influence over its members in particular domains of life; while households, extended families and lineage groupings are some of the ways in which kinship relations are

¹⁸ In South Asia, among Hindus: a woman who is faithful and devoted to her husband. From Sanskrit *pativrati* from *pati* husband + *vrat* will, command, obedience, observance”. (Oxford Dictionary) <https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/pativrata>

organised (p. 4). They observe that institutions tend to explain inequalities in terms of differences in nature, divine force, culture or tradition. An example of the framework in the household organisations in the Indian context, illustrates the intersection of caste and kinship rules for the decision of marriage (who will marry whom, age, resources, joint family or separate, etc). Nevertheless, it is important to highlight the fact that the norms and the practices vary within India. These practices influence the ways power and inequality are shaped. For instance, in South India, women are not separated from their natal kin whereas in Northern India, women are physically and ideologically separated from their natal kin. In South Indian kinship system, the gender egalitarianism is higher than in Northern Indian kinship system where women's mobility is controlled over and women's autonomy is restricted.

In the following lines, the Pativratiya ideology is explained. It gives a better comprehension of the social hierarchisation in the South Asian context, according to sex.

- ***The Ideology of Pativratiya (Dhruvarajan, 1988)***

Pativratya consists of complete devotion of the wife to her husband who is "Pati Pratyakha Devatha," or a living God, to her. The males have to find a good wife so that their family line is continued by giving birth to a male child. The wife's role is to help her husband to achieve his life goals: "She should never think that she has an existence apart from her husband. His needs should be hers. She should become one with him in every sense of the word" (p. 274). The belief goes to the extent that women ought not to expect anything from their husbands, but they have to be at their disposal in order to be saved. The origin of this principle lies behind the conviction that men are pure, strong, mature, and ready to lead. Women on the other hand, are polluted, weak, and immature and they can only follow, never lead. The male is the representation of consciousness and the female is the representation of the energy called Shakti that is used exclusively to benefit their husbands. This energy is undefined and has no solid direction. The direction and the seed are provided by the male. Thus, the male takes control over everything, women's sexuality as well; only a virgin is capable of bearing right and healthy children. The devotion is usually towards a man not chosen by her but through arranged marriage.

Through the interviews with the Musali citizens, the author observes that women depend on their husbands. This is a result of the belief that female freedom is a threat because it

may provoke chaos. For that reason, men have the responsibility to restrict this autonomy. Physical punishment is allowed in the cases where the woman acts as if she has power. The primary role of the woman is to be a good wife and a mother. Good wives serve their husbands and only eat when they finish their meal. As mothers, they give different education to their sons and their daughters. The same as with adults, boys have freedom and girls are restrained. Daughters are the reflection of their mothers. This means that if the girl does not behave properly, it would be her mother's fault. In Musali, mothers focus their energy to teach their daughters how to deal with problems in the family, how to be humble in front of their husbands, how to suffer in silence, how to be patient and tolerant and, the most important thing, not to expect to be treated as something special, because they are women and women are not special¹⁹. They have to sacrifice their interests in the name of the interests of their brothers and to be able to understand it.

The second study was taken in a cross-cultural context. First generation Asian Indian women settled in Canada were interviewed. The researcher was interested in the *Pativrata* ideology in women who have migrated from India. The results revealed that the power of the ideology weakened when women had resources and references other than the family. In the case of the Musali women, they did not have access to education and their only reference was the family. In the Canadian case it is shown that the higher the level of education is, the weaker the ideology. We assume that women who do not have access to resources and are not exposed to other ideologies are highly attached to the practice of the *Pativrata* ideology. Women who do have access to resources and other ideologies do not manage to have a complete disaffection with the ideology. The third assumption is that only exposure to ideology does not alienate women from the androcentric belief. Nevertheless, unlike the Musali case or the studies within urban India, in Canada migrant men and women who have equal access to opportunities and see different ideological models in society, are more likely to distance themselves from the patriarchal ideology and accept values of gender equality (Dhruvarajan, 1988). Nevertheless, Naidoo (2003) discovered that apart from the burden of gender roles, South Asian women are strong, self-determined and confident. Her assumption is that their

¹⁹ The author explains that women educate their daughters following this pattern, not because they do not love them, but on the contrary, their idea is to be more realistic in terms of the life expectations of being brought up as females: "It is precisely because they love them that they teach them how to lower their expectations and learn how to cope with life the way it is" (p. 282).

strength arises from the concept of Shakti, the Hindu conceptualisation of the cosmos.²⁰ Since Shakti has the power of creation and the possibility to transcend with the aim of reviving personal balance, this study follows the principles of Shakti. The participants are seen as agents of change, who are able to overcome difficulties. Besides, with their testimonies they serve as role models for other women and make visible their presence in the host society.

²⁰ ” [...] a divine cosmic energy that represents feminine energy and the dynamic forces that move through the universe. Shakti, who is responsible for creation and can also be an agent of change, is often manifested to destroy demonic forces and restore balance” (Eisler, par. 1, n.d.). For further information see <https://chopra.com/article/shakti-universal-force>

CHAPTER 3

CULTURE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

“you will be
baptised into
womanhood
by all the eyes
that own you”

Jasmin Kaur

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, culture and cultural identities are discussed. The section is opened with culture in a social system based on patriarchal values. Then, we define the concepts culture and cultural identity. After that, culture and identity are treated. The chapter is closed with the last section focused on religion.

Culture is molded in the patriarchal system, a system dominated by men who execute power in the entire organisation of societies (Castells, 1997). The system has shaped the female “conscious” to the extent that women accept the role given in the particular culture (Amorós, 1985). Women are in a symbolically inferior position to men due to different structural features (Valcárcel, 1997). Patriarchy is challenged through women’s consciousness (Castells, 1997).

We define culture as a system of collectively held values (Hofstede, 1980). Culture represents the group in the same way the personality represents the individual. By tradition, culture has been molded by masculine values (Saéz, 2011). Ortner (1974) claims that men are associated with culture and women with nature and if women are part of nature then, culture finds their subordination “natural”. After the discussion of culture, we define cultural identity as the representation of the social group to which the individual belongs. Going back to Ortner (1974), she identifies three features that create women’s subordination; cultural ideological features, symbolic features, and social structure features. Lagarde (2000) introduces the term syncretism to refer to the fact that women’s identities are diverse and they create the conditions of being a woman.

The identities are constructed by the individuals. They are capable of developing a plurality of identities that are influenced by different features (Castells, 1997). Then, we present the identity types identified by Lagarde (2000) and the construction of identities by Castells (1997). These identities have different effects; construction of the civil societies, creation of communities that fight against oppression and the production of subjects. Lagarde’s (2000) view is that women were not allowed to construct an individual identity because of lacking social individualisation.

The last section of this chapter is dedicated to culture and identity in South Asia. The factors that strengthen the patriarchal value system are identified by Patel (2018). Here, we present different studies with South Asian migrants and their sense of identity (Khurian and Gosh, 1978; Ralston, 1992; Dhruvarajan, 1993; Naidoo, 2003).

This chapter concludes with religion. The general assumption is that women are marginalised in religion and the challenge of the concept of religion today is to reconsider its practices (Shukla-Bhatt, 2008). Starr (1999) discusses the feminist interpretation of religion and the idea of woman as a symbol and woman as an agent.

Before moving on to the next chapter, we would like to highlight the fact that we have presented studies with South Asian migrant women in different countries other than the BC. This may be due to the fact that South Asian migration is recent in the BC and we did not find supporting material whose aim was to study South Asian female migration in the BC.

We have considered appropriate to discuss culture, cultural identity as well as religion in this study because we aimed at understanding the role of the native culture for shaping their character, the way they are and the decisions they take before and after migration.

3.1. CULTURE IN A SOCIAL SYSTEM BASED ON PATRIARCHAL VALUES

This chapter begins by examining cultural identity. Before the conceptualisation of culture and identity, a discussion of patriarchy as a social system that shapes the values of one culture is developed. The London Feminist Network defines patriarchy as: “[...] the society in which we live today, characterised by current and historic unequal power relations between women and men whereby women are systematically disadvantaged and oppressed”.²¹ This system attributes cultural identity to the people belonging to a certain culture and conditions the interpretation of their values. Hence, culture is molded in patriarchal society.

Patriarchal structure is characterised by male dominance and male execution of power in the entire organisation of societies and the (re)production of politics and culture (Castells 1997). Rodríguez (2002) questions what she identifies as a “patriarchal culture”, through the observation of societies that give men this previously mentioned power, oppression, exclusion and exploitation of women. Amorós (1985) states that the ties of patriarchy are so strong that they have shaped women’s “unconscious” to the extent that they accepted the social roles given and established by the patriarchal norms. Valcárcel (1997) says that the situation of women in societies is influenced by three factors: their economic status, their performance in the democratic or authoritarian system, and the influence of religious concepts in public life and on their personality. The author affirms that women are in a symbolically inferior position to men everywhere in the world and that these symbols are rooted differently. The roots may be found in the different cultural features such as the past structures of the families, their value systems and beliefs. If the origin of the inferior position of women is a result of the way the culture is transmitted, then identity construction depends on the values women and men from one culture are taught. The patriarchal system does not only create but justifies a domination pattern of male superiority and female subordination in the private and the public spheres (Collado, 2006).

²¹ The definition has been retrieved from www.londonfeministnetwork.org.uk

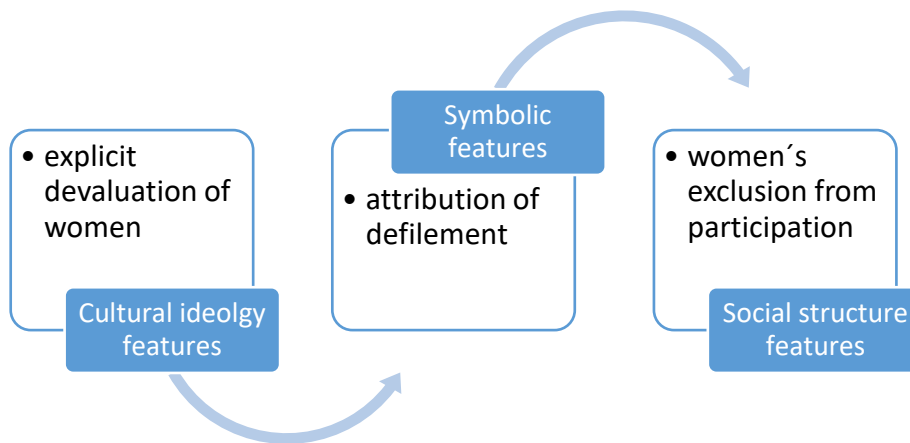
Castells (1997) observes that patriarchy is challenged through the transformation of women's consciousness. This transformation has resulted in the growing number of women who actively participate in the feminist movement. Despite the historical trajectory of feminism, it is now, in the information age, as the author claims, that resistance against this social structure has started to become visible. The diverse feminist movement opened debate for a whole new transformation of society, considering women as social actors who construct or deconstruct their identity (Castells, 1997).

3.2. DEFINITION OF THE CONCEPTS CULTURE AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

In pursuance of a definition for the concept "culture", it is important to say that the term may refer to products related to creativity and productivity such as art, literature, music, etc.; but it can also refer to the beliefs, customs, traditions characteristic for a particular society (Canadian International Development Agency, 2001). Furthermore: "It shapes 'the way things are done' and our understanding of why this should be so" (Canadian International Development Agency, 2001: 1). Hofstede (1980) claims that: "[...] culture is the collective programming of the human mind that distinguishes the members of one human group from those of another. Culture, in this sense, is a system of collectively held values. Culture is to a human collectivity what personality is to an individual" (p. 24). Thus, culture is molded by the values held in one society. It represents the group in the same way that the personality represents the individual. Having said this, if culture is the product of the collective mindset of one society and, as previously said, societies are patriarchal, then culture is molded and generated by masculine values (Saéz, 2011). In a related reference it is observed that culture produces and maintains symbolic meanings of the proper culture and afterwards these symbols are interpreted by members of that culture. Hence, if the interpretation is done by those who have a privileged status because of their biological sex, then the oppression of women is situated within a symbolic order that is culturally constructed (Amorós, 1985).

In her groundbreaking paper of 1974, Ortner says that men are associated with culture and women with nature. In her words: “Since it is always culture’s project to subsume and transcend nature, if women were considered part of nature, then culture would find it ‘natural’ to subordinate, not to say oppress, them (Ortner, 1974: 73). Cultural identity represents the social group to which the individual belongs. The identity may refer to: “[...] a collective, a group and a social sector, including elements that define, characterise, and distinguish a group at a social, cultural or ethnic level (Vallejo, 2014: 43). Other authors, like Carrasco (2011), are very critical towards the definition of cultural identity. She claims that cultural identity is erroneously seen as the product of the natural order of things to explain the material and the symbolic world. According to Carrasco (2011), cultural identity is a human construction. Schalkwyk (2000) brings attention to gender as a reason for the cultural attributes given to women and men. Ortner (1974) traces the existence of human universals and cultural particulars. The subordination of women is one of the universal truths on a cross-cultural level. While women’s secondary status is universal, there are different cultural interpretations on what it means to be a woman (symbols and concepts). The author gives an example from Chinese culture with the aim of exemplifying in a simpler way the status of women. As reported by the author, in Taoism women and men are equal. The female “ying” and the male “yang” have exactly the same status in the society. Notwithstanding this, in the social structure she observes that the father is the head figure of the family and the birth of a sons and not daughters is highly desired. Therefore, China is a prototype for a patrilineal society where the Chinese woman is invisible, silenced and subordinated (Ortner, 1974). Yet, the prime goddess in their culture is a woman, a generality which easily can lead to the misinterpretation that Chinese society is matrilineal. The secondary status of women is grounded on the following three observations, conforming to Ortner’s arguments (1974: 69):

GRAPHIC 1. *Features of Subordination*



Source: Ortner (1974)

Prepared by the author

The interpretation from the standpoint of Ortner (1974) is that culture devaluates women's activity by attributing to them degrading roles. In addition, culture establishes the social structures that exclude rather than include women from the relevant decision-making in society. In this work the intention is to understand both the characteristics of the culture and the cultural identity assigned to the participants as women. Then, moving one step further, the goal is to comprehend the individual perception of their culture and the creation of an individual identity as opposed to the cultural identity.

Lagarde (2000) says that women's identities are marked by syncretism. Syncretism is: "The combination of different forms of belief or practice"²². Hence, the identities of women are diverse and represent a fusion of nationalities, ethnicity, races, social classes, politics, religions, traditions, customs, etc., that create the condition of being a woman. The generic syncretism consists of gender acculturation. Acculturation is the process of implementing features of a culture different from the receptor culture and here is when syncretism occurs.

In this study the aim is to encompass syncretism by understanding if there is a loss of some cultural features of migrant women's culture with the migration process and if there is an acceptance of others, pertaining to the host culture. In addition to this, if identity conflict is born then, how do they cope with both their culture and the host culture? Lagarde (2000) claims that there are women who feel strongly attached to their native culture and even if they are in contact with the new one, they do not accept some of its features. Other women do the opposite by the negation of the features of their culture and

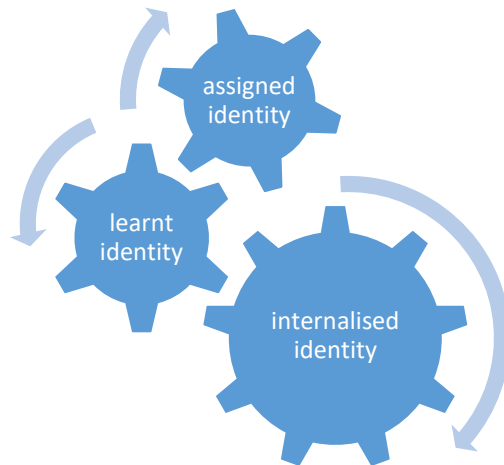
²² The definition has been retrieved from Merriam – Webster Dictionary.

the acceptance of the characteristics of the host culture. The third group is the melting-pot group. They create a cultural fusion between the native culture and the host culture, mixing features from both.

3.2.1. IDENTITY

In this part, the dimension “identity” is discussed. Identity is created with the construction of the senses and the senses are connected with the characteristics of the culture. Castells (1997) agrees that, sociologically, identities are all constructed. The author defines identity as: “[...] the process of construction of meaning on the basis of a cultural attribute, or related self attributes, that is/are given priority over other sources of meaning” (p.6). The individual may develop what Castells (1997) calls a *plurality of identities* that may also provoke confusion for the social actor. This is due to the fact that identity differs from roles. Unlike roles, whose main characteristic is that they are created by the norms of the institutions and the organisations of the society, identities are defined by the process of individualisation: “Although, as I will argue below, identities can also be originated from dominant institutions, they become identities only when and if social actors internalise them and construct their meaning around their internalisation” (p.7). The construction of those identities is influenced by the people’s actual biology, the history of a given culture, religion and power holders. Individuals reconstruct identities, accept or deny them in agreement with their social and cultural values (Castells 1997). Lagarde (2000) defines identity as the characteristics that define the individual in their existence throughout history. Thus, each individual, from the moment they are born, is assigned with identities that correspond to values of the individual’s family nucleus as well as society’s values. However, by interacting with other individuals and through personal development, each individual constructs an identity for themselves. Identity may be:

GRAPHIC 2. *Identity Types*



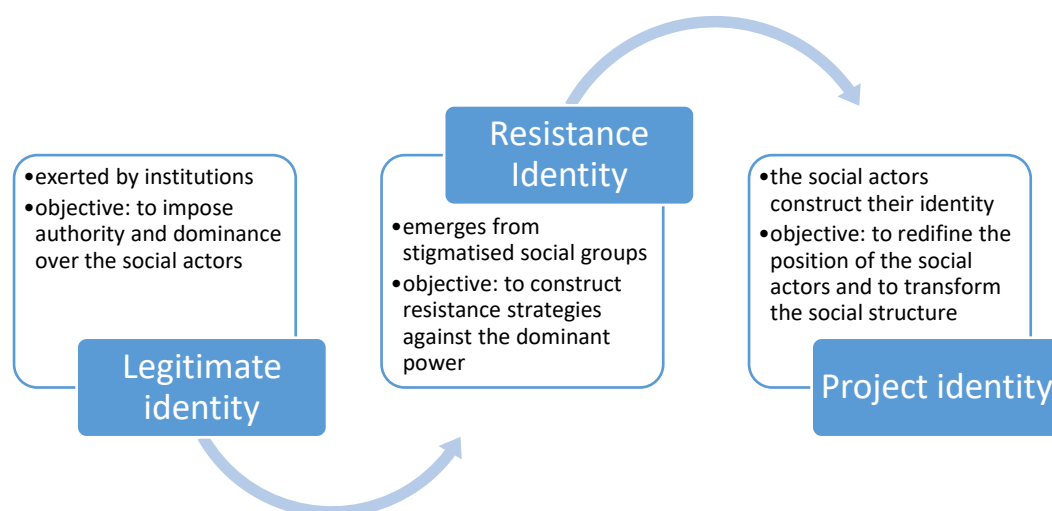
Source: Lagarde (2000)
Prepared by the author

The chart portrays the three types of identity identified by Lagarde (2000). The internalised identity is represented in the biggest circle and this is not by accident. Unlike the assigned and learnt identities, the internalised identity is related to self-identity. Self-identity is a very important feature of the process of empowerment, discussed later in the study. Identity is not static. Each individual transforms and reshapes their identity until they find their self-identity.

In psychology, identity is related to self-awareness, self-esteem, how the individual sees themselves and their self- reflection: “[...] identity is emphasised as a quality that enables the expression of the individual’s authentic sense of self” (Shields, 2008: 301). The identity is changing but it can show stability at the same time. She exemplifies this by taking gender as an identity category that is present in all periods of history and in all cultures even though, as a category, it may be interpreted differently in distinct historical times and societies.

Identity construction is related to power relations. What Castells (1997) suggests is that power holders (those who construct collective power) establish how cultural symbols and senses need to be interpreted by the members of the social structure. Castells (1998) identifies three types of collective identities. Conforming to this, the three ways of the construction of the identity are: *legitimate identity*, *resistance identity* and *project identity* (p. 8):

GRAPHIC 3. Construction of Identity



Source: (Castells, 1998)
Prepared by the author

Castells (1998) holds the view that the three types of identity have different outcomes in composing society. The former participates in the constitution of the *civil society*. Resistance identity creates the communities that rise up against any form of oppression in society. The latter is the identity that fits in this study. This identity produces the subjects (p. 9). As explained in the chart, this identity type allows the social actors to construct their personal identities, to improve their position in the social structure and, what is more, to take actions for transforming this structure. Lagarde (2000) emphasises that women were not allowed to have an individual identity because they did not have the opportunity to have a social individualisation. Dhruvarajan (1993) observes that: “[...] men subscribe to the belief that women should define their identity through men” (p.75). Carrasco (2011) considers that the most convenient way for women to construct their identity is to combat patriarchy and androcentric culture. The Canadian International Development Agency (2001) claims that culture and society are not static but are able to be remodeled and improved.

3.3. CULTURE AND IDENTITY IN SOUTH ASIA

If patriarchy is the system on which values are based in Western societies, the situation is not different in the Indian subcontinent. Patriarchy in this particular context is

comprised of six factors that strengthen male dominance and women's subordination. These important factors recognised by Patel (2018) are: caste, kinship network, religion, economic status, the media and the state. This value system gives priority to men and boys and puts aside women and girls. Patel (2018) provides various examples of the situation: sex determination tests resulting in abortion of female fetuses, female infanticide, neglecting daughters in terms of food, health care and education, etc. In this way, women are not given the same facilities for personal development as men. Mohammad-Arif & Moliner (2007) state that after Indian independence in 1947²³ ethnic conflicts did not stop; they have witnessed wars, riots and confrontations on the basis of various things: "[...] religious (Hindus vs Sikhs, Hindus vs Muslims), ethnic (Punjabis vs Bengalis, Sindhis vs Muhajirs, and so on), and national (Indians vs Pakistanis, Pakistanis vs Bangladeshis)" (par. 1).²⁴ The important thing to be noted is the fact that people started to leave their homeland and search for a better life quality in foreign countries.

Bates (2001) remarks that a common characteristic of migrants from the Indian subcontinent is to carry a strong sense of identity with them to the new country. This conduct is a typical feature for both female and male migrants. In her study with migrant women from South Asia, Naidoo (2003) observes that dualism in the worldview of her participants appears. She discovered that they show selectivity on what to preserve from their culture and what to accept from the culture of the host country: "They are adamant about the values from their traditional culture that they wish to retain as part of their cultural self-identity and the values from the host culture that they wish to incorporate into their evolving identities" (p. 56). This study aims at seeing if and how the participants manage to cope with the features of both cultures; do they reject some characteristics of the native culture and accept new ones from the host culture?

In their study focused on the socialisation of Indian migrant families, Kurian and Gosh (1978) claim that their culture is the first reference point once they leave their native countries. What is more, they observed that they even value their culture far away from

²³ India gained independence from British rule on 15 August, 1947. The leader Mahatma Gandhi accepted the independence cum partition proposal for the creation of Pakistan, offered by the British, to avoid civil war (<https://www.culturalindia.net/indian-history/modern-history/indian-independence.html>)

²⁴ Hindus, Sikhs, Muslims refers to different religious groups; Punjab, Bengal, Sindh are provinces in India and Pakistan.

home more. An interesting process occurs at this point. On one hand, in the native countries people tend to abandon some features of their native culture and “emerge” themselves into so-called modernisation. On the other hand, migrants strengthen the feeling of belonging to the native culture after migration. As the authors say, in the host country, they try to adjust to the norms but at the same time they are willing to preserve their cultural identity.

3.3.1. RELIGION

In the religions of the world, women have been subjected to different forms of marginalisation. Actually, the challenge that religion faces nowadays is to reconsider and remodel its practices in terms of gender equality and social justice (Shukla-Bhatt, 2008). Castells (1998) observes that there is something in the nature of humans that makes them search and maybe find consolation in religion. This section concentrates on the status of women in religion, bearing in mind that the religious orientation of the participants is diverse: Hinduism, Islam and Buddhism.

Religious feminists have flourished in their writings on how they interpret religion. Starr (1999) remarks that in its roots, religion does not discriminate against women but through other historical factors that ought to be eradicated. One of them is the symbolism of the “woman” in the patriarchal religious tradition: “[...] the contemporary feminist agenda should be to strip away the historically later layers of gender discrimination; [...] should be the creation of new women-oriented rituals and symbolic interpretations [...] should be the creation of new religions that reflect women’s spirituality” (p. 212). In her article, Starr (1999) analyses gender in religious systems through the perspective of woman as a symbol and woman as an agent. This construction symbolises gender, sex, and sexuality as created by men in their religion. Woman as an agent refers to individuals who act as agents in social situations. In religion, women pursue the freedom of expression of their needs, freedom of interpretation, the possibility to relate with other practitioners and the freedom of choice of rituals and ceremonies. These two terms intertwine in a way that “woman” may be found in religion through mythology and theology, which in turn affects women who are part of that religious tradition: “Women who do not comply with cultural symbols of ‘Good Woman’ run the risk of having cultural symbols of ‘Bad Woman’ [...]” (Starr, 1999: 195/196). Patel (2016) considers that women’s subordination moves through religion, communities and territories, challenging them on the social and individual level.

In her study on the construction of personal and social identity through the religious activities performed by South Asian migrant women, Ralston (1992) has come to the understanding that religion is a prominent feature in the creation of their identities. Activities practised in the public and private sphere are those that distinguish them from native women in the host country. Mohamad-Arif and Moliner (2007) claim that religion is the central feature of ethnic identity when migrant identities are redefined with migration: “This is due to the disruptive nature of migration that propels some migrants to turn to what they perceive as unchanging values and traditions of their past (par.7)”.

In her study with migrants from Asia, Dhruvarajan (1993) observes that religiosity is the most important variable for answering the question: Why do women follow patriarchal norms? If the role of religion is of great importance then there is nothing surprising in the fact that in her study, the majority of the participants believe in male supremacy over female subordination and the gendered division of labour. The study shows that women with lower levels of education are more religious than women with higher levels of education. Thus, the lower the level of education and employment type, the higher the religiosity. Another point that she considers is the length of stay in the host country. Migrants whose period of stay in the foreign country is shorter: “[...] are more likely to adhere to some behavioral aspects of the ethnic culture” (p. 78). This means that migrants carry with them the attributes of their culture in the new country and these attributes are more articulated at the beginning. On the other hand, migrants who are less religious are usually characterised by having a better occupation and higher education. Their stay in the foreign country is longer as well. If the first group emphasises the cultural features of their country, the second group deemphasises their ethnic culture: “[...] and are more likely to adapt norms and behavioral features of the larger society” (p.78).

This study is delimited by interviewing participants who have lived in the Basque Country for more than two years. The period of stay for all of them is similar, given the fact that South Asian migration in the Basque country is fairly new. As a matter of fact, the theoretical framework of this study has been supported by studies with South Asian migrant women in other countries.²⁵ At the moment of writing this work, the researcher did not encounter any other work whose interest was South Asian female migration in the

²⁵ For studies with South Asian migrants see: Khurian, Gosh (1978); Dhruvarajan (1988); Aquino (1990); Bhasin, Said Khan (1990); Quintos-Deles (1990); Ralston (1992); Dhruvarajan (1993); George, Ramkissoon (1998); Naidoo (2003); Martins, Reid (2007); Mohammad-Ariff, Moliner (2007); Keumjae (2008); Nehuladdin (2008); Akbar (2009); Maitra (2015).

BC. The only reference we had was the study by Ikuspegi, The Basque Observatory for Migration (2019). However, that study was focused on the Asian population in the BC, not South Asia and not women migrants.

CHAPTER 4

MIGRATION AND MIGRATORY PROCESSES

“Women are oppressed in the east, in the west,
in the south, in the north. Women are oppressed
inside, outside home, a woman is oppressed in
religion, she is oppressed outside religion.”

Taslima Nasrin

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 4 is focused on migration and migration processes. We begin by defining migration and the theoretical constructions for migration and gender. Afterwards, we continue with the feminisation of migration, female migration and the concept of the female migrant. In addition, we detect the prevailing factors for female migration. Next, migration in general and then, Asian and South Asian migration in the BC are discussed. We come to a close in the chapter with the perception of native people about the Asian population in the BC.

At the beginning, we define migration and we make a distinction between the terms “immigrant” and “migrant”. Then, we present the different types of migration (Orozko, 2015; Zolfagharian, Saldivar & Brown, 2015). We continue with the migrant personality (Boneva & Hanson Frieze, 2001).

The next part discusses the theoretical constructions for gender and migration. Traditionally, men were the decision-makers for migration and women were their companions that continued accomplishing the reproductive role in the host countries (Vallejo, 2014). Migration is a complex social process and in order to understand the motives for relocation, different factors ought to be considered. Migration may be a possibility for gender transformation, externalising internalised gender roles from the countries of origin (Escudero Espinalt, 2015). Gregorio Gil (2012) criticises Eurocentrism and the custom of generalising about women’s experiences from the same culture of origin or culture. She states that women’s experiences are diverse and it would be dangerous to give only one possible meaning.

The next section is focused on the feminisation of migration, where women migrants started being visible not as victims but as transformers of their own destiny (Marinucci, 2007; Balbuena, 2003). Thus, migration may be one possible source of women’s empowerment (Farah, 2006). Women migrate nationally or transnationally and, until recently, their role in migration has not been considered valuable (Gregorio Gil, 2002). Therefore, new patterns of female migration have emerged.

After the discussion of the feminsation of migration, we focus our attention on the prevailing reasons for female migration (Balbuena, 2003; Caritas Internationalis, 2012; Patel, 2016, etc.). Furthermore, migration in the BC is introduced. The migration flow in the BC is increasing (Vicente, 2006) since the 1990s (Larrogue, 2006). We give the reasons for the interest in research for migration in the BC and we present the evolution of Asian migration in the BC from 2008 until 2018 by historical territory and the distribution by sex and labour situation (Ikuspegi, 2019). We move forward with South Asian migration in the BC and South Asian female migration in the BC, explaining the value of the work with women from developing countries and racialised women.

Finally, we discuss the perception of the native people towards the Asian population in the BC by presenting a graphic with the degree of sympathy towards the population of foreign origin (Ikuspegi, 2019).

4.1. DEFINING MIGRATION

Migration is a basic right of every human being (Carrasco, 2011). The statement sounds utopian in times when not everyone has the right to move freely from one place to another. Each person is supposed to have the freedom of choice to settle in a certain place; to migrate.

In the study, the women participants are called **migrants** rather than **immigrants** except, in the direct quotations of authors who have chosen to use the latter term. Anderson and Blinder (2015) explain that both terms are used interchangeably. They refer to a person who lives in a certain territory that is not their native country. Although as the authors express, these terms are both used to refer to foreigners, in the study the interviewees are named migrant women rather than immigrant women. This is due to the fact that the word migrant appears to be more subtle than the word immigrant. As illustrated in the article “We deride them as 'migrants.' Why not call them people”, written by the journalist David Mash (2015) in the newspaper *The Guardian*, the word “immigrant” has a racist reference in the United Kingdom: “[...] a black person in Britain who should go back home”, as the author exemplifies (par. 9). He says that even if “to immigrate” is the opposite of “to emigrate”, it is dangerous to use the term “immigrant” because it has been related to stereotypes: “But it’s hard to use the former in a neutral context because it has become so loaded, along with phrases such as ‘second-generation immigrant’, an offensive way to refer to their children” (par.9).

Ralston (1991) considers that the term “immigrant” may refer to legal status and to social construction. In terms of social construction, the term alludes to people who are different from those in the host country: “[...] (skin colour, language, religion, dress, customs, work activities and the like). On the one hand, in legal terms, the women may be Canadian citizens who have been permanent Canadian residents for more than twenty years. On the other hand, the term ‘immigrant woman’ is seldom applied to white anglophone Western women who have entered Canada from Australia, New Zealand, Northern Europe, or the United States” (par. 5). The assumption for the above would be that the noun “immigrant” is often used to refer to non-white women who belong to a religion different from Christianity, whose dress code differs from the dress code typical for Northern Europe, the United States, Australia or New Zealand, whose work activity is usually in the

household or around caregiving, and finally whose origin is from the developing countries.

In the study, the term “migrant” is understood as a person who leaves their place of origin, motivated by different reasons, and settles in a country different from their native country. This person may migrate autonomously, in a group or due to family reunification to a country whose culture and language are probably different from their own, as well as the life conditions (Orozko, 2015).

Migration is an ongoing process. People migrate for different reasons and experience different changes with the act of migration. To migrate is to change. Zolfagharian, Saldivar and Braun (2015) identify three types of migration: *upward*, *downward* and *lateral* migration. The first type is when the migrant goes from a developing to a developed country. The second type is the other way around. The last type is when the migrant moves from a developed to another developed country or from a developing to another developing country (p. 331). In this study, the type of migration that is characterised by all of the participants is upward migration.

In their paper, Boneva and Hanson (2001) study the migrant personality. They outline that people who decide to migrate have different personality traits from people who decide to stay. They undertook a study proposing a model of personality characteristics that foster migration. In their findings it is shown that economic factors are not prevailing in the decision to migrate: “We argue here that unfavorable economies in country of origin, emigration and immigration policies, network support in the receiving country, and other environmental factors create the conditions for wanting to leave, but desires to do so are based in the personality of those who make the choice. Thus, under the same environmental conditions, some individuals choose to leave whereas others choose to stay” (p. 478). The study shows that although people who migrate are more work-oriented and power motivated than those who settle in their place, there is no one general personality model of a migrant person. Nevertheless, they do argue that some personality features can be attributed to individuals who are willing to migrate (Boneva and Hanson, 2001). Mohammad-Arif and Moliner (2007) observe that migration may not always be a pleasant experience because it may provoke insecurity as a result of the displacement and the possible marginalisation: “In their adaptation strategies, immigrants redefine their self-perceptions and their collective identities” (par.4).

Before the discussion of the theoretical constructions for migration and gender, we would like to give attention to transnational migration. Tsuda (2012) observes that transnational literature has been mainly focused on the transborder social networks that migrants maintain with the home countries and has not examined how the transborder connections enable them to stay engaged in both the host and the home country. The author suggests four ways in which the migrant is engaged with the host society and the home society. The first one is *zero-sum*. It is an economic transnationalism that analyses cross border remittances and migrant entrepreneurs. The second one is *co-exist*. In this case, the migrant's engagement with the native country may perfectly co-exist with their participation in the host country, dividing their resources between the two countries. The third way is *positive reinforcement*. The engagement with the home country may result in resources they can use in the host country that would improve their social participation. The fourth way is *negative reinforcement*. It is the lack of engagement with one country that may lead to a lack of engagement with the other. Lutz and Palenga-Möllnbeck (2011) say that transnational migrants create transnational spaces in the host country and the native country with their practices, organisations, mental maps and collective identities. The gender specific characteristics are reflected in the everyday practices and the individual position of the migrant in the transnational social spaces is characterised with intersections of life-cycle, class and ethnicity. For the identification of these positions, research on the care responsibility in the household, the age when the migration occurred, the migrant's networks, skills, abilities, resources and life experiences, is needed.

Irregular Migration

This type of migration has an impact on the country of origin, the transit country and the destination country apart from the migrant itself. It converts migrants in a vulnerable category of citizens because of possible discrimination, exploitation and abuse by crime organisations that do human trafficking or migrant smuggling-crimes. The human rights of the migrants are violated with these acts: "While human trafficking and migrant smuggling are two distinct crimes, frequently the two phenomena overlap. In the context of increasing control over borders to prevent irregular migration, many potential migrants turn to organised criminal groups to arrange their border crossing. Smuggled migrants are generally unaware of the risks involved in these transactions and they often become victims of abuse by organized crime syndicates. In addition, they are vulnerable to

become victims of human trafficking” (United Nations, 2013: 93). The United Nations has provided a legal framework comprised of two Protocols to the UN Convention against transnational organised crime to guide Member States in the policy development: “[...] (a) the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children; and (b) the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air” (p. 93). Datta (2011) defines trafficking as a violation of rights for dignified livelihood. In her work, she analyses female trafficking where females are transported and recruited to work in forced prostitution. The author observes that illegal migration and the trafficking of women for sexual exploitation are connected: “Specific gender related issues become evident when female migrants suffer human abuses because of their dual vulnerability as migrants as well as women” (p. 47).

Broederes and Engbersen (2007) highlight the fact that European policies do not facilitate illegal migrant’s path towards integration but the opposite; the measures applied exclude irregular migrants from public services. Thus, irregular migrants cross the borders in an irregular manner and they are obliged to participate in the informal economy as the only possible way to stay in Europe. O’Neil, Fleury and Foresti (2016) say that migration may expose female migrants and refugees to many risks especially if the female workers are lowskilled and if they are working in the unregulated market. The authors consider that empowerment of female migrants occurs through regular channels where they are able to take decisions and when they have access to resources. This is not impossible but it requires actions and cooperation from both the community and the international sector.

4.2. THEORETICAL CONSTRUCTIONS FOR MIGRATION AND GENDER

As discussed in the previous chapters, men are the producers and women are the reproducers by tradition. Men have the power and they are the decision-makers. Thus, if men are the decision-makers then they are those who decide whether, where and when to migrate. However, things change, society changes too and Vallejo (2014) observes that this statement leads to the erroneous generalised belief that men migrate in search for a job and women are their companions who continue to have their reproductive role in the

host society. Boyd (2006) considers that gender inequalities incite women to migrate and their migration is conditioned by these inequalities. Camacho and Hernández (2005) say that gender analysis recognised the differentiated archetypes about female and male migration. In this manner, power relations and the inequalities that emerge during the migratory processes may be understood. Migration is a complex social process in which many factors have to be considered: “[...] socio-economic, political, cultural, individual” (p.86), as well as the countries of origin of the people who migrate. Only then, migrants, either women or men construct their migratory experience that eventually affects them differently.

In this context, Escudero Espinalt (2015) sees migration as a possibility for gender role transformations. Transformations occur when women migrants become acquainted with the values and roles of the new society that the author considers are more egalitarian. In this way they externalise the internalised gender roles acquired from the countries of origin. In her study (Escudero Espinalt, 2015) was interested in how migrant mothers transmit values and gender roles to their daughters in the host society, considering the process of socialisation in their native countries and the acquisition of values in the host countries. An interesting observation from the results of her study is that women migrants have experienced transformations in the way they act and the role they take as a result of their personal experience of life and personality. Culture remained in the shadow, as seen in the following quote: “[...] the change in attitudes and roles that they have experienced since arriving at their destination has come about mainly due to their personal situation and their experience in particular, with the cultural factor remaining in the background” (Escudero Espinalt, 2015: 151).

International migration does not only have an impact on the economy, politics and society but also on the migrants themselves. On one hand, migration is considered to be a facilitating factor for transforming gender relations in the countries of origin. On the other hand, migration may bring a triple discrimination for being a woman, a migrant and for belonging to a certain ethnic group (Gregorio Gil, 2012). The author observes that it would be risky to generalise for the autonomy or the independence of women from the same country of origin or same gender system in spite of the fact that most of the researchers desire to have that result in their studies. Behind this statement stands the critique against ethnocentrism and the tendency for homogenisation of women from a certain origin or culture. The experiences of women are different and very subjective:

“[...] the social class, rural or urban origin, the migratory moment, marital status, age, type of family before and after migration, etc., we are going to clash again and again with changing realities and with multiple meanings that women give to the events to which, as researchers, in our definition of the ‘gender system’, we give a single meaning [...]” (p. 581).

4.3. FEMINISATION OF MIGRATION

The term feminisation of migration has been coined to explain the phenomenon of women changing their places: “to point out, in a generic way, the changes that women went through in the last decades concerning the migratory context” (Marinucci, 2007: 6). The author claims that feminisation of migration is a term that needs to be used to refer to the end of the imperceptibility of women migrants. This process gives a voice to migrant women, seekers of freedom from stigmatised societies (Marinucci, 2007). Balbuena (2003) observes that the stereotypical opinion and the general victimisation of female migrants need to be eradicated on the grounds that female migrants have taken the role of transformers of their own destinies and realities.

Farah (2006) contends that female migration is a possible source for women’s empowerment: “It can and does give rise to structural and institutional changes and above all change in the mind set, the understanding and the life style; migration brings about change not only by redressing social and economic imbalances, but even more by redressing existing gender imbalances and inequalities” (p.24). Besides, women have additional difficulties if they decide to migrate. They have to fight tremendously more than men: “[...] to counter their legacy of being born female; enhance their eligibility; protect their integrity; stand up to exploitation and abuse; uphold their rights and preserve their dignity throughout the migration project” (p.24).

UN Women (2017) observes that the feminisation of migration contributes to development. They provide a reproductive labour force that benefits host countries. In addition to this, they bring human capital. The global migration of women has increased

the employment of women in the care sector both in private sector services and private households. Shutes and Chiatti (2012) in their paper, discuss the case of Italy and England. In Italy, the migrant care worker has substituted the role of woman's unpaid work in the household. In England, female migrant care workers have supplemented the labour in the private sector for lower wages and precarious employment conditions. Romero (2018) explains that unskilled women's labour is usually done by racialised migrant women that converts this labour in an unskilled one. The author draws attention to the fact that the demand for migrant domestic and care workers is in a constant growth because the number of the elderly population in the North is growing too. For that reason: "Working conditions need to be standardised and receive the same labour rights and benefits that receiving countries provide their citizens. These workers should not be expected to give up their family life, but provided paths to permanent residence and the option to reunite family members (p. 1188). Similarly, Williams (2012) states that while women are encouraged into paid employment, care work is maintained as underpaid and undervalued women's work: "Then and today these were cost-effective ways of securing family norms and meeting care needs, creating a reproductive labour force layered through 'race', class and gender inequalities" (p. 372). Lutz and Palenga-Möllenberg (2011) identify three regimes at the heart of migrant care work in Europe. The first is the gender regime in which household and care work are notably gendered and tasks are coded as masculine or feminine. The second regime is part of the welfare regime where the responsibilities for the wellbeing the citizens are distributed between the state, the family and the market. The last is the migration regime whose role is to promote or to discourage the employment of migrant workers. The authors claim that the majority of migrant domestic workers, work in precarious working conditions and that focus should be put on the institutional discussion of the needs of these women such as: "[...] anti-discrimination regulations, work-life balance, migration policies, etc" (p. 353).

4.3.1. FEMALE MIGRATION AND THE CONCEPT OF THE FEMALE MIGRANT

Women migrate either in their own country or transnationally. An interesting consideration of Juliano (2012) is that of women displaced from their own home when they married and moved to their husband's home due to patrilocal values. The author

explains that in the past, and even today in many societies, women leave their house and relocate to their husband's house. This is also migration. Reflecting upon this point of view, women have been considered only as companions to the male migrant in international migration: "[...] their leading role and their strategies have been veiled under the dominant conception that assigns to man the maintaining role and the role of the producer in the public sphere and to women, the role of the reproducer and the maintained in the domestic sphere and the guarantor of the social and moral order" (Gregorio Gil, 2002: 93). Naidoo (2003) points out that women: "[...] bear the major burden of settlement and integration of their families in western host countries" (p.51). Migration may not always be a pleasant experience because it may provoke insecurity as a result of the displacement and possible marginalisation. This means that they should rely on adaptation strategies for the redefinition of their self-perceptions and collective identities (Mohammad-Arif and Moliner, 2007).

Gregorio Gil (2013) observes that there is a Eurocentric standpoint in terms of how migrant women are perceived: "Eurocentrism refers to values, attitudes, ideas and ideological orientations that are informed by the notion of European uniqueness and superiority. This involves, among other things, the tendency to understand non-European history and society in terms of the models, categories and concepts derived from European experiences" (Farid, 2002: 761). Gregorio Gil (2013) believes that the Eurocentric viewpoint is that migrant women are either pioneers or heroines or either victims. Her suggestion is that migrant women ought to be perceived in a different manner. It does not mean that if they have migrated from a "less" developed country to a more developed one, it is because they have suffered in their motherland and they have decided to leave their countries. The problem of Eurocentrism is that it does not allow Europeans to think outside of the Euro-box and consider different factors in the decision to migrate.

Lagarde (2000) acknowledges the courage of migrant women not only because of the decision to change their place of origin and move to a different place but for all other changes that migration implies: different language, different culture, and a different society that does not always treat them with kindness. These women learn to live in a foreign language and in a society with values that often clash with their own. New patterns of female migration are observed; women are autonomous subjects in search of a job, many of them migrate independently, they are decision-makers for migration.

Nevertheless, it is necessary to emphasise the fact that women's experiences of life are not homogeneous because they do not have the same life conditions even if their origin is from the same country or nearby countries, as in this study. Donkor (2000) exemplifies this statement by saying that a young illiterate woman from rural Ghana will not have the same experience of life and the same obstacles of a young, educated woman from the capital of Ghana who has migrated to a foreign country.

In the next part, some of the reasons for the decision to leave the native country and come to a new country are explained.

4.3.2. PREVAILING FACTORS FOR FEMALE MIGRATION

The motivation to leave the native country varies from one person to another. Although poverty is a very important motive in the search of a dignified livelihood, it is not the predominant one. Migration may depend on the quality of life in the country of origin and the particular community, culture, family values, economic conditions and the individual situation of each woman. Other factors are the patriarchal norms that lead to arranged or abusive marriages, domestic violence and violence against women and inequality (Caritas Internationalis, 2012). Patel (2016) contends that in the South Asian context, migration is the result of the subordination of women, the normalised sexual violence within family or caste, marginalisation and unequal opportunities for women. Balbuena (2003) proposes to look beyond economic reasons for migration. There are migrant women who leave their places of origin in search of freedom or because of the patriarchal values of their culture. Hence, the economy is not always the prevailing factor for women's migration. Marinucci (2007) considers that: "[...] migration is the emancipation consequence" (15). If women are successful in liberating themselves from hetero-patriarchal domination and subordination through migration, this could be:"[] encouraged or influenced by social and economic reasons, changes in the labour market, as well as by changes or searches for change in gender relations" (p.16).

The economic aspect of migration is not the scope of this study but rather the experience of life and personal empowerment through the lens of the interviewees. Nonetheless, economy was encompassed in the interview process when the working trajectory was discussed.

Zlotnik (1995) observes that women's role in international migration has been underestimated due to the fact that women have been considered as companions to male

migrants. The stereotype is closely related to the belief that a person migrates with the aim to improve their economy and worker migration has been associated with male migrants whereas female migrants have been ignored until recently. However, the author highlights the fact that although the visibility of migrant female workers constantly increases, the majority of women who migrate internationally are not doing so for work purposes: “That is especially the case of women migrating legally from developing to developed countries, since most European countries have kept their admissions of migrant workers at a minimum ever since the labor-receiving countries in the region put a stop to the recruitment of foreign labor in 1973-1974” (p. 1-2). The author observes that women from developing regions such as Southeast Asia or Latin America, are more likely to migrate transnationally than women from South/West Asia or North Africa. Cortes (2016) explains that migration to the North is more frequent than from North to South. For example, between 60% and 80% of the migrants from the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, are women. Martin (2013) identifies four major migration flows; from South to South, from South to North, from North to North and from North to South. When we say North, we refer to do an industrialised country and South to a developing country. In this study we are interested in the migration from South to North. This flow is the second largest flow of migrants after South to South. Martin (2013) observes that the South to North migration flow is in a constant rise.

Migration is accelerated by poverty and gender inequality in the countries of origin of women. Factors such as the position of women in the household, age, cultural and social norms, resources, state policies and legal issues need to be considered. Thus, migration is gendered: “[...] gender inequality does not only impact on the propensity to migrate, but affects the sector of the economy in which employment is found, the type of employment open to migrant women –often in domestic and care work - and gendered vulnerabilities and exploitation in the country of destination, remittances and return to the country or origin” (p. 134/135). The author with her holistic approach, presents the woman migrant as a contributor to economic resources that leads to empowerment and social welfare, increase of opportunities, access to resources and changes in gender roles.

4.4. RESEARCH LOCALE OF THE STUDY AND MIGRATION IN THE BC

From a geographical perspective, this study is carried out in the BC. The BC is an autonomous community in Northern Spain with Vitoria-Gasteiz as a capital city of the region. The BC consists of three provinces: Araba, Gipuzkoa and Bizkaia. The study offers a brief information for its locale. From a historical perspective, there is data for the BC from pre-history to the Middle Ages. The sixteenth to nineteenth century are marked by liberal capitalism and early industrialisation. The twentieth century is characterised by the Spanish Civil War and the Second Republic. It is when the Basque government was created and the Basque Statute of Autonomy was given to the BC in 1936. The following years are a dark chapter for the BC with the dictatorship of Francisco Franco from 1939 to 1975. Euskara, the language of the BC was banned accompanied by many repressions. The Spanish Constitution was approved in December 1978, three years after the death of the dictator Francisco Franco. However, the constitution did not allow Basques to decide for their future (the right to self – determination). The previously mentioned Statute of Autonomy was approved by referendum in 1979. Thus, Araba, Bizkaia and Gipuzkoa became the three provinces that form the Basque Autonomous Community. Nowadays, the relationship between Spain and the BC is still complicated with many issues to be solved especially the demand for a greater decision- making capacity (Zallo & Ayuso, 2009).

There is a growing interest in the migratory processes in the BC and the reasons for choosing this Autonomous Community is attributed to the fact that in recent years the BC has become a place where the flow of migration is increasing. That being the case, it is very useful to study the phenomenon (Vicente, 2006). Blanco, Alvite and Gómez (2000) say that first Basques migrated from their territory to other countries (especially during the Spanish Civil War) and then, migration from other Spanish provinces occurred due to the industrial boom that the region experienced. Similarly, Larroque (2006) highlights the importance of the immense migration flow and the reception of many migrants in the BC. It was in the 1990s when the number of people from different countries started to increase rapidly, especially with migrants from South America and Africa. Otxoa and Esnaola (2013) notice that although geographically speaking it is a small territory, the BC consists of diverse migratory phenomenon. Pecharromán and Bullen (2005) note that the BC is interesting for research on migration because of its political organisation and the Basque

people's aspiration for their own cultural identity as a region that is well developed economically²⁶.

A study carried out by Ikuspegi (2018), shows that the total number of migrants in the BC in 2018 was 206,175 or 9,4% of the total number of residents in the BC. Chart 4 demonstrates the evolution of the migrant population in the BC from 2008 until 2018:

CHART 4. Evolution of the Migrant Population in the BC 2008 – 2018 in %

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
BC	6,6	7,3	7,7	8,0	8,4	8,4	8,3	8,4	8,6	9,0	9,4
ARABA	8,5	9,5	10,2	10,4	10,9	10,5	10,4	10,5	10,5	10,9	11,3
BIZKAIA	6,3	7,0	7,3	7,6	8,0	8,0	7,7	7,8	8,0	8,3	8,8
GIPUZKOA	6,3	7,0	7,3	7,5	7,9	8,1	8,3	8,5	8,8	9,1	9,5

Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2018: 2)
Prepared by the author

Iraola Arretxe (2012) sees migration as a political issue. Citizenship is related to being a member of the state nationality and “otherness” is related to foreigners. The author considers that there is an asymmetrical relationship between the host country and the migrant and that integration is a two-way process. In the BC, the situation is complex because there is a lack of competence to deal with migration and a lack of public debate on citizenship, cultural diversity, the role of Euskara in connection to migrants, the rights of migrants and the mechanisms for integration. Thus, the BC needs to promote the well-being of migrants and equality; the benefits enjoyed by Basque citizens should be applicable to migrants as well.

The Basque government has created a set of proposals to respond to the migration challenges in the BC. The set supports pluralism and solidarity with people from other countries and origins for the creation of an inclusive community fostering non discrimination and equal rights. The BC needs migrants to meet the workforce and the demographic requirements. In addition, channels for regularised migration are promoted, as well as the development of actions for the improvement of the reception and the

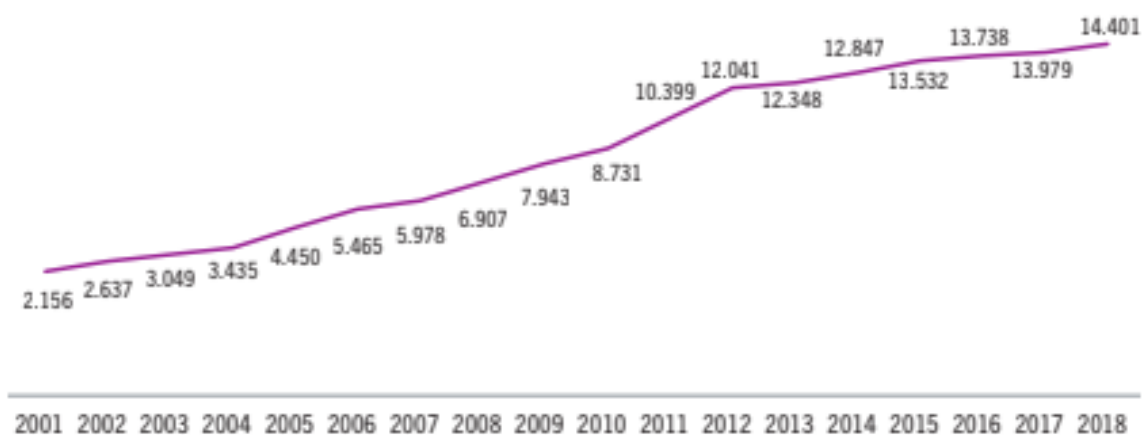
²⁶ Retrieved from <https://ec.europa.eu/growth/tools-databases/regional-innovation-monitor/base-profile/basque-country>

integration of asylum seekers and refugees. In terms of migrants in vulnerable situation, the BC ensures to provide the necessary resources to give an adequate humanitarian response especially to women, minors and victims of human rights violations. Finally, migrants in non-regular situation need to be given resources for a solidary and humanitarian response. The aim is higher autonomy of undocumented migrants (Eusko Jaurlaritza, 2018).

4.4.1. ASIAN MIGRATION IN THE BC

The Basque Immigration Observatory Ikuspegi conducted research for the Asian population in the BC in 2019. The total number of the Asian population in the BC was 14.401 in 2018 or 7,0 % of the total foreign population in the region, as presented on Graphic 5:

GRAPHIC 4. Evolution of the Asian Population in the BC 2008 – 2018

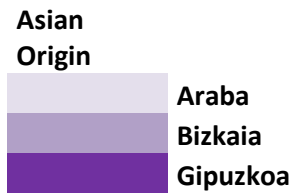
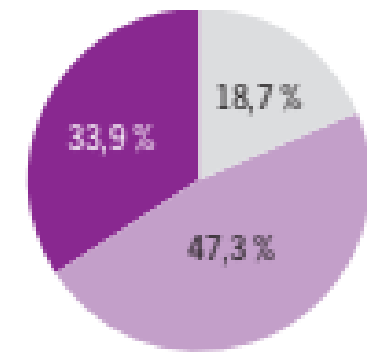


Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2019: 2)

The graphic shows that the population from Asia is continuously growing, being 5.798 in 2008 and 14.401 in 2018.

Graphic 5. shows that the province of Bizkaia is the place of residence for most of the Asian migrants. This is followed by the province of Gipuzkoa and finally Araba.

GRAPHIC 5. Distribution of the Asian Population by Historical Territory, 2018.



Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2019: 2)

In Bilbao there are 3.098 Asian migrants. The next city is Gasteiz with 2.408 Asian migrants. The last city is Donostia with 1.358 migrants (Ikuspegi, 2019).

4.4.2. DISTRIBUTION BY SEX AND LABOUR SITUATION

The number of male migrants from Asia to the BC is slightly higher than that of female migrants. The total percentage of male migrants is 56,0 % and the total percentage of female migrants is 52,6%. This is due to the fact that the number of male migrants from Pakistan is considerably higher than the number of female migrants (73,6 % versus 26,4 %) ²⁷. The report shows that Asian migrants are young, varying in age from 25 to 44 years old.

The report by Ikuspegi (2019) shows that the employment rate of Asian migrants in the BC is 64%, that is, above the average rate of the rest of the foreign population. This information, distributed by sex, would give 57,9% Asian male employees and 45,9% Asian female employees.

²⁷ See the distribution by sex of the Asian population in the BC, 2018, Appendix.

4.5. SOUTH ASIAN MIGRATION IN THE BC

In this study a current phenomenon has been contemplated. As Geiger (1986) explains, the presence of women from developing countries and racialised women in research is valuable not only for acknowledging their issues, but also because these issues play a significant role in the production of feminist knowledge. The growing number of Asian women who migrate to the BC and the lack of knowledge about their experience as subjects in the BC lead us to ask the question: “How is the life of these women now in this context and how was it in their native countries?” A point that needs to be considered is that the BC is a place with a long migration tradition, but Asian migration is a new phenomenon.²⁸

South Asia is a region that forms part of the continent of Asia. The lexical definition of the term “South Asia” as provided by the Oxford online dictionary is: “The southern parts of Asia, in particular, India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, Nepal, and Sri Lanka”. Nevertheless, the countries that comprise the continent are very different on the social and political levels, as exemplified by George and Ramkissoon (1998): “In India alone, there are over 20 regional languages in addition to Hindi, which is the national language, and numerous religions, such as Hinduism, Islam, Buddhism, Jainism, Zoroastrianism, and Christianity. There is also significant international competition for power and influence among countries in the region. In fact, some women (like those from Pakistan and Sri Lanka) prefer to be identified by their countries of origin (in this case, to be called Sri Lankan and Pakistani) rather than by the more generic term South Asian” (p.104). Ralston (1992) discusses the South Asian identity; : “Being South Asian refers not so much to the personal qualities of individuals [...], but rather to social characteristics which have been constructed and reconstructed in historical and ongoing social relationships in specific social, economic and political contexts” (p. 246). Hence, being or not being a South Asian is not delimited by the individual characteristics of a person, but the social traits that distinguish that group of people from other groups in their particular social, economic and political circumstances.

²⁸ The first paragraph of this section forms part of a published article by the researcher and the director of thesis. For further information please see: Sokolovska, S. Silvestre. C. M. (2018). Life History Method as a Tool for the Exploration of South Asian’s Women Empowerment. *Crítica y Resistencia. Revista de conflictos sociales latinoamericanos*, 8, 44-61. ISSN: 2525-0841

In this study, women from three different nationalities from South Asia have participated. Hence, even if they share some experiences, it is not possible to generalise, because they come from one particular region of Asia. An interesting statement by Ralston (1991) in another of her works with South Asian women is that being a South Asian migrant woman is a social construction. The author explains that the term does not refer to the personal characteristics of a woman who is migrant and comes from Asia but to features that arise from the society and are constructed and reconstructed in that particular society: “Things like national origin, skin colour, language, religion, culture, food customs, dress and work activities become organised as ‘differences’ which have important consequences for individuals and groups. In fact, the term ‘South Asian’ itself is a social construction to encompass distinctly different ethno-cultural groups who trace their origins to the Indian sub-continent” (par. 4).

4.5.1. SOUTH ASIAN FEMALE MIGRANTS IN THE BASQUE COUNTRY

The feminisation of migration as a concept has been discussed previously in this chapter. When related to the BC, Emakunde (2012) states that, female migration to the BC is an ongoing process as result a result of the favourable working and life opportunities for women within the community, making the BC one of the most prosperous territories in Spain. Furthermore, the high level of feminisation of migration has led to the need to give attention to the phenomenon from the point of view of human sustainability (Aierdi and Fouassier, 2013).

In the next chart, we present the evolution of female migration in the BC from 2008 until 2018:

CHART 5. *Evolution of Female Migration in the BC 2008-2018*

Year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Number of female migrants	71.194	79.219	83.640	87.948	92.552	93.509	93.531	95.199	97.999	102.653	108.653

Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2019)

The above-presented chart shows the evolution of female migration in the three provinces of the Basque Country, from 2008 to 2018. As shown in the chart, the number of women migrants increases each year, from 71.194 women in 2008 to 108.653 in 2018.

In the territory of the BC there reside women from diverse nationalities, as observed from the statistics of the Basque Immigration Observatory *Ikuspegi*²⁹. Nonetheless, the focus of this study is on one collective of women settled in the BC, women from South Asia. South Asian migration is a new phenomenon in the BC. The inquisitiveness to listen to the stories of the women and to present their experience of life with the aim to visualise their existence in the Basque society is the main objective of this work. The following South Asian female nationalities settled in the BC since 2008 are detected:

CHART 6. Female Migrants in the BC from South Asia 2008 -2018

INDIA	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
N° of women	32	43	44	69	78	86	91	154	154	159	169
NEPAL											
N° of women	12	16	18	25	60	68	99	114	129	131	153
BANGLADESH											
N° of women	7	7	10	24	35	32	61	72	85	92	105
PAKISTAN											
N° of women	137	159	246	450	609	763	909	996	1.087	1.214	1.302
SRI LANKA											
N° of women	2	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/	/

Source: *Ikuspegi*, Basque Immigration Observatory (2016)

Prepared by the author

²⁹ The information for the evolution of the female population of foreign origin in the Basque Country from 2008 to 2019 is given in the Appendix. For further information visit www.ikuspegi.eus

The chart presents the number of South Asian women in the BC from 2008 until 2018. The data by Ikuspegi, the Basque Immigration Observatory shows that South Asian migration is small in quantity. The migration is predominantly male.³⁰ As represented in the chart above, the migration of South Asian women has been inconstant growth since 2008. There has not been a case where the number of women has decreased from that point on. Pakistani women are the most numerous migrants to the BC, being 1.302 in 2018. They are followed by Indian migrant women, whose number was 169 in 2018. Then, Nepali women appear with their presence. They were 153 in 2018. The penultimate collective of women are the migrant women from Bangladesh. They were 105 in 2018. Finally, the only data found on Sri Lankan women is the data from 2008. From 2009 until the present day there is no data on the number of Sri Lankan women in the BC.

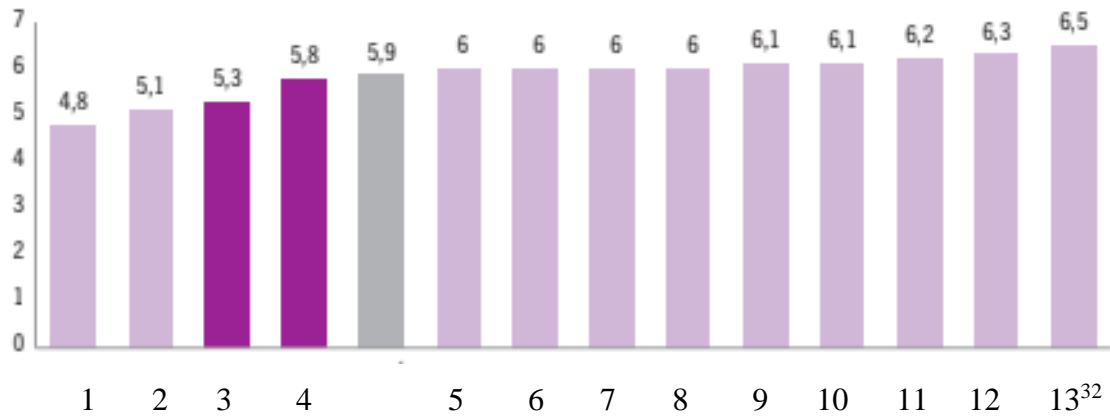
4.5.2. THE PERCEPTION AMONG BASQUES OF THE ASIAN POPULATION IN THE BC

This chapter is closed by looking at how the native people of the host country perceive the Asian collective. Generally speaking, little is known about the Asian community. The study by Ikuspegi (2019) shows that the level of sympathy towards the Asian population has noticeably grown. On the scale from 0 to 10, the Chinese population is the best valued, with 6, while the South Asian population has a slightly worse evaluation, a 5. An interesting observation is that migrants from the “developed” European Union countries are the best rated.³¹

GRAPHIC 6. Degree of Sympathy towards the Population from Foreign Origin in the BC 2018

³⁰ See South Asian migration in the BC by country of origin and sex 2008 - 2018 in the Appendix.

³¹ Romania forms part of the European Union but is evaluated worse than South Asia. The only country that Romania precedes in the evaluation is Morocco.



Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2019: 9)

³² 1- Morrocco; 2- Romania; 3- Pakistan (Nepal, Bangladesh); 4- China; 5- Paraguay; 6- Brazil; 7- Bolivia; 8- Colombia, Ecuador, Peru; 9- Nicaragua, Honduras; 10- USA; 11- Sub-Saharan Africa; 12- Argentina; 13- European Union.

CHAPTER FIVE
CONCEPTUALISATION OF
EMPOWERMENT

“women are so far behind that if you only
promote women for the next 100 years,
we still won’t defeat patriarchy”

Radhika Vaz

INTRODUCTION

Chapter 5 centres on the conceptualisation of empowerment. First, we define power and then we move forward with empowerment as a feminist concept for the improvement of the rights of women. Before discussing sorority and alliances among women, the concept of disempowerment is discussed.

Power is defined in different ways (Dahl, 1957; Batliwala, 1997; Castells, 1998; Glick and Fiske, 1999, Vallejo, 2014). Lukes (2005) identifies three dimensions of power and we present the dimensions in Chart 7. After that, we continue with the feminist definition of power whose aim is not dominance or power over somebody (power over women, power over other men, power over the marginalised) but the ability to make choices and to be autonomous (Benett and Chapman, 2010).

After the discussion of power, empowerment as a feminist concept for the improvement of the life of women is discussed. It is a strategy to combat gender inequality and promote women's development. The social context is crucial for the empowerment process (Benett and Chapman, 2010). It may be seen as a reaction against disempowering features. Then, we show the different components of empowerment which may be individual, collective and social (Rubio, 2014). Kabeer (1999) states that resources, agency and achievements are the key constituents of empowerment. Agency is related to the *power within*. The ability to make choices is related to *power to* and, finally, the negative sense of agency is *power over*. In addition to this, Mosedale (2005) mentions the collective action or *power with*. Then, we present two graphics that depict the capacities for individual and collective empowerment and the types of empowerment. The aim of the process is to transform social relations (Rowlands, 1997) through the key features: self-esteem, decision-making, control over life, goal-setting, self-efficacy, knowledge, competence, action, ability to make choices, dignity and impact (Rowlands, 1997; Kabeer, 1999; Lagarde, 2000; Benett and Chapman, 2010, etc.).

The chapter ends with sorority and alliances among women. The participation of women in a group with mutual goals may empower them individually or collectively and build sorority and friendships. The networking between women is necessary for achieving mutual goals (Zimbalist, 1979). The self-organisation of women opposes the politics of the state, family, religious norms, caste, and institutions and aims at the remodeling of values (Patel, 2016).

5.1. DEFINITION OF POWER

In this chapter, the discussion will point to the concept of empowerment. Before going deeper into the topic, power is discussed. The noun “empowerment” is actually a word game containing the noun “power”. Castells (1998) defines power as: “[...] the ability of a social actor to impose its will on others, regardless of consensus” (p.474). There may be confusion in the distinction between the terms power and influence; while the former imposes, the latter considers and then frames the choices of the social actors depending on their interests (Castells, 1998). Vallejo (2014) identifies two types of power: *sovereignty* and *deployment*. The first refers to the dominant authorities in the society who practise power over individuals. The second is reflected in social movements like feminism because its goal is to combat the oppressor through knowledge: “[...] as an intellectual strategy to disrupt the knowledge/power relationship, by making visible and by opening to the Resistance the systems of ideas that constructed the subject, in a way that power is not only practised through force, but is also maintained through the discourse, the ideas and the knowledge” (p. 86). Batliwala (1997) views power as the control over material goods, intellectual resources and ideology. Material goods comprise the possession of physical and tangible deeds. Intellectual resources refer to the knowledge acquired, ideas and perceptions and ideology would be the ability to create and sustain beliefs, values, and attitudes, behaviors on the specific socioeconomic and political context of the individual. In this way Batliwala (1997) deduces that: “ Therefore, power is accumulated for those who control or are prepared to influence the distribution of material resources, knowledge and the ideology that governs the social relations both in the private and the public life” (p. 192). Dahl (1957) claims that power is executed when one particular subject is able to affect another particular subject in a way that is not in accordance with their interests: “A has power over B to the extent that he can get B to do something that B would not otherwise do” (pp. 202-203). The assumption is that A is men and B is women. A and B are social actors and they are related. Power is the relation among the actors in society. Glick and Fiske (1999) explain that in the process of socialisation, men have been taught to learn how to have and practice power: “Men are socialised to act in ways that are consistent with having social power, at least when they are interacting with women of similar or lower social class to their own, preparing them to assume higher-status social roles” (p. 379).

Lukes (2005) recognises three dimensions of power and they are explained in the following lines:

- ***The one-dimensional viewpoint***

Here Lukes (2005) criticises Dahl's (1957) pluralistic view on power as elitist in elitist-decision making structures and pluralist in pluralist decision-making structures: "[...] this first, one-dimensional, view of power involves a focus on behaviour in the making of decisions on issues over which there is an observable conflict of (subjective) interests, seen as express policy preferences, revealed by political participation" (p. 19). Holders of the one-dimensional viewpoint believe that power only appears when, in the decision-making process, there is a conflict. Thus, according to this viewpoint, people are conscious about the injustice but if they do not act against it (not only the elite but everyone is able to participate in decision-making) this is due to their indifference, making them passive civic people as opposed to active political people (Sadan, 2004: 40).

- ***The two-dimensional viewpoint***

In this view, unlike the previous one where power emerges only in situations of conflict during a decision-making process, power arises in non-decision making as well. Here, non-participation is considered to be: "a manifestation of fear and weakness and not necessarily as a manifestation of indifference" (Sadan, 2004: 42). This viewpoint shares the idea that the powerless are completely aware of their situation and failed at recognising the fact that the subordinated may have an erroneous, internalised consciousness, deeply rooted in the power relations (Sadan, 2004).

- ***The three-dimensional viewpoint***

Lukes (2005) is critical towards the previous dimension as being too individualistic and recognises a third dimension of power. This dimension gives the possibility to individuals to consider resources outside of politics, such as the institutional framework, society or the actual decisions of the individual. Nevertheless, conflict is not excluded. Here the author mentions the term *latent conflict*: conflict of interests among the power executors and the interests of the powerless.

In the following chart, the views discussed above are summarised:

CHART 7. One-, Two- and Three-Dimensional View on Power

ONE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW	TWO-DIMENSIONAL VIEW	THREE-DIMENSIONAL VIEW
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Decision-making • (Key) issues • Observable (overt conflict) • (Subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences revealed by political participation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • (Qualified) critique of behavioural focus • Decision-making and non-decision making • Issues and potential issues • Observable (overt or covert) conflict • (Subjective) interests, seen as policy preferences or grievances 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique of behavioural focus • Decision-making and control over political agenda (not necessarily through decisions) • Issues and potential issues • Observable (overt or covert), and latent conflict • Subjective and real interests

Source: (Lukes, 2005: 29)
Prepared by the author

Feminist theories of power differentiate from the patriarchal perceptions of what power means. It is a concept that allows women to make their own choices and to be autonomous. This power is not practised over others with the goal to dominate others. The goal is to have equal rights where each person can act in accordance with their belief (Marinucci, 2007). The anthropologist Zimbalist (1979) has analysed the social relations between the sexes. She has come to the conclusion that even if women may have power, importance and influence, in relation to men, their position is inferior as a result of the social structure and the organisation within cultures. Rowlands (1995) sees power in terms of “obedience or ‘power over’ to control or influence others” (p. 101). In another of her works, Rowlands (1997) observes that: “the power dynamics of gender, race, class or any other form of oppression, are not considered in the societies” (p. 11). A gender analysis of power shows that ‘power over’ is predominantly practised by men over women, over other men and by the dominant social, political, economic or cultural group over the marginalised. When power increases, the influence of the individual increases as well: “[...] an increase in power is an increase in one’s influence in social relations at any level of human interaction, from dyadic interactions to the interaction between a person and a system” (Benett and Chapman, 2010: 647). Empowerment will be successful when

the individual obtains a meaningful personal increase in power through their own efforts, the authors claim.

Hill (2003) in her paper speaks for development as an empowerment. She recognises the fact that changes that benefit those who have less power than the dominant social actors usually encounter resistance. The author considers that improvement will depend on the institutional norms and the goodwill of the social actors that is not always welcomed because it requires social transformation: “Feminist goals, such as an equal ability to participate in political processes or an equal capability to exercise power, are linked to a social transformation that may be as difficult to achieve as that envisioned by Marx in his dictum, “From each according to his ability; to each according to his need” (p. 130).

5.2. EMPOWERMENT AS A FEMINIST CONCEPT FOR THE IMPROVEMENT OF THE RIGHTS OF WOMEN

This chapter is concerned with women’s empowerment. Nowadays, the term has become a trending topic and it has been used by politicians, celebrities, etc.; in the media, education, social work (Rowlands, 1995). Despite its massive use today, it was only in the 1970s when empowerment started to be discussed (Akbar 2009). On the basis of the issues discussed during the Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995, the conference participants came to the conclusion that empowerment is a fundamental strategy to combat gender inequalities and to promote women’s development. At that meeting, empowerment was defined as: “[...] the self-affirmation of women’s capacities for their participation in the decision-making processes and access to power” (Lizana, 2014: 9). This access to power is not an access to the kind of power characterised by dominance as the guiding force, but power that would actually change this social model through the capacity to take decisions and through mutual collaboration. Silvestre Cabrera and Royo Prieto (2019) define empowerment as a process in which women acquire individual and collective awareness. In that way, their self-confidence, self-esteem, capacity for decision making and access to power increase. The outcome is the influence to transform the subordinating structures.

First of all, the starting point of empowerment theory is that the social and political environments are essential for the wellbeing of the individual (Perkins and Zimmerman 1995). By the same token, the authors draw the attention to the aim of empowerment research; to detect capacities and to provide possibilities for skill and knowledge development rather than focusing on the disadvantages, blaming or victimising the powerless individual. Benett and Chapman (2010) agree with Perkins and Zimmerman (1995) on the crucial role of the social context for the empowerment process. This viewpoint comes from the fact that not all powerless individuals have equal opportunities to overcome their situation and to obtain power; but it is quite the opposite: empowerment occurs in contexts where the distribution of power is unequal and existing structures persist in that some individuals are more privileged than others.

Empowerment emerged as a criticism generated within women's movements around the world. The empowerment critique was mainly directed towards the institutions that reinforced and applied practices in favor of masculine domination (Batliwala, 1997). Empowerment aims to challenge power relations in terms of caste, class, race, gender, etc., and to question men's domination and women's subordination through recognition of the patriarchal ideology. Recognition refers to the internalisation of subordination since childhood: "It has to be kept in mind that women have been taken to participate in their own oppression through a complex hatch of religious sanctions, social and cultural taboos, superstitions, hierarchies among women within the family, conditioning, withdrawals, concealment, limitations of physical mobility, food discrimination and other family resources and control over their sexuality (including concepts such as "good" and "bad" woman) [...]" (p. 196). The author maintains the view that transformation is needed for women's self-image about their rights, capacities, values in the private and the public sphere (Batliwala, 1997). Escudero Espinalt (2014) makes a reference to Latin American and Caribbean women who in 1985 saw in the concept of empowerment a tool for the rise of women's self-esteem and self-confidence, capacity for their own decision-making and, what is more, mutual collaboration for the reconstruction of gender roles through collective power, as understood in feminism. Patel (2016)³³ believes that if women are

³³ The publication *Changing Nature of Gender Politics in India* by Patel (2016), was given as a private document in Word format to the PHD candidate by the Professor Vibhuti Patel, a supervisor of the PHD Candidate during her research mobility at the Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, TATA Institute for Social Sciences, Mumbai, India.

empowered, their life does not depend anymore on external factors but rather on their own decisions: “[...] setting their own agendas, gaining skills, building self-confidence, solving problems and developing self-reliance. No one can empower another; only the individual can empower herself or himself to make choices or to speak out. Institutions within the State and civil society are supporting processes that can nurture self-empowerment of women through the collective efforts of the women’s movement” (p. 2). Thus, if women are empowered, they would be able to make their plans for the future, gain knowledge in areas they are interested in, they can feel assurance in their own qualities, take risks, overcome difficulties and finally trust in themselves and their capabilities. Keumjae (2008) claims: “[...] women’s active involvement in constructing and reacting to various empowering and disempowering realities has been often overlooked, rendering women as victims rather than agents of change in their own life course plans” (p.28). So, empowerment is not only the construction of empowering traits that would benefit women, but the reaction to the disempowering features that amplify social injustice against women. Goldman and Little (2015) note that empowerment occurs when those who have been denied the opportunity to make choices through resources and agency are able to do so. They consider that achievements lead to empowerment: “Achievements can also be seen as resources for empowerment if empowerment is viewed as a process of sequential and sometimes simultaneous stepping-stones changes in one sphere leading to subsequent changes in other spheres” (p. 763). Individuals are empowered when they are able to increase their possibilities and exercise them without any constraint (Rowlands, 1997).

In the empowerment processes various factors ought to be considered. Zimmerman (1990) identifies the context, motivation, reasoning and the personality of the individual. Individuals who are empowered do not necessarily take the right decision always, but they are empowered because they have the possibility to make a decision. The level of empowerment depends on class or caste, ethnicity, wealth, age, position in the family, etc. (Mosedale, 2005). Lagarde (1996) sees empowerment as a fundamental constituent of human development and a tool for combating patriarchy by changing the patriarchal norms in one society. Rodríguez, Salvador and Hernández (2014) describe empowerment not only as a goal but as a process towards individual and collective identity.

As already discussed in Chapter 2, women’s assigned role is to serve others and to exist for others. Lagarde (2000) considers that this condition is harmful for women. The author

distinguishes two dimensions for the creation of new conditions. The first one is subjective and internal. It is the capability to separate the other from the centre of the self: “[...] place the *I* in the centre, and displace the *others* to the periphery of their own subjectivity, of their own time and of their own symbolic space and material, by redefining properties and commitments” (p. 203). The second dimension corresponds with the relation that the self has with the other. These dimensions raise an assessment in women to respond to their necessities and use their capacities for independence and autonomy eradicating subordination: “We seek to eliminate the powers of dominion, the *captivities*, which oppress women” (p. 203).

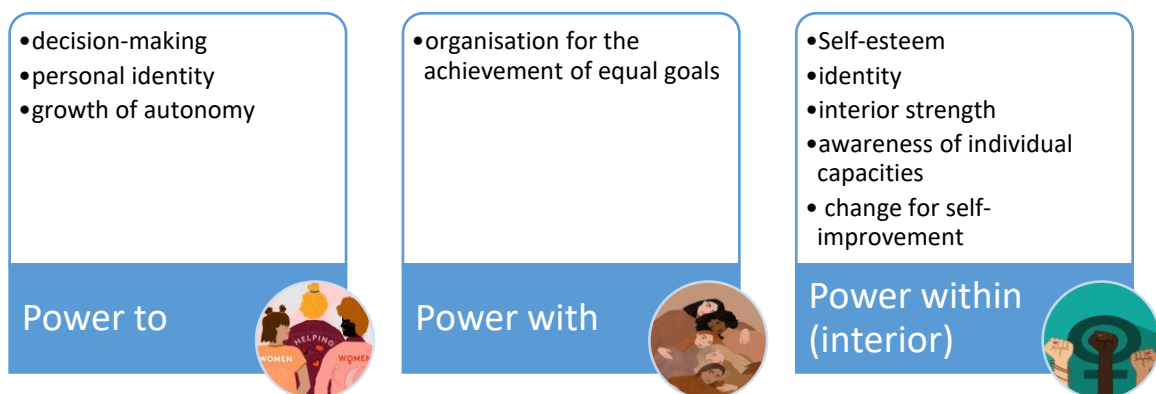
5.2.1. THE DIFFERENT COMPONENTS OF EMPOWERMENT

Rubio (2014) states that empowerment may be individual, collective and social. The individual dimension refers to self-confidence, self-valuation and work for the benefit for the individual. The second dimension is focussed on the creation and maintenance of ties with persons who share mutual interests and demand these same interests. In the social dimension of empowerment changes on the social, political and economic level are produced, with the objective to eliminate gender discrimination in the social structure and relations within the structure. Kabeer (1999) recognises resources, agency and achievements as the key constituents of women’s empowerment. Resources are the *pre-conditions* of the empowerment process. Agency is the *process* of the actual empowerment. Achievements are the *outcomes* of the process (p. 437). The dimension *resources* does not only refer to economic resources but to those resources available through social interactions. The second dimension, *agency*, is related to the capacity to establish life goals and the intention to accomplish them. Agency is what Kabeer (1999) defines as the *power within*. Mosedale (2005) relates *power within* with self-confidence and self-esteem claiming that power begins with the internalisation of these two concepts. In reference to power, agency can be either positive or negative. It is positive when people are able to make their choices even if there are denials; they have the possibility to choose, no matter what. This is what Kabeer (1999) names as *power to*. The negative sense of agency is when it executes the role of *power over*, or when one individual neglects the choices of the other by exercising violent actions. However, claiming that power equals choice is complicated on account of the fact that many women have internalised their inferior status in society: “Women’s acceptance of their secondary claims on house-hold

resources, their acquiescence to violence at the hands of their husbands, their willingness to bear children to the detriment of their own health and survival to satisfy their own or their husband's preference for sons, are all examples of behavior by women which undermine their own well-being" (Kabeer, 1999: 440). Hence, *achievements* are the dimension that cannot be directly understood as unequal because different individuals interpret differently the ways things function in society (Kabeer, 1999). *Power over* is seen as dangerous because of the fear that there is going to be a change in roles and men, apart from losing power, will be manipulated by the power of women. Thus, men's concerns about losing power are a serious impediment to women's empowerment (Rowlands, 1997). Mosedale (2005) introduces the element *power with*, apart from the abovementioned ones: "*Power with* refers to collective action, recognising that more can be achieved by a group acting together than by individuals alone. Many interventions aiming to empower women note the importance of creating opportunities for women to spend time with other women reflecting on their situation, recognising the strengths they do possess and devising strategies to achieve positive change" (p. 250).

Rodríguez, Salvador and Hernández (2014) consider that the previously mentioned dimensions are crucial for the construction of individual and collective empowerment. They refer to them as capacities.

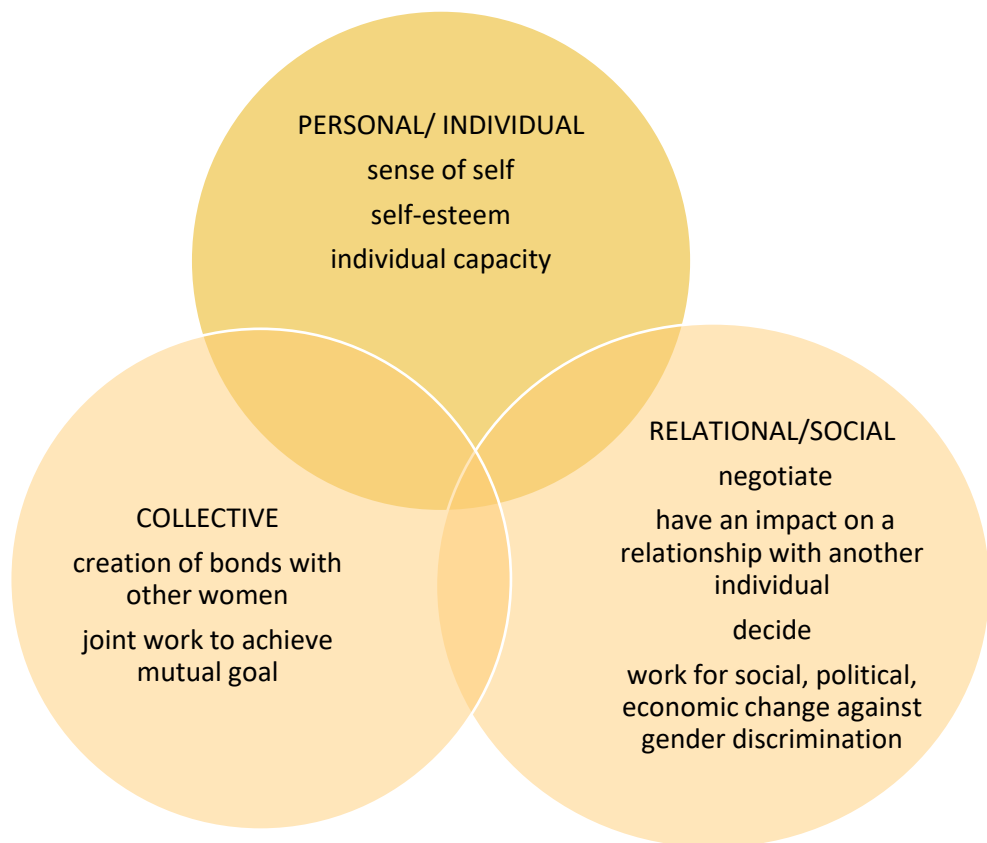
GRAPHIC 7. Capacities for Individual and Collective Empowerment



Source: Rodríguez, Salvador & Hernández (2014)

For Rowlands (1995), personal empowerment occurs when the marginalised individual becomes conscious of the internalised oppression by the dominant power and begins to become aware of their possibilities as an individual. Collective empowerment happens when the individuals that have a mutual goal work together to achieve that goal. Relational/Social empowerment is the one where the individual develops the ability for negotiation and influence. As a result of the ideas expressed here, the following graphic with the types of empowerment has been developed (Rubio, 1994; Rowlands, 1995):

GRAPHIC 8. *Types of Empowerment*



Source: Rubio (1994), Rowlands (1995)
Prepared by the author

Mosedale (2005), states that a person may become empowered if and only if they have been disempowered at some point in their life. In this manner, empowerment cannot be bequeathed by anyone else, but it can be facilitated. The individual, rather than the

collective, is the most important. Although women's struggles for empowerment have taken a collective standpoint, the focus is always on the empowerment of the self. Empowerment is a continuous process. A woman is not going to achieve the ultimate goal of being empowered absolutely because there is no measurable line to which extent somebody can feel empowered, or disempowered: "The process of empowerment is both experienced as a feeling of personal change and development, and also manifested, or demonstrated, in changed behaviour. Each woman experiences the process in an individual way, related to her own history, circumstances, and actions" (Rowlands, 1997: 114). Empowerment is created in contexts where each woman in her diversity is able to defend herself and to fight against oppression and domination: "That is the deep sense of the individual *empowerment* that only occurs if it is socially sustained, if it extends in the society" (Lagarde, 2000: 190).

From all of the points made above, the assumption is that empowerment is a process of transition from a state of powerlessness to a state of self-consciousness about one's life and environment (Sadan, 2004). The aim is to transform social relations (Rowlands, 1997). This transformation occurs in: "people's feelings and capacities; the life of the collective that they belong to; and the professional practice that gets involved in the situation" (Sadan, 2004: 13). Hence, empowerment is a process of development of the self. It allows the individual to redefine themselves and improve their capacities.

Shakya and Young (2019) observe that implications of migration for gender roles and relations are often being overlooked. Women need to be given attention as a single category in order to gain a more subtle perspective on how migration may be positive for them: "Adapting to new places across borders themselves is certainly a challenging task for anyone, and women migrants face gender inequality in roles and relations in both sending and host countries. Gained mobility from homeland to foreign countries, however, may also open up new opportunities to some migrant women" (p. 106). Their study of the empowerment of Nepalese migrant women in South Korea shows that migration for work may be an asset. Even if they were employed in low-skilled jobs, they were able to earn more money than in their home country and they also could channel the money into their families. In addition, they had the capacity of controlling their resources: "[...] which they can use in long-term strategies for economic independence. It can also strengthen their sense of agency and increase their self-confidence in their interactions with natal and marital families" (p. 118). The authors suggest some actions that could

make the migratory experience empowering. They need to be considered by governments in both sending and recipient countries. One of the suggestions is the work permit in the host countries that would increase women's empowerment and it would reduce human rights abuse and risks. Overall, their study shows that mobility may enrich and empower women. To live in a country different from your own is a process of constant learning. Migrant women can share their foreign experiences and serve as role models to other women. This would have an impact on challenging gender inequality and empowering women in individual and collective level.

Now that empowerment has been discussed, the focus in the following subchapter is placed on self-esteem as an essential attribute for a person to be empowered (Lagarde, 2000; Rowlands, 1997).

5.2.2. THE KEY FEATURES FOR THE EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

In this part of the chapter, the central components of individual empowerment are discussed: self-esteem, decision-making, control over one's life, goal-setting, self-efficacy, knowledge, competence, action and impact (Bandura, 1994; Rowlands, 1997; Kabeer, 1999; Lagarde, 2000; Benett and Chapman, 2010, etc.).

For Lagarde (2000), self-esteem is the most important component for the empowerment of women. Self-esteem is the interpretations that people have about themselves and the events around them. The construction of self-esteem is the path towards liberty; to be free and live in freedom. The author argues that the feminist paradigm desires for women to redirect the self-esteem in the direction of their capacities. It consists of women's raising awareness of their abilities and potentials, and sharing them with their female companions: "The fundamental thing from the feminist perspective is that strengthening self-esteem consists in achieving personal and collective empowerment of women, and in strengthening our democratising capacity in the world" (p.27). By sharing experiences, where one woman takes the role of a teacher and the others of learners, women's wisdom is acknowledged.

Self-confidence, self-esteem and being an agent that makes things happen are the core of the empowerment process as stated by Rowlands (1997). She also includes dignity as a key aspect. Nevertheless, having self-confidence or dignity does not always lead to

transformations in the execution and the experience of power. What the author is trying to convey is that having high levels of self-esteem or dignity would not be equal to empowerment. The process is more than that: “[...] it is also what happens *as a result* of having self-confidence and dignity. [...] “Factors which encourage empowerment can be reinforced and are reinforcing; inhibiting factors and obstacles can be mitigated and overcome, thus serving to encourage and affirm empowerment” (p. 127).

Lagarde (2000) mentions two terms, *sintonía* y *asintonía*, to refer to the rise of women’s self-esteem. *Sintonía* refers to *in harmony with* while the closest translation of *asintonía* would be *incompatibility with*. In the patriarchal order of society, there are women who disagree with the roles they are assigned, the values, beliefs and the tradition of their culture and the society’s lifestyle. Therefore, they decide to break with the supposed *harmony* and be *incompatible with* that harmony created by the dominant power in society. As defined in the Cambridge Dictionary of the English Language *harmony* is: “the agreement of ideas, feelings or actions, or a pleasing combination of different parts”³⁴. Women who are *incompatible with* the *harmony* reject the patriarchal norms and are eager to construct a self-identity rather than obeying the rules of the socially constructed identity.

Another central concept of empowerment is the ability to make choices when taking a decision. Choice as a concept may be qualified differently. It may refer to the proper conditions of choice. Choices may be taken after being observed from different points of view, sometimes there may be no choice and furthermore, some of the existent choices may not be the correct alternative. The second type of qualification of choices is related to the importance of being able to differentiate “strategic life choices, and second-order choices” (Kabeer, 1999: 461). After the choice has been taken, the consequences may be used to assess how the choices taken challenge and break with the social inequalities and to what extent they produce and reproduce those inequalities (Kabeer, 1999).

Goals cannot be found in explicit definitions of empowerment, as observed by Benett and Chapman (2010). Nonetheless, in the process, the individual establishes a set of goals that they follow and intend to accomplish. When the individual identifies their goals, this act has a positive impact on their personality because it leads to changes that may improve their well-being. It influences their belief that they have the capacity to achieve that goal.

³⁴ Retrieved from the Cambridge online dictionary of the English language. See dictionary.cambridge.org

Self-efficacy refers to the ability of people to be conscious for their capacities to act and take control over their lives. This component defines people's feelings, thoughts, motivation and behaviour (Bandura, 1994). The author recognises four sources that influence self-efficacy. The first one is failure before success. The overcoming of obstacles is a process of great effort where the individual learns what it takes to succeed and do not give up easily when setbacks appear. The second source is role models. If the individual observes other individuals as similar to them, their belief that they will achieve their goals is higher. Social persuasion is another way to motivate people to succeed in their objectives. The last source is the emotional state of the individual. A positive attitude increases the belief for self-efficacy and a negative attitude diminishes it.

Benett and Chapman (2010), in their identification of the components of empowerment, consider that having knowledge of the social context, the power dynamics in that context, the strategies for goal achievement and the required resources for the achievement lead to empowerment. This component is closely related to the following one, competence. Nevertheless, to know what to do does not mean that the individual knows how to do the particular thing and the obstacles they may encounter are different for both components. The task of the individual before the action is to evaluate if they are competent enough and if they are ready to take that action. This enables them to learn more about themselves, the advantages and the disadvantages of the society and their personal strengths and weaknesses.

The penultimate component of empowerment is action. The goals may be achieved through taking an action. Action is driven by the previously mentioned components: the individual's goals, the belief in the capacity for achieving the goals, knowledge and skill possession. In the empowerment process, action refers to people's awareness for the power dynamics in their social context and if there are ways to change them or not. Impact is an important source for the capabilities and the obstacles the individual encounters in the social structure. It gives the possibility to evaluate the outcome of the taken action: "It is in reflecting on impact that obstacles to success such as discrimination, lack of resources, and institutionalised racism will become glaringly clear, revealing related power dynamics (knowledge) and leading to the refinement of goals" (Benett & Chapman, 2010: 654).

5.2.3. WHAT ABOUT DISEMPOWERMENT?

The reasons for women's powerlessness vary as a result of many interweaving factors. Akbar (2009) states that women's disempowerment ought to be analysed by considering class, race, ethnicity, culture and history for understanding women's inequalities in different contexts. Sadan (2004) in her work on community empowerment observes that to be disempowered is not a problem of the powerless individual but rather a social and structural issue: "People, generally, are not powerless because of lacks in their private lives or their personalities, but because they belong to a powerless group" (pp. 84/85). Authors such as Valcárcel (1997) hold the view that it is the symbolic power of men that subordinates women: "[...] women hold less than one percent of the total wealth of the planet, less than one percent of political decision-making positions, and practically do not even count as labour in any GDP³⁵ calculation, in spite of the fact that they carry out most of the work, they form a major part of the administrative infrastructure of a peculiar type of administrative positions (high responsibility, low decision-making capacity), and at this moment, at least at some countries, in general they have [...] an education equal to, or superior than that of men" (p. 77). If women possess less than one per cent of world wealth, less than one percent of decision making, if they are not considered in the gross domestic product although they are the biggest producers and if they form the major part of the administrative infrastructure, bearing in mind that their education is the same or higher in comparison to men, then why do they live in disadvantaged conditions?!

Kabeer (1999) argues that to have power is to be able to make choices. To be disempowered is the opposite – not being able to make choices. Along similar lines, empowerment goes together with disempowerment and in relation to power; empowerment is enabling those who were denied the ability to make choices, to actually have that ability. It is not a static process but it generates change. On the basis of this statement, a person who during their life course has had the opportunity to make their own choices cannot be empowered, because they have never had the possibility to make their own choices taken away; in other words, they have never been disempowered. Thus, empowerment is the ability to make choices after being denied this ability.

³⁵ Gross Domestic Product.

5.3. SISTERHOOD AND ALLIANCES AMONG WOMEN

In the previous subchapter attention was given to empowerment as a concept that promotes female participation in society, the acquisition of self-confidence and autonomy for a sustainable livelihood. Here, the relations among women that may lead to empowerment are discussed.

Women's relations with other women who share the same goals lead to the creation of alliances between women. Solidarity among women is to empathise with their female colleagues and work for the collective development of all humans denying androcentrism and patriarchy. The participation of women in a certain group with mutual objectives may empower women on an individual and collective level (Rowlands, 1997).

In one study that was interested in the adaptation of South Asian women to Canadian society, Martins and Reid (2007) looked at the dimension of socialisation. Their findings reflected that solidarity arose when they were introduced to other migrant women because they faced similar challenges: "Additionally, friendships with other individuals from the same cultural group and with other women also benefited the participants a great deal as these served as a source of information, referrals, and emotional support" (p. 216). Another study, previously mentioned in Chapter 1, that was interested in soft-skill training of migrant women from South Asia, revealed that friendship and alliances among them arose during the training sessions. (Maitra, 2015). Valcárcel (1997) puts forward the claim that women have similar objectives and desires to leave a better world for future generations because they originate from the same generic position: "This means that we have the right to talk about ourselves as a collective and speak each one of us in the name of that collective" (p.80). Nevertheless, the author emphasises the fact that individuality must not be lost in the collectiveness. Through the alliances between them, women strive for freedom, equality and solidarity, conditions in which they would be able to express their specificity. Along similar lines, she argues that once the "self" is constructed, this "self" later becomes "us": "Women can and should act in their own name and create our own networks within our countries and between our countries [...]" (p.80). Zimbalist

(1979) states that in societies where the status of women is inferior to that of men, there is no networking among women and they usually depend on the authority of the male figure. On the other hand, they improve their conditions when they are able to fight against male authority through joint work. When the author speaks about joint work, she refers to the work of women to change the social values established by the patriarchy.

Women are agents of change. In this context it is worthwhile considering Patel's (2016) arguments for women's struggle on a daily basis not only confronting the state's politics but also family, religious norms, caste, and institutions. In the Asian context, as has been noted by Patel (2016), women are subject to both internal and external conflicts: "They are targets of sexual violence within the family, in caste and communal conflicts and in situations of state repression. Social change and radical political movements sometimes provide the locus for challenging traditional gender roles and norms; [...]". The self-organisation of women and their willingness to be agents of change of the patriarchal order contribute to this remodeling of values in the societies to actually transpire. In addition to this: "Women, who had identified the sources of their problems and indignity on their own, began to acquire a language, an organisational platform, a collective identity and legitimacy that they did not have earlier" (p. 4).

PART TWO:
EMPIRICAL DESIGN OF THE STUDY

CHAPTER SIX

METHODOLOGY

“once you have known true freedom,
you will not settle for something else”

Nayantara Sahgal

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter the methodology used to carry out the study is explained. Two important paradigms that served as a background for the development of two different methodologies in research are briefly discussed: positivism and hermeneutics.

Supporters of positivist thinking hold the view that logical reality is objective and measurable only by using statistical and systematical data. Contrary to this, hermeneutics is focused on the subjective, the personal and the interior via interpretation. The former is connected to deductive reasoning (from general to specific) with a previously elaborated hypothesis. The latter is associated with induction (from specific to general), without necessarily having a previously established hypothesis or theory (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007). Positivism was grounded on rationalism and was in search of describing society in a mechanical way. The other paradigm was the interpretivist and it rejected rationalism as an adequate way for the description of the social world. Interpretivists intended to understand society and construct social behaviours, infer roles and culture and grasp the subjective demeanors of social participants. Positivism observes social structure as something external to human consciousness, whilst the latter regards the structure as a part of human consciousness (McKernan, 1996). Therefore, through the characterising features of these paradigms, the assumption is that quantitative research methodology is associated with positivism and qualitative research methodology is associated with humanist thought. Schwandt (2000) explains that interpretivists hold the view that human action can be understood through human sciences, while positivists on the contrary believe that the aim of science is to give logical explanations of life phenomena. Postpositivists and poststructural science oppose the science of positivists for being exclusively based on reason and truth while positivists criticise the others for intending to “legislate one version of truth over another” (Denzin & Lincoln, 1998: 7).

This chapter is structured in the following way: first, we discuss the value of qualitative research methodology. Then, we explain the objectives, the research questions and the hypothesis of the study. After that, we describe the narrative approach and life history. This is followed by the presentation of the research plan and the research process.

6.1. THE VALUE OF QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Looking back in the past, science has been following quantitative research methodology for the explanation of the reality in a very limited and inflexible way. Denzin and Lincoln (1998) detect resistance towards qualitative research in academia. Qualitative scientists were called ‘soft’ or simply ‘journalists’ whose work is not scientific enough and not explanatory enough. Álvarez-Gayou Jurgenson (2003) explains that there is a need for a new paradigm that rejects the idea that Human Sciences are always objective or that the facts speak for themselves. The author considers that when the individuals are examined through qualitative research methodology, the other person understands them and their personal struggles. Creswell (1998) states that the researcher has to think thoroughly whether qualitative methodology is suitable for the research they wish to carry out; a qualitative study unlike a quantitative study, is concerned with understanding *how* or *what* happens. Thus, in this kind of study, theories do not explain the behaviour of the participants, but they need to explore and develop them. Thirdly, the topic investigated is explained in detail. The individuals are interviewed in their natural setting and the researcher is an active learner who retells the story of the participants as seen by themselves. Through qualitative research methodology, the researcher attempts to understand how other people behave, what their thoughts and their expressions are (Schwandt, 2000). Escudero Espinalt (2014) claims that qualitative research gives the opportunity to speak to the silenced ones and for the researcher to be critical towards society and its norms.

All the above said, this not a criticism of quantitative research methodology: “[...] both methodologies are equally valid and compatible” (Royo Prieto, 2008: 218). What the researcher ought to do is to identify what is their goal and to immerse themselves into the research with a methodology that corresponds to their objective (Royo Prieto, 2008).

To justify the reasons for using qualitative research methods in this study, it is necessary to go back to the main objective of the work: to understand the process of empowerment of South Asian migrant women in the BC together with the comprehension of the gender roles in the countries of origin of migrant women, the identity and the transformations they have gone through with migration to the BC. Furthermore, the participants are seen

as a whole. Thus, a holistic perspective is one of the characteristics of this methodology; in qualitative research, the researcher aims to be as natural as possible and to interact with the interviewee, rather than to ask an abundance of questions; the researcher's goal is not to prove their hypothesis but to comprehend. Hence, all of the experiences recounted and each individual are valuable for the research; human beings are similar and unique at the same time and each of them deserves to be listened to (Álvarez-Gayou Jurgenson, 2003). Frutaldo (2019) says that qualitative approach allows the researcher to interpret the patterns. In these terms, *qualitative* in the study is seen as: “[...] an emphasis on processes and meanings that are not rigorously examined, or measured (if measured at all), in terms of quantity, amount, intensity, or frequency. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry (Denzin and Lincoln: 1998: 8).

6.2. OBJECTIVES, RESEARCH QUESTIONS AND HYPOTHESIS

- *Objectives*

The general objective of this work is to portray the process of empowerment of South Asian migrant women in the BC through the narrative approach: life history.

Some of the questions that correspond to the overall objective of this study are the following: what are the empowering tools that change migrant women's perspective with migration?; what changed with migration?; how are values and gender roles remodeled after the migratory experience?

The *specific objectives* are:

To address the factors that contribute to the construction of gender roles in the particular culture. The research questions are: what are the gender roles in the countries of origin of migrant women?; what influences the creation of the gender roles?; how are they constructed?; under what circumstances are gender roles in South Asian societies constructed?

To examine how cultural identity transforms into personal identity. The research questions are: how is individual identity created as opposed to a constructed cultural identity?; what influences the construction of personal identity?; what happens with cultural identity?

To visualise women. The research questions are: how can the experience of women be visualised?; how can the stories of women from South Asia be valued and considered relevant?

To understand the function of female networking in the creation of sisterhood. How do female associations contribute to the empowerment of migrant women; how is it possible to achieve sorority?

6.3. THE NARRATIVE APPROACH AND LIFE HISTORY

The narrative research approach through the life history method is used for this study. The objective of a study that uses the narrative approach is to narrate the lived life and expectations for the future. This approach allows the individual to make constructions for their past and their future through flexible questions. The participants retell and then reconstruct the story of their life: “The subjects retrospectively reconstruct the different experiences, actions or experiences that have happened to them in certain social, personal or professional contexts” (Bolívar in an interview with Porta, 2010: 208). In the interview with Porta (2010), Antonio Bolívar says that the narrative approach is broader than just delimiting its possibilities to a methodology that collects data and then analyses that data: “[...] At this moment, it has been constructed in its own perspective, as a legitimate way of building knowledge in research. A ‘hermeneutical’ methodology that allows us to give meaning and to understand the cognitive, affective and action dimensions. It is about giving all its relevance to the discursive dimension of individuality, to the ways in which humans experience and give meaning to the ‘world of life’ through language. Subjectivity becomes a necessary condition of the social knowledge” (p. 204). Carrasco (2011) sees in the narrative approach a way to express the subjective reality of the individual and consider their actions in the explanation of the social phenomena. The principal

characteristic of the narrative approach is sincerity. Antonio Bolívar in his interview with Porta (2010) argues that in a globalised world such as today's, people need their individualisation and identity role models, where their own "self" is a safe place to be (Bolívar and Porta, 2010). In this way, the narrative approach becomes a powerful tool to work with identity, with people whose voice is rarely heard, self-identification and personal and cultural reconstruction. In an interview for life histories and human sciences with Franco Ferrarotti, the sociologist explains that quantitative research methodology gives the researcher a naive security because they limit the interpretation of the acts. Ferrarotti's views are grounded on the assumption that the core problems in society are covert and people who have these problems need a relationship based on confidentiality, something that cannot be quantified (Iniesta & Feixa, 2006). Plummer (1989) claims that the social researcher is not only a means for transmitting new knowledge but also a constructor of new knowledge.

6.3.1. THE LIFE HISTORY METHOD IN FEMINIST RESEARCH³⁶

As many authors claim, qualitative research methods allow the researcher to understand the individuality of people because they study the individuals in their natural environment (Sandelowski, 1991; Berg, 2001; Álvarez-Gayou Jurgenson, 2003; Mallimaci and Giménez, 2006; Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007, 2012; Escudero Espinalt, 2014). In order to develop our case study we have chosen to take advantage of life history, i.e. a qualitative research method which consists of exploring the individual's experiences within the social context they inhabit, from the perspective of the narrator (Geiger, 1986; Sandelowski, 1991; Goodson, 2001; Iniesta and Feixa, 2006; Mallimaci and Giménez, 2006; Ojermark, 2007). This method, phenomenological in its nature, was first used by anthropologists and then acquired by sociologists. We claim that it is phenomenological because its aim is to study the subjective human experience (Goodson 2001; Charriez, 2012).

It was in Chicago at the beginning of the last century where sociologists' interest in personal documents flourished (Martín García, 1995). The publication by Thomas and

³⁶ The first four paragraphs of this section form part of a published article by the researcher and the director of thesis. For further information please see: Sokolovska, S. Silvestre. C. M. (2018). Life History Method as a Tool for the Exploration of South Asian's Women Empowerment. *Crítica y Resistencia. Revista de conflictos sociales latinoamericanos*, 8, 44-61. ISSN: 2525-0841.

Znaniecki (1918) with migration thematics from Europe to United States of America was relevant to the flourishing of the method. Personal documents were an unexplored field that recognised the need to deal with issues such the marginalisation of certain social groups such as people with social disadvantages or poor people whose voices were not heard due to the dominant structure of society (Martín García, 1995). Nevertheless, after ten years, in the 1930s, it experienced a loss of interest among sociologists because it was a method that did not quantify and was not necessary for understanding human behavior: “Numbers were not collected and statistical aggregation was not produced, and as studies were not judged to be representative or exemplary, contributions to theory remained parsimonious” (Goodson, 2001: 137). Hence, we have seen life history’s moment of glory and its decline. In addition to an insufficiency of sampling and absence of statistical data, the method failed in terms of validity and reliability. Researchers questioned if life history as such could be sufficiently objective when applied (Geiger, 1986; Goodson, 2001). In reference to reliability, the critic is against the fact that the method may exemplify cultural norms treated in the study and deviate from those norms. Regarding subjectivity, it is argued that the interviewees are subjective in their narration and the interests of the interviewers may cross the line between objectivity and subjectivity. An equally significant aspect is the risk of losing anonymity. Even if consent forms are signed before the study is carried out, anonymity would never be completely guaranteed (Geiger, 1986; Goodson, 2001). From a practical standpoint, life history has been accused of being too subjective, descriptive and arbitrary. In addition to this, the lack of initial theory does not allow the researcher to generalise about the results (Martín García, 1995). Other weak points detected by the author are the difficulty in finding subjects that are willing to participate, the veracity of that which is told, mistakes when events from the past are reflected upon, the use of audio recordings that may intimidate the subject, the enormous material quantity and the time-consuming analysis. Nonetheless after modernism, sociologists returned to life history to use it in different studies within the social field, making use of its advantages and transforming its disadvantages into useful features for conducting life history studies (Goodson, 2001).

Despite the weak points, this method offers a great potential for the interpretation of life experiences. Feminist response to the criticism of subjectivity was that objectivity is androcentric; the attempt to present a real picture of reality fails to portray the truth and reality for women. Another significant counter-argument was that the life history method

aims to overcome the hierarchy between the researcher and the participants; the narrator narrates her life experience, then the researcher makes the narration textual and only comments on the lived experience. Therefore, the subjective rather than the objective perceptions of the surrounding reality of the interviewee are transmitted by the researcher. They are not trying to change subjective reality but to communicate it from the point of view of the person interviewed (Geiger, 1986; Goodson, 2001). Since in life history method the researcher analyses the text by considering ethical, moral and cultural issues, the knowledge is generated from the interaction between agency and structure on macro and micro level. This means that not only are the individuality of people and their lives discussed, but also the structural conditions that they inhabit: "Life history interviews allow individuals to discuss not only themselves, and their lives, but also the social, economic, and political spaces that individuals inhabit" (Ojermark, 2007: 3). Even a single life history can contribute to the discovery of the structure of an entire society in the production of life circumstances (Mallimaci and Giménez, 2006; Ojermark, 2007). Martín García (1995) identifies an advantage for researchers who work with the life history method. The researcher not only has the opportunity to understand the life experience of the person interviewed but also to empathise with the interviewee. "Few information gathering techniques allow such and important wealt of nuances, details, ironies, doubts, dimensions, etc, about the way a subject interprets, constructs, and reconstructs their sociocultural environment, their experiential context, objective and subjective realite that surrounds them...as life history does" (p.52). Apart from this, the subject is the protagonist of their own life history that acts as a reflective mirror onto their life (Martín García, 1995).

While life history is a rich source for studying women's experiences in different life cycles, methods that are quantitative limit the interpretation of the data. Iniesta and Feixa (2006) explain that quantitative research methodology gives the researcher a naïve? security because it limits the interpretation of acts. Furthermore, life history is used as a method that analyses the different dimensions of women's empowerment. Thus, it is not surprising that the life history method has been used in feminist research (Watson, 1976; Miles and Crush, 1993; Dodson, 1998; George and Ramkissoon, 1998; Slater, 2000; Richie, 2001; Hall, 2003; Kazmierska, 2003; Carrasco, 2011; Escudero Espinalt, 2014). Life history has been given a secondary place in research compared to other methods. Watson (1976) refers to life history as "*the unwanted stepchild*" who did not have firm

objectives nor a valid frame reference for data interpretation. In addition to this, it is difficult to analyse the results because of the diversity of motivations, interests and personalities of the researchers (p. 95). Ojermark (2007) states that feminism saw in this method a tool to visualise women's experiences. It gave them the possibility to raise their voices in spheres where access has been traditionally been denied to them. Hence, the life history method is deeply rooted in feminism, sociology, psychology, cultural studies, migration, etc. It could be argued that the life history method gives the researcher the possibility to narrate what has happened before and the events at the actual moment, which subsequently is a strategy for the construction of identity; social life is understood in the way that is interpreted by the social actors (Bolívar in an interview with Porta, 2010). Escudero Espinalt (2014) notes that life history allows the researcher to analyse the interaction between the different dimensions of women's empowerment: "[...] the work developed from life histories allows us to analyse the interaction of the different dimensions of women's empowerment [...]" (p.34). Chárriez (2012) claims that life histories have a phenomenological perspective because the intention is to interpret the human behavior in their social reality, starting from the subjective individual. She defines life history as a profound narration of life experience, interpreted by the person interviewed. Escudero (2014) explains that: "[...] the elaboration of life histories is going to allow us to approach the reality of people in particular, starting from their own life experiences and from their position in the society" (p. 31). The ability of the researcher is to convert the life stories into life histories (Escudero, 2014). It is not important what happened, but how what occurred is perceived from the present perspective (Carrasco, 2011). Ruiz Olabuénaga (2007) explains that the life history method – unlike focus interviews, whose aim is to explore a particular experience of the individual and focus group interviews, which are interested in the experience of various individuals at the same time – life history is a method that: "[...] aims at the ways and the manners in which a particular individual constructs their life at a specific moment" (p. 277). They are not trying to change the subjective reality but to communicate it from the point of view of the person interviewed (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007).

Each individual as a social human being tries to express themselves and their worldviews according to their subjective reality and the (re)construction of their reality in everyday life: "Only by capturing the processes and the ways in which the individuals grasp and create their social life, an understanding of the subjective meaning of the social life would

be possible”. (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007:273). The challenge for the social researcher is to understand the “true self” of the individual interviewed. It is challenging for the reason that the “self” is not given to the individuals from the moment they were born; on the contrary, the “self” is constructed in the process of socialisation: “The self is something that has a development behind it. It is not present from birth but emerges in the context of the social experience, that is, it develops in the individual as a result of their relations with the whole common process and with other individuals within the same process” (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007: 294). Life history is a method that gives the individual the possibility to reconstruct their life: “The best way to understand the self is based on the persuasion that the bibliographical interview is a discursive process in which the subject is able to reconstruct their past life” (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007: 294).

The use of the life history method in this study is justified by the fact that this method embraces the entire life of the individual starting from childhood until now, capturing both good and bad moments, all the significant people in the individual’s life (relatives, friends, emotional partner) and their social reality; life history method aims to describe the changes the individual undergoes through the life experience; the subjective reality of the individual is comprised within the life history method – how the individuals see themselves and their surrounding reality. Finally, this method examines certain social phenomena that are understandable only by discovering the personal experience of the individual (Ruiz Olabuénaga, 2007). This study presents the subjective opinion of the social reality of the women interviewed and under no circumstance did the interviewer intend to influence their views during the interviews.

6.3.2. SOME CONSIDERATIONS WHEN LIFE HISTORY METHOD IS USED

Ruiz Olabuénaga (2007) identifies two types of situations that the interviewer may encounter when they work with the life history method. First, the social researcher may have the document to be analysed prepared and written previously. This was not the case with this study and for that reason details of this kind of situation are not given. The researcher did not have the document beforehand and their task was to construct a life history grounded on the story told by the interviewee. We used additional material (photographs, objects, story). What the author suggests is that every social researcher who

decides to work with life histories has to go through five basic principles: At the beginning stage, the social researcher makes the earliest preparations for the interview. After the preparations the interview is performed and this is the phase where the social researcher collects the data from what is being said. Data is very important and losing it would bring the researcher to the initial stage where they would have to repeat the two stages again. The fourth stage is the advanced one where the social researcher, after reading their data thoroughly, starts the analysis. The final stage is the presentation of the results.

Escudero Espinalt (2015) explains the three types of life histories that the researcher may encounter at the time of deciding which one would be the most appropriate for their research: 1) *Complete life history*. The interviewee retells their entire life starting from childhood until the present. The researcher uses secondary sources and the interviewee facilitates personal documents to the researcher. 2) *Focal or thematic life histories*. This type of life history, unlike the previous history, is focused on one particular aspect of the life of the individual. It is used for comparison between people belonging to the same social group, same generation, emotional partners, etc; 3) *“Edited” life histories*. These are followed by editing by the researcher, whether full or partial. In this study, the first type was applied. Once the researcher has the oral text, they ought to consider three core aspects for the analysis (Escudero Espinalt 2014): 1) the *macro-zoom*, focused on discourse, how the oral text is narrated and the overall sense of understandability (coherence); 2) the *micro-zoom*, the emotional aspects and the themes tackled with the person interviewed are the focal point on this level; and 3) the *interactional zoom*, the centre of attention is put on the relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee.

6.4. THE RESEARCH PLAN AND THE RESEARCH PROCESS

The study consisted of designing and collecting in-depth semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions with women from South Asia who have migrated to the BC in the last two years. First, a methodological chart was elaborated. Then, the main theme of interest was established. After that, the dimensions were recognised. This was followed by the creation of categories from which subcategories arose. The result was the

formulation of open-ended questions. A chart with themes, dimensions, categories, subcategories and questions is presented in the Appendix.

The interviews are structured according to the established dimensions. The first dimension encompassed the native culture and identity. Here, the attention was given to the memories from the country of origin in early childhood until the moment of migration, addressing cultural values and traditions, family values and the participant's own values in that culture. This was related to identity as assigned, learnt and individual identity (Lagarde, 2000).

The next dimension was "gender roles". In this part of the interview a discussion on the role of women in the public and the private sphere in the native country of the participants was developed. Then, the role of the participant and other family members within the family was addressed. There, the intention was to come to know whether they were in accordance or discordance with them. The penultimate dimension was migration. When migration was contemplated, the attention was centered on how migration influenced the individual transformation. There, we asked questions where the participants reflected on their life before migrating to the BC and their life in the host country. The last dimension contemplated in this study was empowerment. The aim was to understand how participants felt at that moment as migrant women in the BC. There, personal growth, self-confidence, self-valuation, assertiveness, awareness-raising, rights, consciousness and capacity for companionship with other women as categories that contribute to the empowerment of women were discussed (Zimmerman, 1990; Perkins and Zimmerman, 1995; Rowlands, 1995; Batliwala, 1997; Rowlands, 1997; Sadan, 1997; Kabeer, 1999; Lagarde, 2000, 2005; Malhotra, Schuler and Boender, 2002; Mahat, 2003; Mosedale, 2005; Mangar, 2011; Escudero Espinalt, 2014; Lizana, 2014; Rubio, 2014; Maitra, 2015; PRIO, 2015).

Since the interest was to evaluate and to understand the individual empowerment of South Asian migrant women in the BC, encompassing gender roles in their native countries, identity and transformations through migration – descriptions, memories, photographs, short story excerpts and objects from their culture were introduced during the interviews. Before the the interviews were conducted, informal meetings with all of the women occurred. There, they were kindly asked to bring family pictures and significant objects

that reminded them of their life in their countries of origin. The pictures were shown and explained when the dimension of culture, family and family values, and childhood/adolescence memories were discussed. The objects served as a tool for discussing the characteristics of the native culture and the celebration of the holidays. For the purpose of introducing migration as a topic of discussion, an excerpt of a story that narrated the decision of one woman to migrate was introduced.

Finally, before concluding the migration section, the participants were asked to describe themselves in one to three words as women, before migration. At the end of the last session, they did the same. They described themselves in one to three words after migration. These activities were proposed for the sessions with the aim to make the interviews more interesting and energetic.

6.4.1. CRITERIA FOR THE SELECTION OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The most important factor in choosing the interviewees was nationality. Given the fact that South Asian migration in the BC is a relatively new phenomenon, the establishment of complex characteristics for the interviews would have made the fieldwork process even more difficult than it was. For that reason, the characteristics of the person suitable for this study are the following:

To be a woman – This study falls into the realm of feminist research and one of the aims is to make visible the life experiences of women.

To be heterosexual – The study is centred on heterosexual women. Homosexuality would have obliged the researcher to study how sexuality is affected before and after migration and this is not the object of the study.

To be born in South Asia – Women from India, Nepal and Bangladesh were accepted for the study.

To be 25-44 years old – This age border is based on the findings of a study for the Asian population in the BC. According to this study, the age of the Asian population in the BC mostly varies between 25 and 44 years old (Ikuspegi, 2019).

To live in one of the provinces within the BC – The study is focused on the Basque Autonomous Community. Interviewees from Bizkaia, Gipuzkoa or Araba were welcomed. The focus on only one autonomous region adds to the homogeneity of the sample (Royo Prieto, 2008). The experiences of life of one particular group of women in one particular place are described.

At the initial stage associations of women and migrant women in the BC were contacted electronically for finding participants. Some of them responded immediately, some of them did not respond at all. As a reference for the associations, the Guideline of Associations of Women in the Basque Autonomous Community (Emakunde, 2016) was consulted. Opie (1992) holds the view that participation in a research project may empower the participants if the interviews are not rigidly structured: “because it assumes they can contribute significantly to the description and analysis of a social issue” (p. 64). The participants in this study contributed to the visibilisation of South Asian migrant women in the BC by constructing their experience of life as women in their native countries and as migrant women in the host country. Besides, they serve as role models for other women.

6.4.2. SUPPORTING MATERIAL

In this section the materials used for conducting the research are listed and briefly described.

Consent form – A consent form was given to each of the participants before the the interviews were carried out in one of the two languages, English or Spanish. Two copies were made, one for the researcher and another one for the participant. The consent form informed the participants about the study, clearly stating that neither the name nor the identity of the participant would be revealed³⁷: “Subjects must agree voluntarily to participate – that is, without physical or psychological coercion. In addition, their agreement must be based on full and open information” (Christians, 2000, 138-139)

³⁷ Please see Appendix: Consent form.

Sociodemographic questionnaire – The questionnaire that compiled sociodemographic data related to the age, place of birth, marital status, studies, work, previous migration, current place of residence in the BC and association was given to the participants before the start of the interviews.³⁸

Voice recorder – For conducting the interviews, two voice recorders were used. The participants were informed about the use of this material before the actual acceptance of being part of the study. The use of the voice recorders is only for academic purposes and is not going to be misused. During the recording, the researcher may take notes that would help the reconstruction of the story, always taking into consideration not to break with the natural order of the interview.

Guideline for the in-depth interviews – An illustrative guideline has been elaborated for carrying out the interviews. The guideline encompassed the important dimensions of the study and served as a reminder of the direction of the study. Some themes in the guideline were omitted and others that were not included emerged in a spontaneous way.

Excerpts from books – Since life history method was used in the study, materials such as small excerpts from books were introduced in the interviews as topic starters or as reflection tools.³⁹

Pictures and objects – The participants were kindly asked to bring pictures and decorative objects from their culture. In that way, they were able to remind themselves about their childhood, adolescence, family life, holidays, etc. These tools were used as facilitators in the interviews.

³⁸ See Appendix: Sociodemographic questionnaire.

³⁹ See Appendix: Book excerpts.

CHAPTER 7

INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS AND

DISCUSSION

“all the histories are written by men,
and you have few women like Rani
of Jahnsi or Razia Sultan, who fit into
the male model of history –
we get to know only about them”
Vibhuti Pately

INTRODUCTION

In the final part of the research, the analysis of data is explained. The narrative approach has several limitations in terms of how the information gathered needs to be analysed properly. Antonio Bolívar in the interview with Porta (2010) criticises computer and software programmes: “[...] well, we are not dealing with informative texts but with bibliographical narrative that constructs in a human way” (p. 208). Bolívar continues by stating that neither citation of the exact words said by the interviewee, nor restoring their words in the text, is the right way. The argument is that narrative analysis needs to avoid categorisation because categorial treatment impounds the voices of the interviewees: “It is about looking for thematic groups (through similarities or differences) that serve to organise the report. The content analysis, through thematic categories makes information manageable (by reduction) and allows its interpretation (by coding), processing and obtaining conclusions” (p. 208-209).

The interviews in this study are analysed inductively. That is, starting from the interviews, in order to be able to reconstruct the story. The work by Royo Prieto (2008) has been of great help in carrying out the analysis part of the study. The dimensions and categories have been identified, as well as the results.

The process of analysis of the qualitative data is composed of a previous individual examination of each interview; each participant and each story are equally valuable and central in the study. Then, the individual analyses are compared based on the established themes and dimensions, in search of similarities. The collection of data is comprised of the stories, their reconstruction and participant observation (Creswell, 1998).

The life histories of five migrant women from South Asia are analysed. At first, the researcher considered this point as one of the limitations of the study. However, this “disadvantage became an asset throughout the research process as in life history large samples are not only unnecessary but, as Rahamah, Bakar and Abdullah (2008) say, may be inappropriate: “Adequacy is dependent not upon quantity but upon the richness of the data and the nature of the aspect of life being investigated (p. 4).

7.1. THE DECISION NOT TO USE COMPUTER FOR THE DATA ANALYSIS

Computers and software programmes may be useful in studies with large qualitative data. Some of the advantages as explained by Creswell (1998) are the possibility to store and easily find the material and to analyse each sentence carefully. One disadvantage of the use of computers is the fact that the researcher has to learn how to use the programme which may be time consuming for some and sometimes it may delay the research. Another point that needs to be considered is that, after all, computers are machines and they cannot substitute humans. Thus, when categories are created in the computer, the programme fixes those categories while the individual may wish to change them during the analysis process. Finally, computer programme manuals lack information regarding how to analyse qualitatively; they only describe how to work with the programme. The ways in which documentary data within the Social Sciences is analysed varies. Because of the dominant quantitative methodology, qualitative methods face the fact that the theory of qualitative analysis of texts is underdeveloped (Manning and Cullum-Swan, 1998). Denzin (1998) states that interpretation is the core of the Social Sciences. The researcher has the challenging task to give sense to the material gathered. It is there where the *art of interpretation* comes to the surface. Subsequently, the analysis of this study is manual. For the analysis of the data, the model by Akter and Begum (2012) was followed. The transcripts were read several times so that we familiarised ourselves with the content. Then, the themes were identified, grouped together and categorised. Afterwards, a summary of each interview was written. In the group analysis, the categories that repeated in each of the interviews, and the new categories that arose during the conversations, were discussed. The brief description of the data analysis is presented in the next chart:

CHART 8. Summary of analysis procedure

Identify key themes
Categorise
Organise data
Write summary of the individual analysis

Identify categories that repeat in each interview
Identify categories that emerge during the interviews
Organise data
Write summary of the group analysis

Source: Akter and Begum, 2012: 643
Prepared by the author

7.2. SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLE

The requirements to participate in this study have been explained in the Methodology section. This delimitation has resulted in five interviews with migrant women in the BC from three South Asian countries: India, Nepal and Bangladesh. The age of the participants is between 28 and 34 years old. They are married (with a heterosexual partner) and they have migrated to the BC between 2010 and 2016. Three of the participants hold a Master's Degree and two of them High School studies. Four of them live in the province of Bizkaia and one lives in the province of Gipuzkoa. All of the participants have previous work experience and four of them were employed at the time of the interview. Two of them have previously lived in another country before coming to the Basque Country, while one of them has formerly lived in Madrid before her arrival in the BC.

Finally yet importantly, English and Spanish language are used for carrying out the interviews. The researcher has intervened in a fair number of the direct citations of the participants. Neither of the above-mentioned languages is their mother tongue. On one hand, the reason for this is the protection of the integrity of the women; on the other hand, a better understanding of the text is enabled. The names of the women are fictitious to protect the anonymity and the confidentiality. The names are in Sanskrit and they have symbolism and meaning, later explained.

7.3. DHRITI

The researcher contacted Dhriti through another participant in the study. They are friends because she lived in Eibar before the relocation to Bilbao. The first meeting was at a coffee shop in Bilbao. She was very happy to talk to the researcher. This may be due to the fact that they discussed themes that reminded her of her country of origin (culture, religion, food, etc). That day, she was excited because an important Hindu holiday was approximating and Dhriti was eager to start with the preparations.

Her mother tongue is Nepali, formerly known as Khas – Khura or Gorkhali. The English language was used as a means of communication. She felt comfortable with this language on the grounds that her education was in English in her country of origin. Apart from that, she has lived in London, England. Dhriti expressed herself clearly and did not have any difficulties saying what was on her mind.

She is 28 years old and she was born in Kathmandu, Nepal. She migrated to the BC in 2015, first to Eibar and then to Bilbao. This was her second migratory experience. She lived in London, United Kingdom. Her level of studies is Secondary Education and she started a Bachelor's Degree in Journalism and then in Tourism. Dhriti lives in Bilbao with her husband Aakesh and their son Ishan. She is currently working in one household in Bilbao.

The interviews with Dhriti occurred in the library of a University in Bilbao. She brought some significant objects from her culture and pictures from her family and the wedding day.

The name Dhriti means “courageous” in Sanskrit.

7.3.1. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

FAMILY ORIGIN AND VALUES

Dhriti was born in the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu. Nepal is a small, landlocked country, surrounded by the Himalayan Mountains. In her words: *It has so many*

languages, caste, religions and though we are with different religions, caste and customs, there is no fight.

She was the second child of five children, one older sister, one younger sister and two younger brothers. When asked how she remembered family life, the assumption is that she differed from her siblings, having a more rebellious spirit: *As a child, I was like very funny and talkative. [...] I was like the naughty of the house you know. Everybody used to eat whatever they got. I was like, I don't want meat. I don't like chicken. I want vegetables [...].* This citation shows her bound and determined decision not to eat animals from a very early stage in her life, being conscious and empathetic as a little girl; this is a decision she introduced to her son's life years later.

At the beginning, they were three sisters and following the social norms of her society her mother was obliged to suffer for a long time until she gave birth to a boy. In Nepali society, to give birth to a boy is a blessing for the family; to give birth to a girl is a regular situation and sometimes even a misfortune: *So, we were three girls and my parents wanted a boy in the family. So, we were a lot of kids. My grandparents wanted a boy as well. So, my mum had to suffer a lot at the time of giving birth to me as well. They thought it would be a boy, but it was a girl. [...] So, finally after four girls, one died, the first died...So, altogether we were six but one died, When she was six months, she had pneumonia and she died. My mum told me. Then, after four girls, they had a boy and there was a celebration in the family.*

In spite of the fact that they were from the capital city, which was considered to be more developed, the family insisted on having a boy and did not consider the mother's condition: *[...] So, at that time it didn't matter if people were from Kathmandu capital or from outside the country. For them, boys are the most important. It is really, really bad you know. So, they thought that boys will run the family, you know. If you have a girl, the girl will get married to another family. So, the family will be stopped. So, in order to continue the family and the caste, everybody wants a boy and I didn't really like that because my mum suffered a lot in having a boy, you know. She gave birth to us in the house. [...] At that time, only few used to go to hospital, most of them in the house. [...] There were midwives so some of them knew how to give help to the women when having birth. So of course it was a problem because they didn't have equipment. It was terrible.*

It is understood that while male children are seen as a blessing from God, female children are the opposite, a burden for the family that ought to be maintained until the day they marry and start belonging to the husband's family. Apart from that, giving birth to a child in a hospital was a privilege, a privilege that her mother did not have. Nonetheless, it did not stop her family from achieving their goal: to have a son even if he had to be born in precarious conditions, risking her mother's life. Seeing the anguish of her mother who had a hearing problem, (Dhriti mentioned this fact during the interview) was not easy for a young girl.

To the question what did her mother and father teach her, the general comprehension is that unlike her friends' families, her mother and father were very flexible and permissive: *My mother was a bit different from other mothers. I saw other mothers telling their children to read books, but my mum, she was like a friend. She was saying: 'do whatever you want! If you read, if you study, it would be good for your future. So it's in your hands'. So, we were nice you know, we used to study. No problems, not giving trouble to the family. [...] My family you know, though we were a lot and my mum and dad, they were not educated a lot, they were in the middle, I realised that they were different. When my friends used to come to my house, they used to think that my mum was like a friend to me because even if she had a hearing problem, she was like a friend to my friends as well. So she was not like a mum to us. My elder sister, she was like a mum. She used to cook, she used to clean because my mum was always feeling sick: 'I have a headache', because she had so many kids.*

The last part of the citation exemplifies the consequences of giving birth to so many children. At the end, her mother – who was more like a friend than a mother and married when she was fourteen or fifteen – was feeling mentally and physically exhausted. This pattern is repeated in her elder sister's family: *My elder sister, she has two girls and in her family, there is still a problem about this because her family, they want boys. She had two caesarean girls. They are still telling her to have a boy. [...] They were hoping that she would have a boy and they are not really happy with my sister.*

Times have changed but the pressure that women feel to give birth to a male child is still very present in modern Nepal. Women are seen as reproductive machines whose role is to give birth to children and if they are not boys, women are blamed for this circumstance.

When Dhriti remembered her father, she said that she felt sorry for not being able to go to his funeral. The last memory that she has of him is at the Tribhuvan International Airport in Kathmandu in 2010, when she was leaving Nepal and migrating to London, United Kingdom. He died of tuberculosis. Concerning the relationship with her father, she states: *My father used to tell us to study but not like: 'you can't go out today, you have to study!' He was not strict, he was free. He used to take us to the Market in turns because we were five and he couldn't take us all together.*

As previously expressed, Dhriti was not like her brothers and sisters. Even when she was very young, she took some very conscious and mature decisions, as shown in the following citation: *I was a bit different from my sisters. I used to save money. My mum used to give us money to have food in the school Cantina but they used to spend it. I used to take something from the house, like bread, in the bag. I used to save money but they used to spend everything in eating.* This childhood habit has become an ability to administer her money, an ability that is an asset nowadays.

Her mother and father taught her and her siblings to be compassionate with others, to help one another and to be helpful. They have become responsible young people with these values embraced: *They used to teach me to be helpful with friends. My father was helpful. Sometimes he used to buy new clothes and then, if he saw somebody in the street without clothes, he used to give them the clothes. He used to teach us to help each other and the most important is to help the brothers and the sisters. [...] So, my sister is still doing that. I'm still helping my younger brother. [...] So yes, they taught us to be careful, to respect the Elders, to be smiling to everybody, to be kind.* What calls our attention is the fact that Dhriti only mentions her father with regard to the values she was taught. Her mother is covered within the concept of “they”.

Dhriti said that she was feeling free to do whatever she wanted to do when she lived in Nepal. Nevertheless, her response to the question whether she felt safe in her country of origin summarises the danger that women were exposed to and are still exposed to in the present day: *No, no, no, no, no! Now is worse in Nepal. For a girl now is worse to go out. When I was there, maybe it was a bit less. Now it is worse because the girls are being raped and not only girls. The last one, a ninety years old woman was raped, women and*

children. The security is worse in Nepal. [...] If you are a woman, a student, a girl; if you go out from the house, you know, to the school, the family will not know if you will be back. [...] You know, they kill very badly. When I was in Nepal, it was less than now. It was risky, it was hard to go out in the night and to go far without your family without someone elder, but not really bad like now. They don't leave three years old girl.

The citation epitomises the most vulnerable categories in Nepali society, women and children. Dhriti believes that this violence against women and children is due to the sexual oppression that exists in the South Asian countries: *In my opinion, it is because in foreign countries having sex is normal. You can have a friend and you have a relation. In Nepal is a big thing if you have a relation [...]*. She continues by explaining that raped women are stigmatised by the family and the society: *If she is raped, big problem. She is not going to be happy. She is not going to be normal like others. Some of them commit suicide because people will see her differently. They do not think it is her fault but they will look at her in a different way.*

- **Roles**

In the previous section, Dhriti explained that her parents built a friendly relationship with her and her siblings. She remarks that she did not feel any restrictions only because she was a girl: *So, my family was a bit free-minded. Although they wanted a boy. So, after having boys as well, they didn't tell us: 'you are a girl, you are not allowed to do this'. [...] I used to see my friend's family telling to my friend: 'don't wear this skirt, it doesn't look nice'. Yeah, they used to restrict. They used to tell them: 'don't go there, don't do this, don't do that'. Strict, you can't have freedom, you know.* The citation '*Although they wanted a boy*' illustrates the fact that what her mother desired was embodied in the pronoun 'they'. Her mother was not seen as the subject, the one who was going to give birth to a child, but as part of 'they' (her husband and the in-laws).

In terms of the role of her mother and the role of her father in her family, she explains that her mother did not work outside the house (Dhriti is conscious that domestic work is actual work that women do for free) and that her father was involved in the domestic chores: *My dad used to work to run the family and then, he had a business for cement and he used to sell that and sometimes he used to be without a job [...]. My mum used to cook,*

clean, but it's not that only my mum used to do that. My dad was helping in the family. He used to cook, clean, everything. They were helping each other.

She is aware of the fact that women have fewer opportunities than men. When she was living in Nepal she observed that most of the women occupied the domestic sector, while the public sector was exclusive for men. Dhriti emphasises again that she has seen situations of injustice in the families of her close friends but that her family was different: *When I was in Nepal, most of the women, they only had to work in the house; cooking, cleaning, and looking after the kids. They did have the opportunity to go outside their house to work and earn money, but the men, they used to do that. So, I didn't really used to like that part. [...] but in my family it was different. My dad used to help but I could see other families. The father and the men in the house, they were not cooperating. They feel that the woman has to wake up early in the morning to clean the house, to make the breakfast, food ready for the husband and for the children and everything and in some places they have animals as well. So, they have to look after the animals.*

Dhriti realised that there was an inequality in the roles that women and men played in Nepali society. She uses the noun “cooperation”, which demonstrates her awareness for equality issues, being critical towards men’s conduct: *Some men, they used to help you. [...] but in that time I used to see most of them, they were like enjoying their life and women are busy in their house in very bad conditions.*

Furthermore, Dhriti’s and her sister’s tasks in the house were different from their brother’s responsibilities: *My brothers were very small [...] so, my older sister and me, we used to wash clothes by hand [...]. My brothers didn't do anything. They used to play, television, fight sometimes, because they were younger, they were not in the age to help.* They did not have a washing machine and they had to wash the clothes by hand. Dhriti says that her brothers were very young to take care of the domestic chores. Nevertheless, girls are prepared for these duties from a very early age, as if they had a talent from birth for this type of activity. Unlike girls, boys are seen as incapable to learn how to work in the home when they are young. In addition to this, when they were with the monthly menstruation, they were not allowed to go out of their room (the menstruation tradition in South Asia is explained in the next section): *[...] when we had period, in that case, my*

brothers, they could go wherever they wanted to go; in the kitchen, in the saloon. When we had period, we were not allowed to go wherever we wanted to go.

With regard to schooling, Dhriti and her sisters went to school because her mother and her father insisted on going to school and educating themselves unlike in the past: [...] *For girls in the past it was a problem. They used to work in the house, cleaning, everything. But boys, they used to send them to school. [...] In the family they used to think that girls will get married and they will not be able to look after their parents, how to handle the family. So, they have to educate boys to earn money and something like that.* The private sphere was exclusive to women. They were seen as a “heavy weight” that was not worth being educated as her purpose in life was to marry and be a caregiver.

When the question for her childhood memories was framed, Dhriti recalled one traumatic experience that many women in South Asia undergo: the menstruation tradition. When she had her first menstruation, she was obliged to stay in one room for fifteen days: *You can't see boys. I will tell you how I had it when I was a child. They send the girls to a friend's house or relative's house for fifteen days. So, my mother decided to let us stay at the same house, but on the top so that my brother and my dad can't see me. It was in one of our rooms, in the same house. It was not too bad for me because I saw my friends that they couldn't sleep in the bed but I was with a bed and television and my sisters, my aunties used to come to visit me. My mum, she had to take me to a shower every morning. I remember my brother, he wanted to see me but he couldn't so, he used to send me a letter under the door. He used to ask me: 'when are you coming out?'*

This harmful tradition for young girls in the age of adolescence teaches them and those around them that their bodies are polluted and ought to be cleaned of the impurity by staying in lockdown for fifteen days and sometimes under perilous conditions, as exemplified in the following citation: [...] *But some of them still stay in stables, where the cows? There. In the rural parts. So some of them are raped there and die because of the cold, no clothes, no food.* The first menstruation tradition perpetuates the eternal guilt and shame women feel. Guilt, for being polluted and ashamed of their body that results in fifteen days of punishment that afterwards finishes with a big family celebration for the purification of the female body. What is more, when a woman has her monthly menstruation, there are restrictions: [...] *You can't touch the food. If they see that you*

touch the food, they can't eat it. So, in most of the houses still...when the woman has the period, for four days they do not go to the kitchen, they eat separately. [...] They don't hide but if you have the period you can't go to the kitchen. We have separate girls' room. You are not allowed to go there. You have to shower every day and you feel lonely. In the last sentence, she expresses the feeling of loneliness generated by the belief that menstruation is dirty and the male figures deny to see the female body in this condition.

- ***Education and Work Experience***

Dhriti explained that her mother and father are not educated and, for that reason, they insisted on the importance of education. In the case of her mother, she did not have the opportunity to choose schooling or not. Her father, instead, preferred not going to school: *They used to send boys to school and about the girls, they used to think that she has to work at the house, she has to get married, so, it's like a waste to educate girls.* By the time she and her siblings were born, the values had improved and girls were given the possibility to study and educate themselves. She went to an English mixed school. Schools with English as the medium of communication are considered to offer better quality education in Nepal.

When she was a little child, she aspired to be a teacher and accomplished this by being an English teacher for two years: *I was very busy at that time because I used to teach the children. From six in the morning to ten I was in College and then, after coming home my mum used to cook food and I used to eat something small because I had to go to school. I had to be at the school at 10:30 a.m. The school was near here. So, I used to eat very quickly, maybe two, three spoons and run because I didn't want to be late for school. So, there till four o'clock. I used to be busy. Not my sisters, only me. They were at home because they didn't want to work. They used to be at home, relaxing, cooking. My mum told me not to work: 'focus on your studies. You can work in the future' and I said: 'no, I want to join this school to teach the children, to pass time and to earn some money' and what my sisters said was that they will study. They focused on the studies. I focused on studying and my job.*

It is not surprising that she is the one who stood out from her siblings. Dhriti strived for financial independence from a very early age. Unlike her sisters, she did not feel accomplished by only studying and doing the domestic chores. She stood her ground and

made the decision to combine studies with work. However, she started studying Journalism, but she did not finish the Bachelor's Degree: *I did it but I couldn't finish it. My parents wanted me to go abroad to study and then, I got married and I stopped the University. I wanted to study again but it was a bit hard and expensive and visa problems. So, I didn't. I had to choose another one. I did Tourism. It was interesting to me. It was nice.*

She explains with regret that very often, she thinks of what would have happened if she had finished her studies. She looks upon her friend who achieved her goal and even went further with a Master's Degree. Hence, Dhriti questions herself whether she would have been able to help her family more with the Bachelor's Degree studies: *I was supposed to finish in three years, but I only did one year. If I would have finished that, I would have been working with media [...] The most important thing is that I miss one of my best friends. She finished her Bachelor's and her Master's [...] When I look at her I feel that it would have been good to finish the subject. I would have helped my family nicely and then, going abroad.*

As we listened to her testimony, we had the impression that in many life circumstances Dhriti had the ability to reconcile and adapt to what others considered right for her. For example, she quit studying because her parents wanted her to marry and go abroad. When abroad, even if she was motivated again to continue with the Journalism Career, she encountered bureaucracy and financial problems to accomplishing her objective.

- ***Traditions of the Culture of Origin***

The life history method offers the qualitative researcher a wide variety of techniques to be implemented during the interview. One of them is the possibility to bring pictures from significant moments of the life experience. Dhriti brought pictures from her family, the wedding day and the celebration of some Hindu holidays. "Teej" is a holiday celebrated for the goodness of the husband. When we asked her if there was a holiday for the goodness of the wife, she laughed and told us that no. The holiday consists of fasting in the name of the husband, his health, good life and good luck. It represents the wife's devotion to her husband.

Dhriti was delighted with the part of the interview where she had the opportunity to speak about Nepali holidays. When we did the second interview, it was a few days after an important Hindu holiday, “Dasain”: *This festival is for ten days and it is celebrated for ten days. So, in these ten days everything is closed. Before the festival the Market is so busy. People are busy by buying clothes, new clothes, food and variety of items to offer to God; fruits, vegetables. The Markets are very colourful, the lights ...* She continues with her favourite holiday, “Diwali”: *[...] It is the biggest festival. It is the festival of light. We worship the Goddess of wealth, Laxmi. She is very pretty with the saree and the jewelry and everything. We worship her at night. When it was dark, I used to decorate my house with the flowers Marigold. You decorate the house with the candle. We put in the doors, everywhere, to welcome Laxmi. I leave fruits in the main door, worshipping, put flowers, tika.*

Remembering the festival celebrations evoked feeling of nostalgia and excitement as if she was there, celebrating “Dasain” or “Diwali” at the moment of the interview. They are an inalienable part of who she is as a Nepali woman.

- **Religion**

From a very early age of her life, Dhriti has had the opportunity to comprehend different religions from her own, to be tolerant and to accept diversity. She is a Hindu follower but she studied in a Christian High School: *The place where I lived, most of them were Hindu, but I studied in a Christian High School. The school was run by Christians. So, I used to go to church as well with my friends, celebrate Christmas [...].*

We asked her to describe to us the characteristics of her religion and what would be a good Hindu follower in accordance with the values of the religion. As explained by her, the Holy Book of Hinduism is Bhagavad-gita: *It is written what to do in life, how to live a life. Good Hindus are those that respect the parents and respect all the people. We should pray but it's not compulsory. It's not compulsory that you have to read the book every day. It's up to you. You have a shower, put on clean clothes and with the clean heart you pray to a God but it's not compulsory that you need to pray to the God, I think. If you do good things in life, if you are good with everybody, helping each other, being good with everybody, that's important. Hindu religion says: 'don't kill people, don't do bad*

things. No drinking', but people drink so, it's not the book that says: 'do this'. People bring their own tradition.

We can deduce that this is Dhriti's personal interpretation of her religion. She also said that there is the belief that if she reads the Bhagavad-gita while being pregnant, it would give positive vibration to the baby. Apart from that, women are not allowed to go to the Temples when having the monthly menstruation.

She doesn't see her religion as oppressing to women. We believe that this could be ascribed to the significant importance given to religion from a very early stage in life. Religion become part of the self, part of the identity of the person. An additional reason may be her individual interpretation of Hinduism; she believes in what she considers adequate to believe.

Dhriti was kind enough to bring significant religious objects and explained in detail the story behind them. She is a follower of Krishna. We found interesting the fact that in the case of Shiva, the Incarnation of Vishnu, he is praised because of his strength and power, while RadHa only because she was God's wife: *She is only wife. She is the wife of God. He had so many Goddesses in love. She is the one he liked.* The message sent by this kind of interpretation of religion is that women Goddesses become divine creatures if and only if a God falls in love with them and chooses them to be their Goddess. Gods have power, they are strong and respected by others, while Goddesses remain in the shadow of their husbands.

- ***Caste***

The caste system represents the social stratification of people in South Asian societies. A distinguishing feature of this system is that the caste is assigned to the person from the very first moment they are born. The caste system is a complex kind of system and only key terms are explained in this work without entering profoundly into the topic, given the fact that it is not the objective of the study.

Dhriti mentioned the general classification of the caste system: Brahmin, Kshatriya, Vaishya, Shudra and Harijan, facilitating further information by saying that her family belongs to the caste Kshatriya. As an interesting fact, she reveals that people often tell her

that she is Buddhist because of the shape of her eyes. We dare to say that she may have suffered discrimination based on the shape of her eyes in the case that others associate this shape with lower castes. After that, she tries to explain the injustice towards the citizens from lower castes: *In Nepal, before, if you are from a lower caste, they didn't allow them to go to the house. If they touch the water, they don't drink. Our grandparents. [...] Now I think that they are included but still, in the rural parts, if they see the Dalits, they don't touch them, they are separated.*

We have the impression that people's life is determined by caste and that people behave in accordance with the norms of the caste they belong to. Brahmins are the upper level citizens. They preach and teach. The Kshetri are the saviours. They are soldiers. Dalits pertain to the lower caste. They are the cleaners.

Dhriti remarks that in Nepal cultures that do not match cannot blend: *In Nepal still, if you are in love with someone from the lower caste, some families might say no because you don't match the culture [...]. It is very strict to marry a lower caste in Nepal. Now everything is improving. It is still there but it's going away. People are protesting about it [...]. Before it was like, you have to run away to another place [...]. Some of the families, they still don't allow them. If you marry a lower caste, they will not let you in the house.*

A grain of hope in front of circumstances like these is the fact that Nepali society is becoming more and more aware for the social injustice attributable to mass media and education. Thus, Nepalis manifest themselves in the face of this type of unjust reality: *In Nepal now, everybody has a television. The media is very powerful. If they see somebody following the caste system, saying: 'you are from a lower caste, I don't want to give you a job', it's like scandal. Everything would be on the news.*

- **Marriage**

Dhriti married when she was nineteen years old. Her husband was her first boyfriend. She says that she did not feel comfortable with the idea of having one and that in fact she was so young that she did not have the chance to be with someone else before her husband. Her marriage was an arranged marriage and in some way against her will: *Yes, my parents fixed it. I had a problem at that time. The problem was there because I didn't want to*

marry him. I didn't but my parents thought that he was a nice guy. He doesn't drink, he doesn't smoke, he studied well, he has a good family and he will go abroad with you. At first, I said no, but my mum, she was telling me every time to get married to him. I was a bit upset with her at that time because she was telling me so many times...I was so angry and I didn't know: 'okay, tell them okay' and it was fixed in a week. She clearly states that at that moment, she was not in love with him: Yes, I knew him but I was not in love with him. I knew him, how he was, how the family was. But the thing was that I was not in love with him and I was not thinking that he would be my husband. That I'd have to spend my life with him. My mum...it's not that she forced me to marry. She wanted me to be happy. She wanted my life better. She thought that later I might get a husband that drinks a lot and I might not have a nice family and I was not really, really into getting married.

In a context where arranged marriage is part of the tradition, it is difficult to raise your voice and to be able to choose your own destiny. Dhriti did not want to marry but she felt pressurised to do it for the purpose of pleasing her family, especially her mother. She claims that her mother did not force her to marry and tries to justify her behavior by stating that everything she did was for the happiness of her daughter. She had the strength and the will to accept a reality that was not in her plans or intentions: *I met him a lot of times but not as my boyfriend. I knew him, how was he, the behaviour, his family, was he working, studying, as a person. The most important thing, he used to respect the family. He was a nice person. The most important thing was that he didn't use to drink anything. [...] I have seen lots of them abusing women by drinking. The good thing about him; he didn't use to drink. So, I thought that I wouldn't have problems in the future. [...] if you drink you lose money, you abuse your wife, you lose everything you have, your property.*

The conception of arranged marriage in the South Asian societies illustrates the fact that love may be understood differently, not from a Eurocentric viewpoint but rather as an emotion that appears later. Nonetheless, Dhriti considers that she would have preferred to have the possibility to choose whom to marry and satisfy herself before the others: *Yes, I think that, that would have been the best, from your heart. When you love somebody from the heart, you don't mind if he is rich, if he is black, white. You have to be loving with the heart. First, yes, I was like, I will do it for my mum's happiness.*

When we discussed the dowry system as a tradition in South Asian societies. As Dhriti explained, the custom is that the bride gives a gift to the groom: *The system is like this; the girl's family has to give gifts or something very expensive to the boy's family. In my case, they didn't ask but in Nepal, a lot of them. The boy's family, they ask for a motorbike or big television like bed, sofa but for me, my dad wanted me to give them a gift.*

She explains that even though her husband's family did not ask for dowry, they decided to follow the tradition. Dhriti considers that people in her country have the need to show off and take other people's opinions very seriously: *In Nepal, if you marry in the husband's family and the relatives don't see anything, like: 'Oh my God, she married and she didn't bring anything. They will think in a different way. For that, my dad bought these things.*

Reflecting on her marriage, now she thinks that she married very young but that she did that sacrifice because of her plans to go abroad: *At that time, my marriage was strange. It was not a good age. My friends were not married. They thought that it was early as well. I wanted to go abroad and my parents wanted me to be with one man, very good man to make me happy. So, they thought that it would be good to marry and then, go abroad. [...] My parents wanted me to do that so that I can get some help, I can earn better. It is a good idea as well because if you go alone to an abroad country, you don't have time to study and if you have a partner, if you share with your husband, it's good I think.*

It seems that the idea of relocation to a foreign country depends on whether the woman marries or not. Autonomous migration was not contemplated for Dhriti. Her parents and in some way, her, by herself, thought that being accompanied is better than being alone. It looks as if she needed somebody to rely on. She believes that she would have not been able to combine work and studies if she had migrated alone. Even though she opposed it at the beginning, she accepted this family imposition and tried to justify their insistence: *No, I said no. They wanted me to go with him together because going together is like, you will not spend a lot of money to go abroad. If you go alone, you need a lot of money to study. They wanted me to study as well. So, they couldn't afford it. It was too expensive. So, they told me to get married but I said no: 'If you want, I can go alone'. But*

I don't know, my mum, she wanted me to be secure and to feel better. She liked his family. She wanted good things for me.

The interpretation of the above is that Dhriti's relocation to a foreign country was not only conditioned by social and family values, but also by social status. When she explains the reasons for marriage, she never mentions what she desired but what her family, in this case her mother, thought would be better for her.

At the time she married Aakesh, she was employed as a primary teacher. She left the job due to the distance between her new home and the school. Nonetheless, she clarifies that she was unable to combine work outside the house and work inside the house, as explained by the following statement: *For me it was really different and hard for the first time because I was daughter-in-law and she has to do lots of works in the house and I used to get up early in the morning to clean the house. [...] After three months I left the work. It was really hard for me.*

Dhriti openly says that she did not want to leave the job but that she was obliged to do it. On one hand, because her mother-in-law wanted her to study and to go abroad to help the family and because the school was far from her new home. On the other hand: *If the job is near, if you can manage, then you can. Nowadays mothers-in-law, they will not say: 'don't work!' Before they, would say: 'No, you can't do the job, you have to help us clean the house, cook and look after the family.*

- ***Identity and Social Values***

When identity was discussed, the first things she associated with the term were food and Nepali attire: *Food and typical dresses that I can't use here.* Dhriti clarified that is not that she cannot use them but it is not comfortable because of the weather conditions in the Basque Country. This will be discussed in the next section of the study. Besides, she considers that respect, kindness, helpfulness and positive attitude create the identity of Nepali people.

With respect to women, Dhriti sees a considerable change in Nepal. The emancipation of women in the country grows although in the rural areas the process is slow: *They work in NGOs, schools, hospitals, everywhere. Women are educated now in Nepal. Maybe*

because of that there is a change in Nepal. Outside Kathmandu or some parts of rural Nepal, they still think that women have to clean the house only.

Notwithstanding, there are still signs of archaic behaviour towards women and job selection. For example, when we asked here if women are able to work in a bar, we received the following answer: *No it's not. No, it's really, really bad. [...] No, it's really hard. Some of them, they do work but most of them are not allowed to work in restaurants. There are some of them but if somebody knows that you are working in a bar, they think...[...] Because so many girls are prostitutes. So, they think in that way.* This shows that some professions are associated with the concept of “bad woman” and women are spontaneously pre-judged if they work as a waitress. We emphasise again the fact that “they” is the rest of the society that assumes it has the right and power to decide what women are supposed to do with their lives.

At the end of the interview that encompassed the life experience in the country of origin, we asked Dhriti to describe herself in one to three words as a woman before migration. She told us that she tried to remain positive, even when life did not treat her nicely: *Smiling a lot. Even though I had problems, so many problems, I liked to smile. I wanted to be happy.* Her personal vision of herself as a woman in Nepal demonstrates Dhriti's strength and good will to reconcile in order to have a better future. The maintenance of a positive attitude in perilous circumstances is the attitude of a woman “warrior” who did not allow herself to be let down by any obstacles.

In the next section, the migratory process, the life in the host country and personal transformations are discussed.

7.3.2. THE MIGRATORY PROCESS

- *Decisions for Migration*

In the previous section, Dhriti mentioned that when she was in her country of origin, she started thinking of migration with the aim of finding a better job and helping her family financially. Her parents supported the idea with the condition that she married. After the wedding, she and Aakash started the organisation for the relocation to London, England: *After the wedding, I stayed there for one year because normally it takes one year the*

process to go to London, to get a visa [...] I had to wait. I did exam in English. So yes, I was busy, I was newly married, I had to enjoy but at the same time I had to study as well.

She identifies financial improvement as the main reason for migration from Nepal: *The main problem in Nepal for everybody is to go out from the country. These days is getting worse. So many of ours in Australia, UK, everywhere, Dubai. So, in my case as well. It was unemployment. Getting a job in Nepal is so hard. [...] So I was thinking on helping my family, helping in the economic condition, studying as well. [...] Everything was together so, it was really hard for me; going to work, my school and then the house. My husband was so busy working, seven days. Sometimes I didn't use to see him. Then, I had to clean and focus on my studies [...].*

Although finances were the motive, we venture to say that subconsciously she needed a change and time for herself. First, they tried to go to Australia (Aakesh's brother lives there) but they did not manage for bureaucratic reasons. At that time, many Nepalis migrated to England. They thought that it would be easier for them because they spoke the English language. They migrated in 2010.

The experience in London was not explored. Nevertheless, the decisions for relocation from England to the Basque Country are discussed here. In addition, we cannot avoid mentioning one traumatic experience she underwent during the stay in London, a miscarriage. After the miscarriage she had problems because of the placenta and had to undergo surgery. Dhriti felt very sad and for two years they were trying to have another baby but it was not possible: *Yes because after I got married it were many years that I didn't have a baby. I didn't want but when I wanted, I couldn't. So, I had to go to the hospital so many times and every time I had to tell it to my Mum and she would say: 'you are not pregnant' and certainly, after two years I was pregnant and so happy. I was pregnant and I was so afraid so, I wanted to leave the job. [...] I didn't want to repeat the same thing and at that time when the doctor told me that I had a miscarriage, I was alone at the hospital. My husband was busy, he was working because we were not expecting that day the doctor to say this thing. So, I was alone and I was thinking: 'why did I leave Nepal?'. I was alone and I didn't have my brothers, my sisters, my family being here. So, I was crying and I couldn't continue my job. I left my job and my husband also. We needed to relax [...].*

The miscarriage was the first step to start contemplating the change of place to stay due to the fact that it provoked deep wounds that she even started to feel remorse for leaving Nepal. Two years after the abortion, she was pregnant again. Her husband was the only one employed in the family while she was studying: [...] *I had to go to college because without going to college or university, you can't extend your visa. So many problems, so, we were a bit fed up. I couldn't work, paying college fee, rent...*

She was not focused on her studies and she was pregnant. If she couldn't study, Aakesh was not able to stay in England. It looks as if everything was set up for them to take the step and move to the Basque Country: *So, one of my friends, they were in Eibar and we were in contact with them. My college also was on the black list, I was going to collapse. I paid so much for that college, maybe seven thousand pounds. So, it was a lot for us. We were thinking instead of spending money on college, we were thinking to move to Spain and we talked to our friend; how was there, what job is a good job there [...].*

In 2015 Dhriti and Aakesh move to Eibar, a city in the Basque province Gipuzkoa.

- ***Life in the New Society***

Dhriti saw Eibar as if it was her country of origin. A high percentage of the population is elderly and they treated her with kindness. The neighbours were helpful and generous and the people she encountered were warmhearted. On some occasions she felt that she may not have received the same treatment as other citizens for her obvious racialised features and then, her name and surname: *Sometimes, when I'm at the supermarket or the hospital, I think that they are not helping me for being a foreigner: 'they treat me like this because of that'. I think maybe if I was Spanish or from this country, maybe it would be better. But in the other way, I'm happy here. I don't really miss a lot my country...I do miss my country but the culture, the tradition over here is okay. I like the people here. They enjoy a lot and that part is the one I like the most. They know what life should be. They know what life should be. They work also but when I was in England, all the people, they just work, they don't have time for themselves. But here, they work and they enjoy a lot. That's how life should be.*

As a migrant woman, she has observed that she has more difficulties than native women or even migrant women from the European countries. She considers that if she had had European citizenship, the progress would not have been so slow. Otherwise, she enjoys the Basque lifestyle, their culture, traditions and most importantly, the economic situation: *Yes, I think that the economy is better here. [...] In Nepal you have to work a lot [...] At least, I don't have a problem for rent, for food, things like that. It's better here.*

Dhriti started learning Spanish in an Adult Education Centre but she did not go regularly because of the pregnancy. Fortunately, she could rely on her friend if help was needed: *I was pregnant seven months. I used to go to school near my house, in EPA⁴⁰ for four days and then one hour in the evening. Sometimes I was scared not to fall on the street because in Eibar it rains a lot. So I didn't go a lot. Only three months and after that I was busy with my son. I didn't study a lot. I didn't use to understand them. My friends, they used to help me if I had to go to the Social Security. They were with me. I had to call some of them to apply for the help.*

We understand that when Dhriti and Aakesh arrived, they did not have any kind of income. Both of them were unemployed and they had to ask for the Income Guarantee Tax. When we asked her if she remembered the first days after the arrival, she explained that she was worried because of the pregnancy and she had to go to the hospital. Going to the hospital was a new challenge due to the fact that they were newly arrived in the Basque Country and they were not registered: *I was pregnant and for two, three hours the movements of my baby were okay, he was moving. But after that day, he didn't move at all. [...] I was scared and I was new in Eibar and I was not registered in the hospital. So no language, it was a bit scary and my legs were swollen. My hands were swollen and it was cold here. It was really hard for me for two, three days and I had an emergency checkup. One of my friends, she took me to the hospital to check if the baby was okay. The good thing is that they did the checkup for me without being registered, so I was like: 'oh my God, they are very nice'. So, they checked my baby. They said: 'he is fine' [...]. So, after that I was relaxed and I started enjoying. I was in my friend's house for seven days before we took an apartment for us.*

⁴⁰ Adult Education centre, EPA in Spanish.

The description of the first days in the Basque Country evidence that it was not easy for her. She was an unemployed migrant woman from Nepal, with no Spanish or Basque language knowledge and about to give birth to a child. She felt terrified as she did not have the Health Care card and did not know whether health care service would be provided. Finally, they did attend to her.

- ***Difficulties and Obstacles***

To start from zero in a country whose language you do not know, where you do not have a support network and when you come from a different culture, is courageous. The migrant community faces multiple impediments and obstacles in host societies. The first and considerably common barrier is the language barrier: *We were thinking that the language would not be a problem, but when we came to Eibar, it was like a big problem.* Dhriti explains that she was not aware of the fact that maybe people did not speak English. The first reality check was when her son was sick and she had to go to the hospital: *After my son was born, it was like very scary. He had one disease, febrile convulsion. So, I was so fed up that I couldn't call the ambulance. So, that made me so sad. I should've learnt something you know. So, I was lucky that one of my friends was there so, she called the ambulance.*

At that moment of reflection, she realised that it would be better for her to start learning Spanish. While being at the hospital she experienced unpleasant behaviour from the health care personnel: *My son was with febrile convulsion. Everytime he has fever, it's really hard for him. It's dangerous and he had the blood analysis and then I asked the lady if she could wait for five minutes because I wanted to check the temperature [...]. She shouted at me: 'Why don't you take the temperature at home?'. Sometimes, I don't say that it is every day but, sometimes we face this problem. In that case, I miss my country. If it was my country, I've talked to them, what was my problem. I mean, explain myself nicely. Sometimes, I have a problem and I can't express myself in Spanish.* Here, the language barrier and the lack of awareness of the health care staff intertwine and create the difficulties she and her family had to face whenever they needed to use this service.

A further obstacle at the beginning, was the rent of the house. For several days, they stayed in the house of a close friend and then they found an apartment. They had to share the house with another couple because the rent was high and none of them was employed:

At first, it was so hard for us to pay all the money because we didn't have a job and no sufficient money from what we earned in England. So, it might've been a problem but we were lucky. So, we found another couple to share the flat. It was of great help.

Earlier, Dhriti remarked that sometimes she feels that she does not receive the same treatment as native people do, as the following citation shows: *Most of them are nice but sometimes, when we used to go to some agency or socials, some of them, they used to tell us some words...you can't even imagine. How could they tell us that? They were telling us: 'if you are pregnant, why did you travel here? why did you choose this?' They used to get angry: 'you are not the only one asking for benefits'. I understand that there were many other foreigners asking for help so, maybe it was stressing for them [...]. So, I understand. In that case, I was pregnant when the lady told me: 'why did you move if you are pregnant?' and I was shocked.* When people are in a vulnerable situation and struggle to survive, they ask for help. It is a common practice to judge foreigners for applying for the Income Guarantee Tax without having knowledge about or sensitivity towards the person's life circumstances and background. In this specific situation, the person who attended Dhriti did not have awareness tools.

A further difficulty Dhriti encountered was employment. She was limited due to the language barrier and the recognition of her degree: *Finding a job. I think it is also related to the language. If you have a good language, it's not so hard to get a job [...]. I was looking on the website so many times, every day and night. I used to look because I wanted to get an NIE to go to my country to visit my family because without that is not legal. So I can go but not come back. In that case, I was very serious in looking on Internet. So I did a lot of interviews and most of the work here is live-in staff. I was surprised! Why? Sleep there, look after the children.*

Dhriti identified the language barrier as one of the key obstacles in the attempt to find a job. We would add the migratory policies for non-EU citizens as a pivotal feature for making progress in the host country. The lack of opportunities and rights suffered by non-EU citizens cannot be ignored. She did not want to accept the live-in conditions because of her family. It was a difficult situation because, at that time, it was the only possible way to obtain the Foreigner Identification Number (NIE): *Once, I remember, I found one in San Sebastian and I worked as live-in staff for two days and I couldn't sleep all night.*

I worked two days and then, the next day they told me that they couldn't help me to get the NIE, they wanted somebody with NIE. I was so upset. They paid me so less. I worked a lot. Two days continuously and they only gave me 25 euros. Very bad! So at the end I was like very angry with them. I said: 'if you don't want to sponsor me or help me with the NIE, at least you can pay me because I worked'. I was cleaning the house, I did the clothes, shopping, everything. [...] even if I said that, they didn't pay me.

The above citation is a practical example of power relations. The employer used their privileges to mistreat Dhriti and not to be honest with her from the start. In addition to this, even if she was terrified of the idea of having to work and sleep in someone else's house, she decided to make that sacrifice. But in the end, the outcome was not as expected.

After that unpleasant experience, she found a job in Vitoria-Gasteiz and, at the same time, did an interview in Bilbao. The fact that she had lived in London and spoke advanced English attracted the employers but: *Sometimes it was very far or maybe I didn't like the job and sometimes they didn't like me and they preferred a single, without a baby.* Dhriti said that on some occasions she was obliged not to say that she had a child in order to get a job. Now, she regrets doing that: *That was the case but I was totally wrong. It was not a good idea. At the end, is not a thing that you can hide. It is not a good idea. I didn't feel nice. So, yes. Once I told them in one place and after few months I told them that I had one son and they thought that I lied to them so, they didn't want me more. After that, I was thinking if I get another job, I will say whatever I have to say. If I get the job or not. I didn't tell them that I have a son because most of my friends and everybody said that if I have a son I will not get the job.*

There is a long tradition of asking women whether they are planning to have a family during job interviews. In our case, the experience of Dhriti's migrant female friends made her believe that it would be better not to specify whether she had a child or not. The conditions of live-in staff are cruel, the wage is low and the sacrifice is tremendous. Subsequent to these events Dhriti had two job interviews in the same week, one in Bilbao and one in Donostia. The job offer in Donostia was a live-in staff offer and they called her before. Once again, she had to make a decision that was the best for the family even though it was not her choice: *So, I prepared my backpack and I was crying because I had to leave my son and my husband and to do live-in staff and at the same time, before going*

to the house, the lady from Bilbao called me and I was in the middle of what to do. So, I asked the lady how much will she pay me and I told her that I'm going to one of the job offered because they offered me NIE. She told me not to worry, that she will help me for everything.

Dhriti decided to refuse the job offer in Donostia and accept the offer in Bilbao. It looked as if life was finally smiling on her and her family. She would have loved to work in a different place, maybe a restaurant or a hotel, because of the precarious working conditions of domestic workers.

Dhriti is concerned with the work-family balance. In the event that Aakesh finds a job, she does not know how they would manage to take care of Ishan. On one hand, finding a job would ameliorate the economic status of the family. On the other hand, they would not be able to pay a professional to take care of the child: *I have seen my friends' situations where both of them work and it can be long lasting. If we both work, the family can run properly. But if I work only, you will pay the rent, electricity, everything and at the end of the month, sometimes we are scarce of money, so we have to be careful. So, in my friends\ case I have seen that they both want to work but it's impossible, so they can't drop their son. They can't find a caregiver to look after the son for four, five hours and it is expensive, we don't have the money.* She continues: *The main problem is that the husband and the wife can both work. It would be easier to get a night job for the man or the woman but here, it's really hard to get a job like that; so that one of us can look after the son in the daytime and go to work at night. At least two, three days a week, to earn something. But here, one has to work and one has to look after the house totally. We are just waiting on when we can both work together to earn better.*

We have mentioned before that non-EU citizens struggle with obstacles that other migrants do not face. Dhriti has not seen her family for ten years: *A long time that I've left my country and I want some of my family to meet me like in Australia or other countries. They can call their parents for two, three months and they can go. It's easy there. They stay with them at least two, three months. They have fun but here it's very difficult. If you want to call your parents just for a visit, it's impossible, they don't give visa.*

The strict migration policies for non-EU citizens prevents her family from coming to see her in the BC. The visa requirements and the conditions imposed are exhausting and we dare to say unjust, just because some people were not born with the European privilege.

- ***Inclusion and Facilitating Factors***

The first step Dhriti took to make her life easier in the host society was to start learning the language people speak there on her own account, due to the fact that she cannot balance work and the classes in an Official Language School: *The language, if you speak it a lot, it's not hard. I can understand, I can speak but it's because I have a job speaking in English in the house...I have to speak in English with the girl. The family wants to learn English also. I speak in English and that makes my "castellano"⁴¹ a bit low. I have another friend working at the same house; she speaks "castellano" so it's not too bad, but still, I have to learn a lot. If I find some classes to go to learn Spanish, I would love to go. The thing is that I cannot manage the timing. I study from the Internet after work [...].*

Despite all the difficulties, Dhriti feels motivated to learn Spanish even if she is not able to attend classes in person. She has managed to find an alternative solution to the impossibility of enrolling herself in a language school.

Prior to this, Dhriti expressed that she had experienced bad treatment in some public services. However, she has met kind people too. For example, in the same hospital where she was not treated nicely, a woman sitting next to her offered help: *[...] and I remember once I was in the hospital and I was vomiting a lot because the doctor was checking my sugar level and then, there was one lady and she was holding my hands and she was asking me if I were okay. She was taking me to the washroom, she gave me water and that surprised me.*

One of the advantages that Dhriti had was the network among the community. When they arrived in the Basque Country she already had a friend and a place to settle until finding a new home. This small but strong network helped her to find a job and understand her rights as a migrant person. The latter is a feature that many migrants lack due to

⁴¹ Spanish language in Spanish.

information scarcity: *I had one of my friends...she told me of one online website "Milanuncios". So, she told me to look there because after three years staying in Spain, you can apply for residence. I had to find a job before these three years finished so they can sponsor me to get the residence.*

Currently Dhriti works in one household in Bilbao. She does the domestic chores and takes care of the child. Being employed, even if it is not in the job she desires, is of great significance to her and her family as she is the only one who has a regular income: *A job for me is to run the family. If you work, you get money to survive. Without money you can't do anything these days. To eat, to run the family, to do anything. I think job is a good idea. I need a job. In other cases, if you are jobless, your mind is dull. You are not busy and you think negative and you have nothing to pass time, unless you are busy in the house.*

Going back to Dhriti's life in Nepal, we remember that she started working from an early age. She was the only one of her siblings who desired that economic independence even if she was very young. Hence, she made an effort and combined studies with work. This conveys the impression that she is a hardworking woman with very clear thoughts on what having a job implies. She reveals that not only is she the breadwinner of her family in Bilbao but she also helps her family in Nepal: *At least, I can say: 'next month I can help my family'. If I'm jobless I would not do that. At least, I can help my mother who is Nepal. Yes sometimes, if my brothers are not able to help her, I have to help her. Not every month. I can't send them every month because I'm the only one working. So, for me is difficult as well. If we both were working, then, it would be good. I can still help my family in Nepal. Not every month but every two months and the money we send there it's not sufficient for them. Everything is expensive.*

- ***Significance of the Culture of Origin in the New Society***

Migrants settle in a foreign country, but they are people with unique identities, cultures, customs and traditions. In this section, we were keen to understand the importance of the culture of origin in the host country.

One of the most distinguishing characteristics of South Asian societies is the family bond. Western cultures are characterised by an individualistic way of life while in South Asia

sharing and living in joint families is the usual form of living. The collective spirit is what Dhriti notably misses. The following example illustrates this: *Sometimes I compare. I was in Nepal with my mother, my sister. If you are ill, they are there to help you every time. Here you are “the other”. No family and the family relation in Nepal is a bit different. In Nepal is a bit better. In Nepal they help each other, they know everyone in the community. Here, they don’t. If you live in the second flat, you have seen them but you don’t know their name [...]. But in Nepal, in Asian countries, if you live in a community or you need some help, they help each other. So, you have your uncle, your aunty, your parents, everybody. They help each other. It’s very nice in Nepal. I miss that part. Here it’s a bit better in another way, caste, in economic way but in the case of relation, it’s better I think.*

Once again the concept of “the other” appears. As a migrant woman Dhriti feels like an outlander, an outsider. It is “them” and “I”. The “I” is foreign born and different. As such, she feels too “collectivist” for such an individualistic society. In addition to this, she describes the close relationship neighbours maintain among themselves: *If you want to go to your friend’s house, you just go and knock the door. You stay there and have a cup of tea, you chat and you come back or they offer you a dinner. You know, in Nepal if you go to somebody’s house, they will not send you back home without food. You have to eat.*

A further citation that exemplifies the importance of togetherness in South Asian societies is the fact that when a couple has a child, they sleep together in the same bedroom: *Here, in Western Cultures, they have separate room for the baby and they leave the children to sleep separately. In Nepal no. They sleep together with the baby. For us, seeing your kids sleeping alone in the room it’s a bit: ‘oh my God, how can they do that’. Sometimes it’s good as well. You can relax but I don’t know, we are accustomed to have that concern so, we feel nice when they are with us. My son, he still sleeps with us. I sometimes want him to sleep alone but he is sleeping with us since he was small so I couldn’t manage. I’m happy with that, that he sleeps with me. It’s fine. He hugs me and I know he’s okay.*

The celebration of festivals and holidays is an important part of South Asian culture. They celebrate them with great passion and pride. We were interested in understanding if Dhriti manages to celebrate the festivities in the host country: *Yes, we celebrate but I don’t take day off from my work [...]. If I were in Nepal it would be different, going out with my*

family but here I don't take. So, here I didn't but at least in the night I can pray to God and decorate my house. I haven't forgotten that. I do that every year in the festivals.

It seems that her excitement for the celebration of the festivals has decreased with the passage of time. However, she stills follows the customs, although not with the same intensity as when she was living in Nepal.

The traditional garment women wear in South Asia is saree, a type of dress made of long cloth wrapped around the body. She explained that she used to wear this attire in Nepal but not in the BC: *Here no because the weather here is very cold. In Nepal you can wear saree.* One of the places where Dhriti and other women from Nepal wear the saree is in the events organised by the community networks: *When I was in Eibar, we used to have a Nepali cultural programme and we used to see so many Spanish looking at us. They used to participate with us and we used to get help from Socials as well, the local government. They used to help us. They helped us a lot. [...] we could put one stall in the plaza of the city council and sell food from Nepal, clothes, drinks. I think they respect our culture. Okay and we can wear our Nepali dresses. Once I did a Nepali dance and it was published in one magazine. They respect and enjoy our dancing and our food. I cooked pakora⁴² and I sold out everything. Maybe I cooked around hundred.*

Dhriti spoke with such a delightfulness about the events they organised and the acceptance of the Basque people. She feels very proud of her culture and she is happy that there are possibilities in the host society to bring Nepal closer to its citizens.

- ***Motherhood and the Couple Relationship***

Ishaan was born in the host country. He speaks Basque, Spanish, English and Nepali: *At home we mix. He says "Nepanish". I don't know how he discovered this word. Last weekend he told me: 'mummy, I speak 'Nepanish'.*

Dhriti considers that the education system in Nepal is excellent and her family in Nepal sometimes laughs at the slow educational tempo in the Basque Country. However, she believes that not pressuring children as in Nepal is correct.

⁴² Fried snack originating from the Indian subcontinent.

Her life changed after her son was born. Being a mother in a foreign country was a challenge that she accepted: *You cannot compare life having no child and when you have a child. Like you cannot imagine after having a child. There are some points that make you so happy and you are proud of but sometimes you think how easy life was before. You were able to go wherever you wanted to go or if you couldn't sleep at night, you watched a movie. It's totally changed. So, we have to focus more on the son [...].*

At the time of the interview, Dhriti did not have difficulties finding a balance between work and motherhood. Her husband was unemployed and he was responsible for Ishaan: *Till now, my husband is jobless. He doesn't have a job. So, it's not really hard for me because he can drop him to school and I can go to work. But I'm thinking if he finds a job it would be very hard, but till now it's okay. But sometimes still, my son wants a mother. So, in that case I feel so sad. I wish I could help, why I can't give him so much time but I'm doing it for the family. Because we need money to survive. That's important as well [...] In the future, I think it will be so hard. We have some friends living near our home so sometimes if my husband has to go somewhere very important and if I'm working as well, we just ask our friends to help us. They never say no.*

Dhriti feels sorry that she cannot spend more time with her son, but she is the one who runs the family and she feels obliged to make the sacrifice for a better future. Apart from that, a community network has been developed and they support each other mutually by taking care of the children when none of the parents is able to do so. Given the fact that her husband is unemployed, he takes care of the household work: *Okay so, he prepares the food. He comes back home to the house or sometimes he goes for running and yes, he cooks, he cleans the house and I come back home at 4.30, so he offers me a tea with biscuits [...] My son after that goes to the park, in the evening. Sometimes we go together and sometimes if I'm tired I don't go because I work all day so, I feel tired and I don't go.*

In Dhriti's story, she is the breadwinner and her husband is unemployed and does the household work, a situation that probably would not have occurred if they were in their country of origin. In the host country, the socially established roles are reversed. They complement each other and they think of the best for the family. Openness and honesty

are the two characteristics that make her love Aakesh. As she said previously, she did not have the chance to know him better before marriage. But now, after the time spent together, she is convinced that she made the right decision.

- ***Free Time***

Dhriti attempts to spend quality free time with her family and friends although she ends the week tired because of work: *I'm mostly tired because of the work in the previous days. So, I'm tired. So, sometimes I go out with my son and husband to have a dinner in the restaurant. We have some programmes, birthday celebration or we go to the shopping centre and we hang around in the street.*

They also enjoy going to the beach: *So, we go out with friends or sometimes just with the family, me, my husband and my son. When it's summer, we go to the beach. We love going there. We take our food, drinks, a mat and we love spending time there.*

Another form of leisure is to gather with other people from Nepal and watch Nepalese films, or go to the park to have a picnic, or eat at somebody's house and dance.

Dhriti does things that she would have not been able to do if she was in her country of origin: *We were not able to go out in the night as I told you before. The only thing was television and we were able to go to the surroundings.* It is noteworthy that in the host country she has found new ways of spending her free time that otherwise she would not have experienced.

- ***Remodeling of Values***

Dhriti already explained the importance given to menstruation in Nepal; women are not allowed to go to the Temples or eat with the rest of the family. Regardless of the norms, after migration she does not follow this model: *Here not. I pray to God, I live a normal life. Maybe if I go back to Nepal I'd feel different because in my house, there will be my mother-in-law [...].*

It is fascinating to observe that even though Hinduism is deeply rooted in Dhriti's life, she decides to refuse the archaic tradition and to create her own pattern to follow and, most importantly, not to feel guilty about that.

Yet another thing she realised is the difference in social class that exists in Nepal and the nonexistence of a caste system: *Because is not only caste. Here, in the foreign countries is the economy as well. In Nepal, some people have one small house, one floor and only two rooms while others have big houses, mansions. Here, it's like...you are equal, everybody has a flat. So, here it's better and the caste system, here, you don't know the caste of the person by his face or the way they dress. Here is really nice. I like it.*

In the host country, Dhriti recognises a certain balance among the classes and the opportunities people have to improve their welfare. In Nepal, there is a tremendous gap among rich and poor people. An additional factor for the existence of this disparity is the caste system. Having experienced both, Dhriti has a bias towards a society where social inequality and caste-based norms are eradicated.

Leaving Nepal has helped her understand that domestic chores are not exclusively for women and that the key is cooperation: *So, in my case, my husband and I, we went together outside Nepal to London. So, it was totally different from Nepal [...]. If he has time, he will cook and clean. If I have time, I do that [...].* She states that many women who migrate and then go back to Nepal reshape the roles traditionally played in the culture of origin: *[...] maybe they learn and some of them go back to the country and say that it's good to help each other. Maybe now women speak. Before they didn't speak if they were not satisfied because they were living in a joint family and they had a lot of work.* The positive change that occurs once the migrant women go back to Nepal is a tool for transformation of the society.

Dhriti's marriage was an arranged marriage. She was not in love with her husband but she accepted the future her parents decided was the most suitable for her. At the present time, she believes that arranged marriage are not the most appropriate way of choosing someone else's happiness: *I think it's not really good idea of doing arranged marriages. I don't say that arranged marriage is bad. Still, you have to choose what you want. Is not like somebody is forcing you.* Arranged married is not an option for her son in the future. She wants him to have freedom of choice and not to limit him in the way she was: *[...] I don't mind whoever he finds. If he is in love, any cast, any religion, I don't mind. It's his life.*

When it comes to Ishaan, the reconstruction of values is present in terms of his upbringing: *I remember my childhood. Though I was not weak in education, my parents never told me to study. They left us free but I want my child to focus on his studies and help him more because my parents were not so educated, so they were not able to help me. Now, I can help my son so he can be better in his education, singing, dancing and extra activities in the home. I want to help him.*

Dhriti wants to give to her son the possibilities that she did not have in her country of origin. In line with her observations, quality education is primary and only after that may other activities be practised.

When she was living in Nepal Dhriti had the concept that outside Nepal it was not safe. Now she feels that it was a misconception, as we can observe from the following citation: *Yes, I feel safe. I haven't heard any bad news here. Sometimes. But there, you can hear about so many rape cases, problems for women. So, I feel safer here but when I was in Nepal, I used to think that in abroad countries it's not really safe, that it's worst. But I really feel safe here.*

Apart from feeling safe in the host country, Dhriti has learnt to enjoy life. If in Nepal, she passed her time balancing studies and work; in the BC she states this: *I learnt that we have to enjoy our life. It's really good and you feel very nice and you have to enjoy your life and you have to be happy. Your job, your responsibilities are part of our life but at the same time you have to enjoy your life. You have to be happy. You have to do whatever you want. It's good because I've seen so many people enjoying here. They do work, I don't say they don't work but I can see them enjoying a lot.*

7.3.3. TRANSFORMATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT

This is the last section of Dhrit's individual analysis. First, we will discuss migration as a tool that empowers migrant women and then we will turn our attention to the alliances among women that emerge from women's associations and other associations or just through life circumstances.

- ***Migration as an Instrument for Personal Growth and as an Empowering Mechanism***

Dhriti started learning Spanish and felt more confident in situations where she had to manage some procedures at social services, health care or her son's school: *I learnt a little bit but at least I was able to call the ambulance and I was able to go to the supermarket and talk what I want. I used to understand but sometimes it was difficult to return words. I was able to understand within five, six months. So, after that, I joined the school again and that helped me a lot.*

People understand each other by speaking and if the person is not able to express herself or understand what the other is telling her, it may be disempowering and may also lead to misunderstandings or confusion. In this case, there is a woman whose language and even alphabet are completely different and she manages to speak and understand basic Spanish in only six months. It takes persistence and willpower to manage to do that because it is not only the language. Many life circumstances intervene in between. She was forced to cope with them and study the language simultaneously.

Another form of empowerment is the Nepali network in the BC. They organise themselves with the aim of improving their social welfare: *Last weekend we had one meeting of our Nepali community. We were about to open one institute to teach Nepali the children. So, we have one group. We were thinking to help each other; in the weekend, one hour, two hours, three hours. We were thinking in English as well. We will start in January in Zabalburu.*

The preservation of Nepali culture is one of the goals of the community. It is interesting to notice the significance of the culture of origin among the community; they all stick together and support each other – a very common characteristic in South Asian societies.

Dhriti considers that she has changed with migration. These changes refer to maturity, income management and problem solving in difficult situations: *Before migration I was married but without children and I didn't know how to run the family. I knew but not really; how to manage the money, when to spend and when not. But now, I can handle the situation of my family and I can help my friends as well if they want.*

When Dhriti left Nepal, she was twenty years old. In her country of origin, she did not have autonomy and was not able to take a decision on her own or be responsible, as she herself pointed out: *A lot of things have changed. If I talk about my life in Nepal, I was nearly twenty and now I'm nearly thirty. So, there have been a lot of changes. There, in Nepal, I couldn't take any decision. If I had to do one thing then, I was not sure if this was wrong or right. I had to ask my parents but here, after migration from Nepal to England and from England to Spain, I can take any decision freely. I mean, I don't have my parents to ask them if this is wrong or right. Here, I feel free. So, lot of changes. I was a teenager there. So, I didn't really feel the responsibility about my family, about my future. I was relaxed and after migration, now, I really think how to manage my life, how to run my family, the economic condition, things like that.*

Living in a foreign country has also influenced the way Dhriti looks upon the idea of the joint family. Now, she feels so comfortable being the “owner” of her house that she could not imagine herself living together with her in-laws: *I'm alone with my husband. In Nepal, you have to live together with a lot of people in the same house and one will say this and the other will say that. So for me maybe, it will be impossible to live like a joint family if I go back to my country.*

Migration has contributed significantly to Dhriti's independence. Actually, it is the key feature of her personal experience as a migrant woman: *[...] it is the independence. I don't have to depend upon my family, my parents or husband; that he will give me this money and I can enjoy and buy things, travel. I have my own job. So, I'm like independent and if I would have been in Nepal, I'd live in a joint family. So, you have to work under your parents-in-law, take care of the house. Work like a servant in Nepal.*

We asked Dhriti how she sees her life back in Nepal and how she sees her life in the host country. She expressed mixed feelings on the topic. However, we identified one empowering mechanism that keeps her strong as a migrated woman: *If I have any problems here, I don't have time for myself to enjoy...then, I think about my country. There, you have your relatives, your parents, so you can go wherever you want and you can share your ideas, your things. Here, you are on your own. You have to do everything by yourself. So, in that case, sometimes, I miss the family. But sometimes, I don't miss it.*

It's very difficult to live in Nepal because of the economic conditions, the job problems, security.

This citation shows that on many occasions she misses her family because they could make her life easier. But, not having that privilege has taught her to be more self-reliant and depend exclusively on herself for everything in life. One of the features of this self-dependence is the possibility to work outside the home. It seems that in Nepal greater importance is given to work in the household than work outside: *My sister, when she was working in the bank, she used to wake up so early in the morning; clean little bit the house, cook for the family and then, for the children, maybe drop them to school and then go to work. So, the rest of the members, they will just sleep. Sometimes I feel like, if I go back to Nepal and I have to live a life like that, it would be horrible. So in that case as well, I don't want to move. I can wake up whenever I want, I can eat whatever I want, if I don't want to eat I don't. But if you are in Nepal, you live with the family, you have to cook, clean, everything.*

Living the life Dhriti wanted to live is part of her individual empowerment. She realised that life is much more than household work and is not ready to give up on the life that makes her more accomplished and satisfied.

Dhriti feels motivated to continue with her education because she is eager to start a new job related to her interests. She considers that a more challenging job would make her feel more satisfied: *I would like to do some courses so that I can improve, but most importantly, be happy.* The current job does not allow her to enroll in an official educational institution but she has found an alternative: an online course offered by Lanbide (Basque Employment Service). The driving force to become better and the belief in herself are signs of empowerment that would eventually lead to the accomplishment of goals.

- ***Alliances among Women as an Agent of Sustenance and Networking***

As we previously said, there is a strong network among the Nepali community in the Basque Country. Dhriti participates in “Women of Nepal”. In this association, they have started a school of the Nepali and English languages. Apart from the language school, they organise different activities during the celebration of the Hindu festivals. The

networking among them is highly productive as well. They help each other with employment opportunities: *If somebody knows a job opportunity, they post. So, they help into finding jobs. Like, I know about some job. My boss told me that he wanted a person. So, I post it here. So, if somebody wants the job, they call me. In that case, it helps a lot.*

The existence of the association creates bonds among the women participants. The mutual help, sharing the personal experiences and working for the improvement of the wellbeing of the community brings the empowerment to a higher level; from the personal, empowerment becomes collective. Together with this association, there are two more. One of them is for non-resident Nepalis and the other one is for festival celebrations: *Yes, there are two associations. One for non-resident Nepalis. It helps us if we need some documents, papers to submit, apply for the resident card. Yes, they suggest, they help us with the procedures. The other association organises programmes in festivals [...].* A further feature that had an effect on her becoming stronger were the alliances among women created outside the association: *I have a lot of friends from outside, different people. I have Farhana from Bangladesh. I have from Africa as well. My son's friends' mum.*

Finally, we asked Dhriti to describe herself in three words now, as a migrant woman in the BC. We did this exercise previously when she was asked to describe herself before migration. The three words are the following: *Tired, sensitive and happy. I like to be happy. Whatever problems I have, whatever the things are, I like to be happy.*

CHART 9. Summary of Dhriti's Experience of Life

NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	STUDIES	MARITAL STATUS	MIGRATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Dhriti	Kathmandu, Nepal	28	Bachelor's Degree	Married	2015	Domestic worker
VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man-centred society • Joint family 						

- **Pressure on women**
- **The importance of having a male child in the family**
- **Men – blessing; Women – burden**
- **Women’s voice unheard**
- **Women as property**
- **Different educational practices for girls and boys**
- **Restrictions on women**
- **Sex as a taboo**
- **Women – private sector; Men – public sector**
- **Lack of security for women and children**
- **Menstruation = Dirt and disgracefulness**
- **Hinduism**
- **Caste-based society**
- **Arranged marriage**
- **Dowry system**

MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE

OBSTACLES

- **Legal status in the BC**
- **Discrimination**
- **Lack of awareness by the institutions**
- **Lack of family support**
- **Language barrier**
- **Diploma recognition**
- **Precarious employment**

FACILITATING FACTORS AND INCLUSION

- **Motivation to learn the language of the host country**
- **Friendships**
- **Network among the community**
- **Finding a job**
- **Couple cooperation**

REMODEL VALUES

- **Attitude towards menstruation**
- **Viewpoints on Hinduism and devotion**
- **Rejection of caste system**
- **Importance of leisure in life**
- **The role of women**
- **Refusal of arranged marriages**
- **Education of son**
- **Safety in the host country**

EMPOWERMENT

- **Capacity to express herself in Spanish language**
- **Decision-making capacity**
- **Financial independence**
- **Self-reliance**
- **Self-sufficiency**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Strength**
- **Problem-solving capacities**
- **Freedom of choice**
- **Persistence and endurance**
- **Networking among women**

Source: Prepared by the author

7.4. VIRIKA

We touched base with Virika through Nerea, a social worker in one association for the reception of children from Russia and Belarus.

Virika was born in New Delhi, India. She is 31 years old. She has Bachelor's Degree in Law and Master's Degree in Business Administration. The migration to the Basque

Country occurred in 2013. She lives in Bilbao, with her husband Ashwani and their daughter Deepa. She is currently working as an English language teacher in a private language academy.

It is interesting to note that we met the first day we spoke by telephone. She agreed to meet us immediately after being told about the objectives of the study. We met in a cafeteria near the Guggenheim Museum. Virika came with her daughter Deepa and a friend from Nepal. We spoke in English as she felt comfortable with the language. She understands a little bit of Spanish but she did not feel motivated to learn the language. The first conversation was open and friendly. We discussed Hindu culture and she even brought some pictures from her wedding day.

We did the interviews at the library of a university in Bilbao. She used English as means of communication as she felt more confident expressing herself in that language. She was very open and kind remembering life in the country of origin. In addition to this, she has a highly developed critical opinion about Indian culture and the disadvantages of living in India.

We realised that she did not expect that the interview would go in that way. She was delighted to speak about childhood memories, life in India, Indian mentality and culture and, most of all, her position as a woman in all that.

The name Virika means “brave” in Sanskrit.

7.4.1. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

FAMILY ORIGIN AND VALUES

Virika was born in New Delhi, the capital city of India, as a middle child with one older and one younger brother. Recalling life back in New Delhi, she said that as a child and adolescent she was very introverted and she did not establish a healthy relationship with her mother and father: *My family was very nice. I think everybody says that but I was quite shy. I had a lot of things in my heart which I wanted to discuss with my mother, my father, but I was not able to. I never discussed about my things with my family. I grew up like this, keeping things in my heart and my mind. [...] I had a lot of problems but I never discussed and never focused on them. Basically, I just ignored them [...].*

We understand that there was a lack of attention in the upbringing that resulted in confusion and introversion. Trying to find a logical response for this, she said: *I think my family was quite busy in their life. My father was a businessman [...] and he was really busy. When I was waking up in the morning he was sleeping and we were going to school and when he was coming back, we were sleeping. So, we did not have that much of connection in between and my mother was also very busy in household works. I remember very, very well that we used to have lots and lots of guests every day.*

It seems that both of her parents were quite engaged with their responsibilities that somehow, they forgot their daughter. Virika had one brother who died when he was one year old. After that, her older brother was born and after that her mother had a miscarriage. She thinks that her elder brother was spoiled because of these life circumstances: *S, the brother was very pampered, because the child above and the child below died. So, he was very pampered and my father and everybody focused on him. Buying things to him. So he was the most pampered and the rest of us not. We used to use his things; the clothes, the cycle, lunch boxes, everything. He was like a king in our family.*

Once again, the lack of attention towards her appears. While all the focus was put on her elder brother, she felt lonely and had to be satisfied with “second-hand” things. The statement that her brother was the king of the house makes us wonder if this would have happened the same way in the event that she had been the first child.

In terms of the relationship with her elder brother, Virika says that she experienced some problems: *[...] when I was growing up, I faced some kind of problems with my brother. Her younger brother was more flexible, even though he gave her troubles as well: He was like, ‘no, I don’t care’, because he studied in a hostel and he was always outside. He wasn’t more broad-minded than my other brothers, but he became later on, when he got a girlfriend. Then, he changed but before, he was like my enemy, he didn’t let me talk to any boy. And then, he calmed down. When he got girlfriends. Then, he understood that girls and boys can talk and that there is nothing wrong with that.*

Both of her brothers caused trouble and misery until they realised by themselves that there are certain things that young people do, both girls and boys, and that that is perfectly fine. However, they made her life bitter at some point, thinking that just because they were boys and her brothers they had the exclusive right to tell their sister what to do or not.

She felt a lack of communication with her mother during important events in her life, as described in the following citation: *I remember when I got my first period, when I was thirteen or fourteen years old and I didn't know anything about it because my mother...I don't have a sister but my mother and my aunt didn't teach me anything about that. Never! By bad luck, I got it at school and all my dress got spoiled and I didn't know what to do. And on my way to home, I used to have one friend. She was older than me and I just talked to her and I didn't tell her that I had this. I told her that my friend got it and that it was a bad thing and her mother is going to beat her. So, she told me: 'I know you got this and no problem. This is a very good thing. You should talk to your mother and this is not a problem'. She bought me pads and I went home shivering as if I have done something very bad. I didn't know why God gave me this punishment and then, at home, I showed my clothes to my mother and she was very kind, she hugged me and kissed me: 'oh, this is really good. This is not a problem, why are you shivering?' and she gave me a pad. I didn't know how to use it.*

Virika and her mother did not establish a close mother-daughter relationship and she did not have any information on menstruation. This led to the creation of misconceptions on the issue. The feeling of guilt and shame prevailed the day she had the first bleeding. She narrates that she felt terrified about the idea of going back home. However, her mother's reaction was surprising to her: *From that day, I feel some connection with my mother because she took good care of me. [...] she put me to into bed and she didn't let me do anything: [...] 'just take rest' and she made my favourite food and she bought some gifts to make me happy. So from that day, I feel some connection with my mother and I think that my mother, I don't know, she suddenly woke up: 'my girl needs me'. So from that day we started a bond of mother and daughter.*

It looks as if the first menstruation has a symbolic meaning to her. Thanks to that, she felt important to her mother and accomplished the much-desired objective: to have somebody to take care of her. In Virika's case, they did not do the menstruation ritual. She said that in her family it was not a custom, not even her grandmothers did it. According to her, that ritual is typical in some areas of the country, especially the villages.

Her father was a building material supplier. He was very busy and did not have time to pay attention to the upbringing of the children: *He had a big business. So, he was very, very busy. He loved us! On Sundays he used to prepare food for us and he used to feed us*

by his own hands but the other things, like to discuss about life and to teach us something like 'baby don't do this' or 'do this', was missing.

Similar to the relationship with her mother, her father did not have enough time to dedicate to her and her siblings. The days he had were like a privilege to them. However, she felt that she did not have any kind of parental guidance. On the other hand, she describes her father as a very open-minded person who was way ahead of his time: *I was free to wear anything I wanted to. Yes, there were no restrictions, even though my uncles said: 'dress like Indians'. My uncle wanted me to wear the whole clothes, to cover myself. To cover myself but my family no, my father no, my mother too. My mother felt happy when I used to wear short clothes and told me: 'you look beautiful in shorts', even though my neighbours looked at me like this (shocked face) [...].*

We can observe an unusual form of behaviour on the side of her family in times when such "freedom" was even considered vulgar or as the personification of a bad woman. Virika considers that the key figure in this was her father: *[...] my father was very educated. He was raised in a hostel and all that. So, he was used to seeing women in short clothes and going out. So, he was very open-minded. So, my brother was also raised with this mentality: 'she can wear anything' and my mother, she didn't have any opinion. If my father says something, she's fine with that. My family is different from my uncles, aunts and neighbours.*

Education played a crucial role in the case of her father developing progressive reasoning and transmitting this to his sons and daughters. What attracts our attention is Virika's perception that her mother always agreed with her husband's decisions, as if she was not able to decide by herself.

- **Roles**

Virika's mother was a housewife. She was not educated and at that time women rarely worked outside the home. We wonder if this was out of personal choice or if it was a custom not to educate girls. She states that her mother was under constant pressure by the family and she even compared her to a cow: *My mother...my aunt was living with us. The sister of my father and the whole family was living with us. So, my mother was...how can you say...she was very kind, she did not use to speak a lot and she was under pressure of my aunt and my father too. So she was not that open. She was like a cow. Only doing the things and washing the clothes and preparing food for us. I remember that my aunt used*

to take us to school. So we were much closer to our aunt than to our mother because the role of my mother was cooking and providing all the things we needed and not as a consoler or a teacher that teaches us something. No, no, no. I don't think so. I missed that part. She carries on: Somebody is coming to our home and my mother used to cook and clean all the time even though we had servants but the cooking process in India, is for women basically. So, maybe they get help from the servants for the cleaning but cooking is for the woman of the house. So, she was cooking and cooking all the day and taking care of the guests and we were playing, doing our homework and all of that things.

When she describes her mother's role, Virika draws a comparison between her, as a mother and a cow. She perceived her like that because on one hand, she did not express herself often, she was obedient in the face of the family's desires and, on the other hand, she was working all the time, being productive for the family. The role of a mother was substituted by her aunt but it was only a formal role; they did not establish a deep relationship. For that reason, Virika was missing a person in her life who would have served to her as a role model and consoler when she was feeling troubled. When it comes to domestic chores, she was always trying to help her mother. This was not the case with her brothers.

Virika explains that she enjoyed spending time with friends but outside the home only. At home, she started having disputes with her elder brother: *At home, I have my elder brother so, he didn't let me talk to boys. When he saw talking to boys, we used to have drama in the house, he used to fight with me: 'why were you talking to them? He is not good'. So, I didn't want to be in his company, like 'you go boy!'*

The situation repeats itself. It looks as if she was calling for attention but none of her family realised that, not even her elder brother. Then, she began feeling that she was not able to take her own decisions just because she was a girl. It was her brother who considered that he had the right to decide what was the most appropriate for her: *In India, girls face many problems while growing up and I think that all of the girls face the same problem when they are growing up as teenagers and they used to have attraction with a boy. These periods...a lot of things but they did not have somebody to discuss with or somebody who will show them the right path. So, I miss that part and I fell in a bad company. I started doing these things which are not good and then, I came out of it but all of my own, I didn't have anybody.*

We asked her to be kind enough and elaborate on “doing bad things”: *I started drinking and smoking and I used to have two, three, four boyfriends and in India it is a bad thing because we are not that open yet. So, if we smoke on a road, everybody will say: ‘oh, she is a bad girl. She is smoking’, so she is a bad girl.*

We understand the confusion she felt while growing up. There are also some feelings of guilt for supposed misbehavior that does not correspond to Indian norms of how a girl is supposed to behave. We assume that this may be due to the lack of guidance from her parents. It may have been her response to their attitude, making them understand that she was there and she desperately needed their attention. Virika says that it is quite common to see boys smoking on the streets of India but in the case of women, the situation changes: *They smoke but in secret. [...] because everybody is looking like ‘they are not wearing clothes’ or ‘they are the worst thing’ or ‘they came from another planet’. I don’t know why this mentality still there.* We deduce from this statement that smoking is associated with a socially invented promiscuous girl. While boys are free to smoke in public, women are judged.

Virika is conscious for the rules imposed on girls just for being girls and the privileges boys enjoy, for being boys. She says that unlike her brothers, she did not feel free as a young person in terms of freedom of movement: *No, before eight o’clock we had to get inside the house. My brothers, they said that it is not safe. It is not safe for girls and I think so, it is not safe for girls to walk around so late and alone. So, this is the thing I used to suffer. Before eight o’clock I needed to be somehow at home and I couldn’t go anywhere alone. If I wanted to go outside, other city or other place, I needed to go with my parents, my brothers or some family member. I couldn’t go out alone [...].*

Women are not safe in India, Virika is convinced. The main reason, according to her observations, is the mentality: *It is the mentality. It is the mentality totally because if you go to some parts of Delhi, they are very open. Women go wherever they want to go, they come home when they want. If you go to Kerala, all are educated and women are free. But the Uttar Pradesh and the areas connected to Uttar Pradesh, the Delhi parts also. There are many conservatives and most of them are not educated and poverty was a big issue there. [...] they didn’t use to have respect for women, so they used to comment on them, the cheap comments and they try to touch you. So, at night, there are many problems. If you have heard the rape cases, kidnapping the girl also. The parents are afraid.*

As a woman it is difficult to feel safe in India in Virka's words. She related the issue of unsafety to the lack of education and poverty. The lower the level of education and the greater the poverty, the more unsafe the place is for women. She explains that there is a broad difference among regions in the country. Some of them are closed minded and women's lives are in a constant danger; others are more emancipated and women's freedom is not questioned.

One of the things Virika did with her siblings was go to the cinema. Even there, a certain kind of behaviour was expected by her: *I remember when I was going to the cinema with my brother and we used to watch movies and I used to laugh loudly and my brother: 'shhh, quiet, laugh like a girl!' - 'What girl? I like laughing this way. I laugh like this'. Then, I avoided going with them because they imposed restrictions: 'don't look like this', 'don't jump like this'. 'don't run like this', 'behave like a girl'. I don't know what the concept of girl is.*

Beyond a doubt, the roles based on gender are epitomised in the citation above. Virika clearly states that she does not know what the right concept of being a girl is or how girls are supposed to behave. It looks as if girls are sacred creatures, that everything they do ought to be perfect. They have to laugh quietly, they have to have a humble look, they have to stay still, etc. Overall, they have to behave in accordance with the socially established norms.

- ***Education and Work Experience***

Virika has mixed feelings with regards to childhood. On one hand, she was confused and feeling lonely within the family. On the other hand, she was happy to spend time with friends and go to school: *On one side, very happy and on the other side confused and stressed and I wanted to talk but I was not able to do so. On the other side, I was happy. I was having fun. I'm enjoying with friends and enjoying my school. Yes, I liked going to school because I have my best friends at the school but thing is that we didn't have guidance at home.*

School was Virika's way of escape from the loneliness she felt at home. She found support and shelter in her schoolmates. She studied in a convent, a Christian school. Before marriage, Virika finished her formal education and started working in a company.

- ***Traditions of the Culture of Origin***

Virika feels proud of the diversity in her culture of origin. What she likes the most is how colourful India is, the variety of food, dresses, customs and festivals: *For me, India is a beautiful country with lots of colours and the culture of India is very rich [...]. So basically, there are many Gods and many festivals. What else...the dresses are different from all over the world. [...] we have a wide variety of food. The food. So for me, India is full of everything. It is very rich in culture. We have lots and lots of jewelry and all of them have their meanings and the married women put bindi on forehead, which is red, which says that you are married and you belong to one man. We put sindoor⁴³ to say that you are married and basically all these followings are for women. Men don't follow these types of customs like women do. So, this is it. Dresses like saree. It's a long piece of clothes and you wrap it around your body and it looks beautiful.*

The description of the traditions of India was one of her favourite parts during the second meeting we had. As Virika explained, women put a coloured powder on their forehead to manifest that they belong to their husbands. Men do not have such a custom. It looks as if there is a need to mark or emphasise that the woman does not belong to her family anymore but to the husband's family. She continues: *We have a tradition to make henna⁴⁴ on the hand. I love that. On every festival we used to put henna on the hand. We have a wide variety, like thousands of variety to eat. Like, if you go shopping then, it is not possible to come home without eating street food. I love the street food of India. Festivals like Diwali, Holi, they are beautiful! We have the bangles on our hands and they look beautiful. Like, I haven't seen in any other country wearing those bangles and it's beautiful. The culture is beautiful and it's not boring.*

- **Religion**

The majority religion in India is Hinduism. Virika was educated in Hindu values and she worships the God Shiva: *All of my family members follow their own God in which they have their beliefs. I myself follow Shiva, my mother follows Krishna and my sister-in-law follows Shiva. [...] when we were growing up we used to go to Temples and we used to listen to stories and then, we got fascinated about Gods and we were also having lots of television programmes of Gods. So, we grew up watching them in the cartoon way, cartoon form.*

⁴³ A red-coloured powder worn by married Hindu women on their forehead.

⁴⁴ Henna or Mehndi is a dye used on hair or temporary tattoos on the Indian subcontinent.

Virikia brought various decorative statues and pictures of some Hindu Gods like Hanuman, Ganesha, Radha and Khrishna and she told the story behind each one of them. We understand that religion is inculcated in children from a very early stage of life through stories, television programmes and family: *Yes. As a child I liked to go to Temple because they gave us prasad, sweets and we were going to take the sweets with my mother. By the time we were growing up, we came to realise what religion is, what the importance of God is and there are lots of stories behind. My mum and the other people also used to say 'pray to God, he will help you. If you are afraid, take the name of God. Nothing will happen to you'. We grew up with this thinking.*

Now, as an adult, she has her own interpretation of religion. She would rather say spirituality than religion, power rather than God: *[...] I don't know if God exists or not, but I believe that there is some power. It exists for sure in this world, someone who is controlling everything. So, I believe in some power and that power I name Shiva.*

Even if she is a follower of Shiva, she does not pray regularly. The reasons for this, as Virika claims, is the lack of time and the superstitious belief that a person cannot pray to God if she is not "clean": *I'm very bad with followings because I don't have time. We are having some kind of thinking that if we want to pray, we need to take bath and to make ourselves clean. Sometimes is not possible. So, I'm quite kind of superstitious that I'm not able to touch God because I'm not clean.*

Virika strongly opposes the donation of money to the Temples in the name of Hinduism. She considers that donations have become a business that takes advantage of the most vulnerable categories in Indian society, poor people: *[...] they ask money on the name of prasad. Like: 'donate this and you will be fortunate'. 'If you don't have a job, you will do this kind of Puja⁴⁵ and you will get the job' and then, people, they believe and they have strong beliefs. They give money on Mondays in the Temples and they give ornaments and they give everything they want to give and they are not willing to give up any to poor people on the roadside. They give thousands of money in Temples. This is a stupid thing. I'm sorry that I'm saying that but I believe that helping some is better than just donating any money to Temples [...]. They donate millions of rupees in the Temples, millions of rupees. Can you believe it? They're not helping the poor on the road. If they donate a million rupees to poor people, life would change, but they donate money in Temples.*

⁴⁵ Hindu worship ritual performed in the morning and offering devotion.

The citation illustrates the power of religion in people's lives. This harms the most disadvantaged citizens of the society. Virika reflects upon the fact that there is an enormous social class gap in India and those who have the means to propel social change distribute their wealth in Temples.

- ***Caste***

Indian society is based on a caste system. Even though there are attempts to eradicate this code of social stratification, caste still has a significant impact in Indian society. Virika explains that it is still very difficult that two religions mix or people from different caste have a love relationship: *To marry a Muslim family...very hard in middle-class families. Higher class, they do it, like lots of famous actors. They are marrying intercastes, but in the middle-class families, quite difficult. I can't say that it's impossible, but it's difficult and in villages, it is completely banned. I still know some people that don't allow their children to marry in other caste. If they fall in love and they don't let them, at the end, the child just runs away from the house and they get married and to come back it's like impossible in villages. It's a problem, a mentality problem.*

Caste determines the person you are and who you are going to be. Although there is certain progress, especially in the city, villages remain places where change is more difficult to achieve. In relation to caste, Virika says that it should not exist because it is what limits Indian progress. She is very happy that in Bilbao nobody asks her what her caste is. She says that things are changing in India and in the big cities caste is not what determines whether a person is going to be accepted at some job or not. However in some areas, especially the rural ones, caste is still a big issue.

- ***Marriage***

When Virika was an adolescent, she fell in love with a boy and they were thinking of getting married; but suddenly, his family decided to marry him to one of his cousins (she explained that in India, marriage among family members is allowed). She was very disappointed. Later, she married her present husband. It was an arranged marriage. She did not know her husband previously. She obeyed her parents because they thought that, in that way, her life would be better. Although she was not in love with him, she saw him as a good person and appropriate for her. They were from the same caste. Interestingly, she said that she always liked boys from her caste. She stayed in the house of her mother-in-law and father-in-law for some months before coming to Bilbao. She was working but

she quit her job because she had to do the domestic chores and the house where she was living was very far away from her workplace: *One of my cousins got married in his family. So she was constantly saying to us 'ok we have someone in our family, he is abroad and he is nice. What if we marry Komal?' and we were like 'no, no, no, I'm studying, I'm studying'. Then, when all my studies finished and I was working, my parents told me: 'okay, are you ready to get married now?'. So I said: 'okay, let's see'. So, he came to my house with his family. We talked to each other separately and we got to like each other and then okay, we said: 'okay, we will get married'. We took the decision of getting married within thirty minutes.*

Arranged marriages are a common practice in the Indian culture. The concept of love may be different given the fact that two people marry after seeing each other for the first time. Her testimony suggests that marriage is more an obligation than personal desire. It is something that is expected to be done after people finishing their studies or even before, in cases where education is not an impediment. Virika believes that she took the right decision and does not regret it: *I was completely confident about myself that nothing wrong was going to happen to me. So, I was confident and eventually, he got the same but I was thinking and we got married in thirty minutes! It's like a joke if I tell someone that I took the decision within thirty minutes [...].*

When it comes to marriage she clearly states that it is not that often that religions mix although, over the last years there has been a recognisable change in terms of intercaste marriages and love marriages: *It is fine and the girls are also allowed but the basic thing is that they want in their own religion. Now, things are changing. In my family also, lots of girls married in other religions and they are having love marriages also, but some of them, stick to the point of religion.*

In terms of dowry, Virika thinks that it is an unnecessary practice and tradition in India and that previously the groom's family was asking directly for the presents they wanted to receive: *But earlier, it was like, they ask you in your face [...]. Money or 'we want this car' or 'we want this house', like this, on your face. Yes, yes and they still do it.*

The caste-based division of people is something that our participant strongly rejected after the observation of how Basque society functions. She noticed that people are able to work in any job and still be treated with respect. People may be from a lower or a higher class, but they do not suffer constant discrimination or devaluation as happens to the lowest

castes of Indian society. For example, working in the cleaning sector is reserved for the lowest social castes: *No, no, no. Only for the lower-class people. The middle class or the upper-class no. They are not allowed. They are not able to do a cleaning job. Here no. They are free. They can do anything and feel respected and one more thing that inspired me is, if you are a boss or you are a working class, they sit in the same place and they share the food or they will eat on the same platform. In India, no.*

- **Identity and Social Values**

Virika claims that her country is a place where women struggle with many restraints: *[...] they bound girls. They don't let them do what they want freely. Like, I'm talking about the middle-class families. They don't allow them to wear short clothes because they think that if they go out like that, something will happen. The boys will get attracted to her, something like that and they don't allow smoking or drinking to girls on the streets freely. They are not able to do this. In some families, I saw that they wanted to marry their girls in their own religion. So, I don't like this kind of backward thinking in India and mainly, all of them are from the middle-class families. They have them. So, I don't like these restrictions on girls.*

From the above, we understand that the way women dress may be a reason for violent acts by men. Smoking or drinking are considered inappropriate for women. She states that this kind of behavior is more common among middle-class families. They also have the characteristic of showing off: *Lower class families are freer than middle-class families because they didn't have the thinking of show off like we do, like middle-class family. We are living just for show off to other people. They want to show off. Like, I'm the happiest man or I'm the richest man or my children are the best children in the world and they don't do anything wrong. I don't like this. In this way, they don't let their children to live their life, their wives to live their life as they want. So, this is the ugliest thing I've seen in India.* According to her, this is related to the mentality of middle-class families. She thinks that they are more preoccupied with what others think of them than themselves.

As stated by Virika, in Indian society there is the belief that women ought to behave in a certain way in order to comply with the concept of a “good” Indian woman. We raised the question of what a good Indian woman would be. She replied:

Good Indian woman. I don't know the concept of good Indian woman because if I talk about ancient times, they used to work in the fields and they used to take care of the babies, the husband, the grandparents, the in-laws, the house. And they follow the terms of their in-laws and their husband. [...] I love my culture. I love everything. I love my religion, my Hinduism, my God. I love everything but I don't know what the concept of good Indian woman is because it also depends on the family. How they want their woman to be because some men are very conservative and they want their women only inside the house, but the others are open. They want their wife to work outside.

It appears that the identity of a good Indian woman is the one that dedicates her life to the family and their needs. She is obedient and she sacrifices her dreams in order to fulfill someone else's dreams. It is intriguing that how a woman behaves depends on her husband and family. If men are conservative, women ought to adjust to their conservative behaviour. If a woman is "lucky" enough to have married a liberal husband, then she may be able to achieve her life objectives. The good Indian woman is always a married woman. Women who decide not to marry have difficulties in their everyday lives: *If I talk about basic concept here, basic idea of the mentality or something like that, no it is not good. For men maybe but people are used to talk from behind: 'he is like this' or something, 'he is not getting married'. For girls is very difficult if they take this decision. They need to be self-dependent [...] and should not be under the pressure of their parents because it's quite difficult not to get married.*

As stated above, men may decide not to marry but for girls the burden is much heavier. They ought to be self-dependent in a society where women's autonomy faces many obstacles along the way, including family expectations.

Virika feels blessed that she had the opportunity to travel around the country and come to know herself better: *Yes, I have traveled a lot. I have traveled in my country when I was not married and the experience was good because when you are with your friends, you are truly yourself, who you are because when you are with somebody who has responsibilities like husband and parents, then, you restrict yourself. You don't do things you want to do, you behave well and I don't like to behave well.* In travelling with friends she recovered the freedom taken from her by her family; freedom versus restrictions. That freedom gave her the opportunity to find herself and understand who she is.

Virika believes that women in India know that they are considered second-class citizens but they do not know how to fight against that unjust situation. The pattern repeats itself from generation to generation, although nowadays changes have been encouraged with the higher percentage of educated women: *Yes. They know it very well. They want to change it but they don't know how to change it because they are following what their mother has done, the mother is following what their mother had done. So, it is like this. They know and they need to change but they are not able to because there are lots of values in their mind. Like: 'I have a child. I can't do this. My brother doesn't allow this so, I cannot do this'. But maybe in the future there will be a change. Yes, because they are changing now, they are getting well educated and they are changing in some parts of India like Kerala and the South part. They are more educated, they are doing what they want to do but in the North part and the other parts of the country, they are still struggling with their daily routine.*

7.4.2. THE MIGRATORY PROCESS

- ***Decisions for Migration***

Virika never had the curiosity to relocate and experience life in a different country on her own. She says that: *No, at the first time, when I was not married, I did not want to go out from India. We used to have a chat with my friends like 'oh, why would I like to go abroad?' and I was like 'I'm not going out of India. I'm not going out anywhere because I like it here. I love this culture and all this' but eventually, I got married. It was an arranged marriage. My parents liked this boy and we got married and I came here.*

We recognise that Virika felt fear of the unknown. Since she did not have the opportunity to travel outside her country of origin, she was happy and satisfied with what she already knew.

Ashwani was already working and living in the BC when they met: *He was working here since 2008 and I got married in 2013. So, he came especially for marriage, 15 or 20 days and he stayed there and he came back to do all the formalities for visa. Within six months, I was also here.*

The sacrifice Virika made is significant. She married a man whom she did not know previously and then he returned to the BC while she stayed in India as a newlywed waiting for her husband to come back so that they could go together to their new home in the BC.

- ***Life in the New Society***

Virika did not speak Spanish or the Basque language before her migration to the BC. She did not feel comfortable with learning Spanish or Basque: *I remember I was not enjoying learning Spanish because my husband wanted me to learn Spanish and the day I came, he started speaking to me in Spanish. So, he wanted me to learn very quickly. So, he started speaking Spanish and I was like: 'what the hell? This is not my home'. I told him I didn't feel like home. I felt as if I have come to a rented home of some other people. Then he stopped and started talking in Hindi.*

It looks as if she felt pressurised to learn Spanish and the effect was quite the opposite. She experienced the situation as unnatural and in some way it awoke feelings of alienation. She felt like the “other” in a place that it is not her home and whose language she did not speak. After some time, she started learning Spanish, but the demotivation persisted: *I just tried all the schools. In Llodio, I tried EPA and I didn't like. Then, I came here, in Bilbao, in the EPA of Casco Viejo and I didn't like it. Then, I liked it but I changed in the next session. Then, I went to Deusto, in the School of Languages and I got pregnant and I had to stop. So, I kept changing. I don't know why, I just get bored and I have some friends, one from Japan and we just thought: 'okay, let's change the school' and she said: 'okay, let's change the school' and finally, we kept changing until I stopped.*

Virika does not specify any particular reason for the lack of interest in learning the language of the host country, apart from boredom and time. Even today, she has not changed her mind. She is not willing to learn Spanish in a School of Languages but rather acquires the language through daily communication: *Now no because I think that I know enough to live. I'm not going to give an examination in Spanish and now I don't need to learn and I'm learning because I give classes and sometimes I have to translate to Spanish. I'm learning new words every day, but like, going to proper classes no, I don't have time.*

The language problem appeared at the time she started searching for a job: *They say that: 'you don't know Spanish, so you need to learn Spanish' [...]. When I went to Lanbide*

offices, they said that: 'no, no, your problem is that you don't know Spanish. So, you need to learn Spanish first'. 'Okay, and another work?' 'No, no, no'. So, I started searching for the courses. Okay, let's do some course and then, I will search. This is why I just came to know a little bit more Spanish [...]. Then, I went to other office and they took some examination and I passed this exam [...]. Then, they took another exam of mathematics. I passed and then, they took an interview in Spanish and then: 'no, no, no, your Spanish is not that good'. I was like: 'why are you playing with me? Then, I came here to talk about some courses. I thought: 'let's do the MB again, the Masters again and it was so costly. Yes, it was so costly that I dropped the idea again. Then, years by years, we changed, we came here. I came here and I got the job because in Llodio is quite difficult because it's a village [...].

As Virika herself says, she encountered difficulties with employment because she did not have a good level of Spanish language. This occurred despite the fact that she was even overqualified for the jobs she applied for.

Another obstacle was the place of residence. She was living in a city and the work opportunities were scarce as compared to Bilbao. She has adapted to the new job as an English language teacher even though this job position does not motivate her: *I stopped thinking about law because somewhere in my heart, I knew I'm not able to get one. So, I stopped thinking about that but I wanted to get one in the English field, but a more creative job. This is very boring. You have your books and the children come and you have to teach them and then, it is not very well-paid job.*

Virika is a highly educated woman but because of various factors, like the nonrecognition of her Diploma and the Spanish language barrier, she was only able to find jobs that did not match her qualifications and are unfortunately low paid. What is peculiar is the fact that the Social and Human Sciences, the core of society, are related to precarious jobs, while the Natural Sciences are more valued. What is even more noteworthy is that the former is a sector mostly occupied by women and the latter is a sector that is mostly occupied by men. Another obstacle related to the difficulty that the migrant community face when they are searching for a job is the recognition of the Degree Certificates: *I have to give an examination again to get the Graduation Certificate. Then, for MBA, I have to do some of the subjects again and law...no chance, because the law is completely different here. I don't think that I can prepare and I can do that much. I also wanted to do MBA here but it is very costly. I don't have the money so I dropped it.*

The attempts to validate the degree certificates may be time consuming and costly, and can sometimes consist of taking exams for almost the entire university degree, as in the case with Law. Virika would need to study the degree in the host country because the laws of India are different from the laws in the host country. Another difficulty is the cost of the Master's Degrees. She was motivated to study one more Master's Degree course but the high prices changed her mind.

She explains that sometimes, she has encountered people that have discriminated against her based on her skin colour and South Asian features: *Sometimes, I've come across with people that say: 'why are you coming to my country, you people from the outside?'. And they don't like people coming from the outside. Sometimes, I come across to them and I don't like this. But they are few. One in a hundred. I remember one incident when I was with my friend. She has two boys, small boys and one old man just pushed them across the road and I felt pain: 'why did you do this?' and he said: 'why do you come to my country?' and I said: 'we are working. We are not taking any grant. Never in my life. My husband has never taken any grant from this country, we are working. We are working hard, we bought our home and we have mortgage. We are paying taxes'. This kind of behaviour hurts you. It is one in a hundred, all others are very good.*

These incidents demonstrate the lack of awareness and maybe the lack of humanity among some native people who judge others who are not like them from their privileged position. The above example perpetuates the long-standing stereotype of the migrant community as people who come to their country to live from grants or even the other extreme, to steal their jobs. However, Virika tries to apologise for this kind of behaviour and not to be resentful: *Basically, I like everything. Just sometimes, some people...it's human nature and you will get this type of people everywhere in the world, even in India and any other country and here, they don't like the people coming from outside. Some people from the host country give her the impression of being xenophobic and as a migrant person, this makes her feel sad.*

As Virika explained in the previous section, Ashwani was the only person she knew when she arrived in the BC. On the other hand, he was already living in the BC and he had an established network. One thing that Virika told us was that Ashawani did not facilitate new contacts for her: *Yes. A lot of people but he never let me...he used to have many friends, many girls but he never let me, he never took me out to meet his friends. So, meeting friends was also a big challenge for me when I came here.*

We asked her why he did that and she was not able to find the right answer. What she told us was: *I don't know. I don't know what was happening in his mind. He was very busy. He was working eight hours and this work starts from two until ten at night. So first of all, there was no time and then, I don't know. He also stopped meeting his friends, okay? He also stopped meeting them. There was a sudden change in his behaviour. I don't know why and he also stopped meeting his friends and we got used to going out just the two of us. My husband and me. We used to go out a lot but not with other people.*

She could not find a logical explanation for Ashwani's behaviour. One possible explanation is that his conduct may have changed because he married and he believed that he needed to settle and focus on his marriage. However, this kind of actions are common when two people become a couple. It looks as if they lose themselves in the relationship and they sacrifice their previous life in the name of that relationship.

One incident that changed her life and influenced her wellbeing in the host country was the decision to abort her first child. She got pregnant after two months in the BC and due to life circumstances she and her partner took a decision which they later regretted: *When I came here in 2013, I got pregnant within two months. I was pregnant and I was so stressed and my husband was also stressed. Basically, he didn't want the child that time so he said: 'no, no, no, I don't want a child' and I was following him and okay: 'if you don't want it, why should I keep this child?' We went to the doctor and we aborted the child and then, my life started changing. I got into a depression, like 'I did something wrong, I did something wrong, I did something wrong. I'm not going to tell this to my family or the family of my husband'. It was a secret between my husband and me. So, we used to get in a stressed environment at home because my husband was also repenting. He also had regrets: 'why have we done this?' [...]. I got abortion and within two months we changed completely. Our mentality was completely changed and within six months, we started the process again: 'okay, we want a child now'. We were impatient and we tried, we tried, we tried. Nothing happened and we went to the doctor and the doctor doesn't suggest anything to you for two years. So, we were waiting and we were waiting and we were praying and we were broken down. Both of us, broken down and we were waiting, waiting, waiting, waiting. The doctor said that: 'you are so much focused on this, this is why you are not getting it.'*

We understand that returning to a painful memory is not easy. We did not want to disturb Virika or ask too many questions on the topic. We just listened to her and tried to be

empathetic. We assume that maybe she did not want to abort the baby from the very beginning, but took the decision because her partner did not respond as expected. After all, they are a couple and she was not willing to raise a child whose father did not feel excited about the idea of having a baby. The consequences of that decision were bad. She claims that the event changed their life and it affected their relationship as a couple.

We asked Virika about the sacrifices she had to make in order to come to the BC. She sacrificed her job and her family: *I sacrificed my job, all the studies I have done because I really had done a hard work to get those certificates and those studies. I sacrificed my family. I left everything and I came here. I feel freer and I feel safer here and happier I guess and I have a better life standard. Everything is okay but in some way I'm not that satisfied. Like, I always feel something is missing [...]. [...] and I'm also in a kind of a race to achieve something. So, I started working at 6 a.m. till 10 p.m. So, I was continuously working, working, working, running somewhere. I don't know where I wanted to reach and money, money, money. I bought the house. It was also like, I wanted more and I don't know why I'm not living my life. Sometimes, I wanted to leave everything and go back to India and then, my mind starts working: 'no, no, what are you doing? India? Stay here, do some work and achieve this, achieve that'. I don't know.*

As our participant already stated, she came to the BC because her husband was living and working there. She left her job, family and friends and began a new life with Ashwani in the host country. Virika considers that she sacrificed her professional career given the fact that she had a stable and well-paid job in New Delhi, unlike in the BC. She demonstrates mixed feelings for her life in the new place. Sometimes, she desires to return to India and other times, she just reminds herself of all the wellbeing they have generated with her husband in the new society and abandons the idea. It looks as if the capitalist lifestyle has exhausted her and she does not manage to enjoy this wellbeing fully. She says that she misses her family so that her happiness would be complete. This is discussed in the section “Significance of the Culture of Origin” in the host country.

Friends are an important pillar of strength in India. In the BC she has friends as well, but the bond is not the same. They do not know each other profoundly as happens with lifelong friends: *They are also busy with their life and I'm also busy with my life. So, we are not able to enjoy that much. In India, the friends are real friends.*

- ***Inclusion and Facilitating Factors***

Virika migrated to the BC in 2013. She did not know anything about the host country before her migration. She did not show interest either: *Nothing, nothing. I was not interested in knowing anything. I was busy enough in my life. I didn't know a thing. My husband used to tell me something like 'here, they are free and we enjoy [...]'. I was saying okay but when I saw it with my eyes, I was happy. But when I came to Bilbao, it was not that different. I thought as if I come in a good place in Delhi, like in a posh area in Delhi because the lifestyle is not that different.*

Virika identifies similarities between the home and the host country. This may have influenced the faster adjustment to the BC. Apart from that, it is necessary to mention the fact that Ashwani already lived in the BC and she found herself in a situation of advantage compared to other women who migrate alone or migrate with family and start from zero. Truth be told, Virika thinks that this condition was a disadvantage rather than an advantage. She considers that if she had migrated alone she would have felt more fulfilled as a woman. We kindly asked her to elaborate on this statement: *Or happier I guess. More enjoyable because maybe if I was alone, I would have experienced something new, like how to arrange things for yourself and because I came with my husband, I got everything on my plate. I didn't have to struggle and it's boring. You get everything that you want. I would have preferred to come alone and to do all by my own, the struggle to find some contact or just language or maybe I would have made more friends because with my husband I'm not able to make that much of friends because when we go out, we go out alone and we are into together and into each other. We are not looking at any other and we don't need anybody else. Maybe if I would have come alone, I would have enjoyed more because this is how I can come to know myself more, what I can do.*

This statement shows how an asset may become a drawback. Virika is conscious of the advantage of being the wife of a person who already migrated to the BC several years ago and sometimes she questions herself about how her life would have been if she had migrated autonomously, although she did not consider migration previously. This condition has made her life easier in many aspects. Other migrants do not have those advantages but she would have preferred to experience migration independently, to encounter obstacles and conquer them, to learn the language and meet more new people.

Although our participant found similarities between her country and the BC, she also claims that there are many differences: *The food, songs, the music, the festivals, the*

clothes, the way of clothing and freedom. Girls here are freer [...]. The girls are more educated than in my country.

When we asked her how she remembered the first day in the new home, she recalled nice memories and said she had a shock because many customs were not familiar to her: *When I came here it was raining and it was beautiful. It was raining and we went out to have a dinner. I just loved it because I love the raining season even though I didn't know it was raining always. It was not that cold. It was in November. Greenery. Bilbao is not that green but I came in Llodio. It was a beautiful village and green. With wide roads and not lot of people and bars. Every street has ten bars and all are outside. I loved the outside sitting arrangement. Honestly, in Bilbao they are drinking on the road and nobody says anything and it was quite a change. Because I've heard that in foreign countries they do like this but when I saw it, it was beautiful, yes: 'wow, they are enjoying themselves'.*

In this particular story, the language barrier exists because Virika is Indian and her mother tongue is Hindi and she did not speak Spanish when arrived; but an additional barrier is that she does not feel comfortable with learning the language. Thus, she can manage some basic phrases in Spanish that help her to cope with day-to-day situations. Nevertheless, knowing only English did not cause her many problems. Somehow, she managed to communicate with people: *Actually, when I came here, I got to know all the people who speak English. Yes. I made friends in train because I was quite confused; 'this train is going to the direction or not'. So, I used to ask that in English and somehow, I don't know, they also knew English so we started talking along the way. Then, we exchange numbers and become friends. So, this is how we were speaking in English. Maybe they were also trying to improve their English, having a conversation. We have some family friends and they also want little bit of English. So we used to have conversation in English and when I came across a person who didn't know English, I used my translator. [...] I think they like me because I'm lively and because I have something different to tell and I also like them because they have something different to tell me; to make me familiar with the culture here and friends, names of drinks, clothes, the festival clothes.*

We can see that even if she did not express herself in Spanish, she managed to find a way to communicate with native people and, what is more, to socialise and to make new contacts. These helped each other mutually. She has a good relationship with the neighbours too: *They come to my home. I love my neighbours and they say: 'if you need anything, tell us, tell us, tell us'. So they are all beautiful. I love it. I never want to go back*

to India. Like, travelling yes but not spending my life. I love Europe. The weather, I love the weather, always raining. In India is always sunny and I don't like the sun. Very hot! No, no, no. I can't breathe there, pollution, noise.

This citation suggests that Virika feels satisfied with her life in the host country. The new friendships that arose from her nearest surroundings are an additional facilitating factor in her feelings of wellbeing, so much so that she cannot see herself living back in her country of origin.

At first, Virika and Ashwani lived in Llodio, a municipality located in the Basque Province Araba, 20 kilometres from Bilbao. She identified the initial place of residence as one of the things that complicated her attempt to find a job. After three years living in Llodio, they moved to Bilbao and in a very short period of time, she found a job: *Before, I was working in the housekeeping department in hotels and the cleaning department of the rooms and then, I got teaching. Then, I started teaching for this Cambridge Certificate because I've given interview in some kind of academies and they told me that I was okay: 'I'm impressed. This job is yours' and they called me said: 'no, no, we have taken some experienced teachers. Maybe in few years. Maybe if you have some certificate, we will see that'. I studied and I took this Cambridge Certificate and then, I got this teaching job.*

Virika has a Bachelor's Degree in Law and Master's Degree in Business Administration. However, she has started working in less qualified jobs and she is currently working as an English teacher due to her advanced knowledge of English. Though she is fluent in the language, she needed a certificate to be able to work in the private academies.

The host country provides her and her family safety. The freedom of movement that she is experiencing in the BC gives her feelings of satisfaction and calmness: *In India, we are not able to go out. Yes, we are able to go out but we have some kind of terror or fear, we are afraid that something will happen at night. At two, three, we are not able to roam around. Alone? Without a company? For sure not. In some metro cities yes but in Uttar Pradesh no, no. We are not able and they see you with different eyes. Like the girl is not good because she is roaming at that time of the night. But here, I'm totally, free. I was working at the hotel and I used to come home at 12:30 a.m., all alone. So, I feel free, I feel safe here. Too much!*

In this citation, the dignity of women is questioned. If women are spending time outside at hours that are not considered appropriate for women, those women are criticized as bad

women. In the host country, Virika does not have this supposed dignity problem and she is able to go and come back from work without fear, as she explains. What is more, she feels more relaxed about the safety of her daughter: *I think that she is safe. She is in good hands. In India as well but it's like, it's in your head. Lot of crime is happening and you just hear some unexpected news that something bad happened to children and all these things. Children are abducted about sexual harassment so, you don't feel safe from the side of children. It can happen in school also.*

- ***Significance of the Culture of Origin in the New Society***

As a proud migrant woman from India, Virika feels blessed that in the host country activities related to Hindu traditions are organised and she is able to participate. One of these is Holi Festival, the festival of colours: *With the colours, yes. That is my favourite one and I played here also, in Barakaldo. They organise Holi programme every year in different parts of Spain. So, I enjoyed here also. I love this festival.*

Virika feels comfortable in the Basque Country but one thing that she has observed – and the South Asian joint family concept comes to light – is the fact that the BC is an individualistic kind of society as compared to Indian society: *Sometimes I feel sad when I see some elder people and they are sitting alone and they just want to talk to somebody and their eyes are searching for someone that will talk to them. So, I feel sad for them. Here, children don't pay too much attention to their parents.*

In South Asia, the family is the pillar of society. We understand that not having her family with her to support her and to prepare the celebrations of the different festivals causes Virika feelings of nostalgia and melancholy: *I want my mother, my cousins, the family. I want to enjoy my festivals. I love the festivals of India; Holi, Diwali and Raksha Bandhan. It's a festival of brothers and sisters [...]. I want to be with them [...]. In India for example, we have Christmas and you start doing the preparations a month before [...]. In India, we used to start cleaning our room one month before Diwali [...], we used to decorate, lively colours, flowers. So, I'm missing that. I'm not happy in this way. All 365 days are the same for me. There is no change.*

Virika contemplates that her life in the BC is monotonous as compared to her life in India. In her culture, the celebration of the holidays is very important and this is something that

she is missing in her new home. It is also the time when the family gathers to make preparations for the celebration.

- ***Free Time***

Virika works in a Language Academy from Monday to Saturday. Hence, she does not have time for leisure. She tries to spend quality free time with Deepa whenever possible.

- ***Remodeling of Values***

Virika had never traveled outside India before her migration to the BC. The new society gave her new perspectives on how the life of people in her country could possibly be improved. Apart from that, it made her understand the social class inequality that exists in her country: *One thing is that there is a lot of poverty in India. There is no equalisation in the standards. The people are so, so rich that they don't know how much money they have and the people are so, so poor that they don't have food to eat and the women are suffering. So, I was like: 'why government or rich people don't make some efforts to uplift those people, to provide them a little home or clothes or food and here, I can see that everybody is enjoying themselves and at least, everybody has a home. If you don't have clothes, you can go to "Caritas"⁴⁶ and they will provide you with some clothes and food and everything but in India no. In India they have plans, the government gives money, but the leaders eat up all the money between each other and they don't supply that money to the really needed people.*

Another thing that Virika has changed since her migration is the habit of donating money to the Temples. It is a custom that is followed in the country of origin and she has stopped doing that since living in the BC: *Because the population of India is big, it's huge and I guess everyone donates money. If they go the Mandir Temple, it's a custom to donate money according to you. If you are rich, you will donate more money. If you are poor, you will donate less money but they all donate money in the Temples [...]. I also used to donate money and I'm saying it now because I changed my mind now, when I came here. I had that deep in my heart and I didn't want to donate but like, it's a custom. When you*

⁴⁶ A non-governmental organisation whose aim is to eradicate poverty, exclusion, intolerance and discrimination.

are with your mother, she will say: 'put the money, put the money' and it's an obligation, we have to do that.

It seems that she was obliged to do something she did not want to just to please her family and fulfill the expectations of a good Hindu follower. However, after her migration to the BC, Virika finally managed to take her own decisions on the matter and break the norms of how a good Hindu follower ought to be.

In relation to the position of women in India, Virika explains that: *There is a huge gap in the standards of women. Here women are freer. Here, women are free to do anything they want to. In India no. They do it but everything is hidden. They do everything but in a hidden way and here, women don't need to hide anything. They can do anything. To study, boyfriend or anything. They can do it openly and in India, women are not able to get pregnant before marriage. Here, they can. In India, they are not allowed to live in a live-in relationship without marriage but here, they can. So, there is a huge gap. There is no comparison.*

On one hand, we dare to say that Virika has an idealised perception of the host country. On the other hand, we understand that coming from a society that puts so many restrictions on women may result in an idealisation of the new society.

One of the things that Virika observed with migration and that made her rethink the management of certain social issues in her country of origin is the following example: *The one thing that I just love here is that all the official work or at hospitals, they use their language. They use Spanish or Euskera. All the old people are independent, they can do their own work while in my country, they pay more attention to English. If it is a high-level office, they all speak English. The villagers or the uneducated people don't have courage to enter there and ask something because they are embarrassed or shy and I don't like this in India. I don't because they need to pay more attention to their language because all the people or citizens are not educated to speak in English. For example, hospitals. When you go to big hospitals, they are used to talking in English and they have their own way to communicate and the villagers and the uneducated people are not able to enter there.*

One of the things that made Virika reconsider the responsibilities she and Ashwani have in the household is directly influenced by her observation of what other couples in the BC do. For example: *So, watching the women and their husbands, doing a work at home influenced me a lot. I said: 'okay, I'm not going to do this work. This is for you and I will only do this'. I take my decisions out of this value system. In India no. Everything is for women.*

Virika observed that institutions like health care provide more quality and more equal services to citizens regardless of their social status. In India, the most vulnerable categories of people become even more vulnerable when they need a healthcare service. The case is similar with education: *If you have a school with reputation or very big school, they want the parents to be educated as well and they take interviews of parents for admitting children. If the parents are not educated, means that the children are not able to get education in that school. It's not good.*

She realised that the Indian education system is quite selective compared to the Basque; the higher the social class, the more possibilities one has to receive a better quality education. The lower the social class, the more progress is halted. Furthermore, Virika claims that people in the BC pay more attention to their health and wellbeing than in her country, which made her think about her habits: *I see ninety years old men doing everything for themselves. I like that. People are more fit here than in India. In India people are not fit. They don't pay attention to themselves, their health. They eat anything and they are going on with this way of living. They don't care.*

In the same way, she observed that the quality of elderly people is on a higher level than in her country of origin: *The old ladies! I love them here. They do make up so well, they dress so well and they go out and they have their own friends, their own circle, they drink, they have matching purse and matching shoes and I love them. In my country though, the old ladies sit in one place and they want to take hold on all the family and say things to the wife of her boy: 'do this, do that' and if they don't do, then, they become upset and they cry and like, they are not independent. They don't know what life is. When they become old, they say: 'no, no, no, this clothes is not for me because I'm old. No, no, no, I can't do this because I'm old'. But the old people are fantastic. I love them. They dress*

so well, they do make up, they go out, they have their own life. In my country, old people...their life is only children.

Living in the new society gave her a new perspective on how life could be. She learnt that the quality of life may be much better in older age and that people focus on themselves and their life and try to be as independent as possible: *Here people know how to enjoy and how to live their life. When they grow up, they start enjoying their life until they die. They earn money, they are independent. They try to earn money and they spend it. They are not like us, saving, saving, saving, saving. They enjoy themselves. They travel a lot. They eat well. They eat outside. They go to the cinema. They do whatever they want to do. They are not like: 'no, no, no, I'm not going to the disco. I will save the money, no. No, I'm not going to other country. I will save the money. They are not like this. They enjoy themselves and I like this. The perception of people is completely different and that is lovely. Maybe, one day I will see my country like this. People of my country living like this.*

She has learned to enjoy life and loves that people are sincere and direct. In addition to this, she has changed her eating and exercise habits: *They enjoy a lot. They are very outspoken. If they are willing to help you, they will say yes. If they are not willing to help you, they will say no at your face. They are very practical. The food! The food is very healthy. So I wanted to adapt the eating habits. They are very fit. They smoke, they drink but they do exercise also and we people, we smoke, we drink but we don't exercise and we eat a lot. So, maintain themselves was the best thing I've learnt from them. They are free. They feel free.*

When the remodeling of values related to the upbringing of her daughter was discussed, Varika said does not want to intervene in the whether Deepa wants to marry or not. Thus, arranged marriage is not considered at all. Another thing that she would not do is to pressure her with schools tasks as she was pressured back in her school days: *I remember when I was a child [...] everybody was like: 'study this, study this' even though I didn't like mathematics but they pressurised me to learn. In this way, I never learned anything. I just repeated the things in the book but here, they are more creative. They make children to learn in their comfort zone but in India, they pressurise the children and they don't understand the feelings of the child, what they want. They never ask them: 'what do you*

want? You don't want to read? Okay. What do you want to do? First, do that and then, you will do this'. They are in a race. Everyone wants to become first and here, they want to make children more creative. They want them to do what they love. So, I love this thing.

- **Motherhood and Couple Relationship**

Virika and Ashwani have one daughter. She was born in Llodio and she is two years old. Virika was 28 years old. They called their daughter Deepa. She was born after the sorrowful event explained previously: *It was the happiest moment for both of us because we were waiting for two years to happen and my life became happier and we were more satisfied and the relationship became stronger. Yes, it was as if I got the Universe. I got my child, I got the Universe for both of us.*

It seems that the bad episode in her life has faded away with the birth of Deepa. Virika was feeling happy again and the couple crisis transformed into a strong relationship. We asked her how life changed after having their baby girl. She explained that: *It changed our life completely and we are different. Thinking different now. The mentality changes with the child. Before, we were not very healthy people, [...] pizza every day or we didn't eat sometimes [...]. Now, we have a pretty good life. We sleep on time, we get up early in the morning and we eat healthy food. Now, we have a proper life, we are happy. We are enjoying this change and this routine.*

Deepa does not speak yet. Her mother was worried but she consulted specialists who told her not to worry because Deepa is listening to several languages at the same time and she may feel confused: *She uses Basque words and she sings in English and then, she tries to follow Hindi and Spanish. I don't know, nobody speaks Spanish to her. Yes, on the street. My neighbours. So, she takes some of the words. I say something and she repeats but she is not speaking, following one language because when I was pregnant, my doctor said: 'no, no, no, don't teach her Spanish, teach her English and your husband will teach her Hindi, your language and in the playground or the park, in the neighbourhood, she will learn Spanish and in school, she will learn Euskera'. So, I follow that because I don't know what to do. [...] my doctor is saying that she is confused: 'don't worry, don't worry, within a period of time she will start speaking all the languages'. So, I'm waiting for that day.*

It is interesting to notice that Deepa, as a second generation Indian brought up in the BC, would herself be able to communicate in several different languages because of her family roots in her mother's and father's country of origin, the standardised use of English in India, the language of the BC and the official language of the host country. Virika is thinking about learning Basque because she is worried that soon Deepa will start speaking the language and she will not be able to communicate with her.

In terms of the responsibilities as parents to Deepa, Virika states the following: *My husband is used to giving her a bath and he is used to iron her clothes. I never do that and he is used to taking her to school. I'm used to feeding her and washing her clothes and playing with her. That's all.*

The impression is that they organise themselves with the tasks related to Deepa and cooperate between themselves. The values she teaches her daughter are exemplified in the next citation: *I just want to teach her to be herself, to follow her heart. I don't want her to follow somebody else or get influenced by somebody else. She needs to be what she wants to be and if it's bad, it's bad, if it's good, it's good. I want her to develop her character on her values and her own experiences. I just want to teach her one thing. To have respect for others and a helping nature. I just want these two things. To be helpful to others, to have a soft heart and to be respectful to others. That's all. Nothing else. She needs to decide her studies, her clothes, her friends. Everything. She needs to decide by herself but I want to teach her the values like respect and love for others.*

Virika wants her daughter to grow up to be an independent and self-reliant woman who is able and free to take the right decisions for herself. Deepa's upbringing will differ from the upbringing Virika's mother and father gave her: *Yes, it's really different because they never taught me how to handle your situation. If you are sad, how would you come out of it and the basic needs of a teenager. Something like to talk about the environment, or the people outside or about the changes of your own body or your needs and moods. When you are a teenager, you have a mood that swings. Sometimes you are happy, sometimes you are sad and you don't know, you are completely confused: 'why is this happening to me?' My parents didn't teach me, they didn't talk to me or hear me like: 'what do you think about this?'. I never had it with my parents. So, I want to have a more friendly relationship with my baby. The one that I didn't have with my parents so, she can talk to me about her problems. Children have lots of problems, thinking problem or how to deal a situation with friends [...]. We need to sit with them and talk to them and just help them*

clearing the thoughts. I didn't have that in my family. So, I want to have that kind of relationship and values. They never told me how to save myself from outsiders or what are the things you should take into account. I want to be friendlier with my child.

Virika is eager to establish a relationship of trust with Deepa. Given the fact that in her upbringing her parents never talked to her about her problems, she does not want history to repeat itself. The lack of attention from her parents left many questions unanswered. They caused confusion and feelings of being lost. She feels that her parents did not prepare her for real life and for that reason the upbringing of Deepa consists of everything that her personal upbringing was lacking. She feels happy and satisfied with the fact that her daughter is having the opportunity to grow up in a place as the BC: *In India no, I don't know...here is better. In all the perspectives, I find it better here. I'm happier and freer. Safer maybe. I'm happier because I don't need to suffer like my mother used to suffer. Like, it's eight o'clock: 'where is my girl, where is my girl?' This is a kind of torture for mothers and I don't want that torture for myself because you are scared, because children don't think like this: 'I'm in danger [...]. They do what they want to do. But the mothers, the parents, they are going through a torture like: 'where is my child? She is safe or no? What is she doing?' and here is freer.*

Virika finds the host country safer than the country of origin for the upbringing of her daughter. She reflects on how her mother felt when she was an adolescent and she feels blessed that she does not have to undergo the same situation.

The relationship between Virika and her husband Ashwani is built on trust and understanding. What she loves about him is the liberty of mind and the possibility to do whatever she wants without any need to justify herself: *[...] my husband is very open. He never stopped me smoking. He never stopped me drinking or going out to the pub with my friends. He allows me everything, even though my family and my father never said 'don't wear this' or 'don't go there' or 'don't do this'.*

7.4.3. TRANSFORMATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT

- ***Migration as an Instrument for Personal Growth and as an Empowering Mechanism***

Virika is not afraid of staying alone. She knows that if, in a hypothetical situation, her marriage ended, she would be able to overcome that and rebuild her life. Referring to what many of her compatriots do, she claims that she would never accept what other Indian women do; their husbands work in a foreign country and they stay in India. If that was her case, what she would have done is divorce: *I just give him divorce, remarry and live my life. I have seen many women living in their country ten years now, eighteen years and their husbands are in foreign countries and they go back six months, once in a six months or twice a year and they get their women pregnant and they come back and women are raising their children and they are happy. I don't know, but I'm not like that. If he decided to make me stay back in my country, obviously, I would have given him divorce and I would have been doing my life, enjoying my life.*

We are aware of the fact that our participant was a strong woman before migration. She had clear thoughts and she knew exactly what she wanted. Unlike other women who follow the pattern get pregnant, raise the children by themselves and wait patiently for their husband to visit them occasionally, Virika opposed this kind of life. She would not have accepted living under those conditions and she would have got divorced, with all the respective consequences that affect divorced women in her country of origin.

We asked Virika what it means to her to be employed and she answered the following: *First thing is money. If you have money, you are happier. I don't know if happier, but free. You can do whatever you want to do, buy anything and then, the time you are busy. If you are free within the period of...within a couple of days you start getting mad because what are you going to do; because other people, your friends are working. They are not twenty-four hours available for you, to go to pubs or park or somewhere and my husband is also working. What are you going to do home alone? So to make yourself busy too. To get in contact with different people, different ideas, different points of view [...]. Now I'm working, we don't have tensions on spending and we can buy anything we want and we more independent and happier.*

At first, Virika says that money makes a person happier but after that she corrects the adjective and states that money cannot make you happier but it can give you economic independence. Apart from that, employment gave her the possibility to meet new people, to gain new knowledge from their experiences, and it helped the harmony of her marriage. Each one of them has their own money and each one of them decides how to distribute that money. She had to struggle to obtain a job, but she decided not to give up, to be

persistent and find herself a job thanks to herself and nobody else: *He was working and he had a lot of contacts but he never helped me. Before coming here, I used to think that in foreign countries only your education works but later on my mind changed and I can see now that the context works. If you know somebody then, it is easy for you to get some job. I didn't know many people. It was difficult and then, I decided to study a little bit and we just moved to Bilbao which also helped me. I used to go every day to the agencies and the offices. So, I got one job in the housekeeping department and then, I studied for Cambridge English and then, I passed the exam and I got my certificate. I got the English teaching job. I had to struggle a little bit and find myself something.*

Even if the jobs she found were not highly qualified, they still had a positive impact on her life. They gave her independence and economic freedom, and the possibility to network with a different profile of people. Another thing that strengthened Virika was the new friendships that arose in the host country. At the beginning, Ashwani was her only reference in the BC, but nowadays she knows other people and she makes plans with them, not only with him: *Yes. I make my own friends. I make my own zone. So now, here, I go out every day with my friends.*

We understand that she had to struggle to get to know new people in the host country because Ashwani did not help her in this aspect. However, the outcome of this kind of behaviour was positive because it gave her the strength to go for them on her own and to improve her communication skills.

We asked Virika what the most valuable thing was she had learned from migration: *Self-dependency. In India, women don't value themselves. They just get stuck in the family and they follow what other women are doing. Here, I follow my heart. If I want to fight with my husband, I fight. If I want to leave home, I go to my friend's home for four, three, two days. [...] but in India is not possible. So I learned to become more self-dependent. I value myself more. Maybe if I would have been in India, I would not have valued myself as I value myself now, here.*

Self-dependency is an empowerment feature that our participant identifies by herself ever since she has moved to the BC. As stated by her, if she were in India, she would probably not value and love herself as much as she does now. Women there follow an already established pattern and they need a new model, a new female reference that would

encourage them to create a pattern that benefits them. Virika thinks that she made the right choice to relocate to a new place: *What happened to me it's my choice. Yes. I'm living by my own choices, by my own terms.* She continues: *first thing, I'm not pressurised because in India for sure I would be pressurised by my in-laws or my own family. So, I would have to do without any choices the thing they want me to do [...] and in Europe I'm not pressurised. I don't have anybody at the top of my head to say: 'don't do this, do that, do this' and this, gave me time to realise the real me; what I want and what I don't want and not just listening and following other people.*

Virika has become accustomed to living without the pressure that characterises South Asian families. She is aware of the fact that if she had been in India, she would not have been able to do all the things she is doing in the BC – at least not without asking for permission. She has also learned to listen to herself and to follow her own intuition. She also feels blessed for the husband she has: *Fortunately, my husband is also good. He never pressurises me to do anything. [...] he never helped me. I struggled, I made my friendships and I came to know them all alone. I don't need to follow the basic idea of Indian woman: 'you have to wear these clothes, you have to do the household work. It's your responsibility', because in India, it is the responsibility of women to do all the household work, to grow up children, everything. Here, I saw women doing what they want to do and the husbands help them. In the home, if she is cooking, the husband is washing utensils or taking the children to school or giving them bath or taking them to the park. In India, it's like a 90% mentality that all these works have to be done by women. She is used to doing these things but here when I saw it: 'okay, men are helping' and my husband is also helping me. If I do something, he will do other things, clean the house, anything like that. So I realised that: 'no, we are not obliged, we are not like what you say. It's not only our duty'. Indian women think, really think that this is their duty. I really don't know. This is not my duty! You can also do some useful things like go with your friends, go out to drink, to spend quality time with friends, not only with the husband. You can also enjoy outside with friends when you are married. In India, they think that your husband is your God and that you have to listen to your in-laws. They are your God or boss [...]. Here, I don't see that and I got inspired.*

Migration encouraged Virika to deny the socially constructed concept of a traditional Indian woman who dresses in certain attire, listens to her family, sacrifices her professional career to work in the domestic sphere and sees her husband as her God. She observed some close examples that women are not predestined for the domestic sphere. Unlike her, there are many Indian women who believe that it is their duty to do the things they do. Virika mentions the verb 'help' to refer to the cooperation among women and men in the household. We imagine she was referring to cooperating rather than helping. The relocation to the BC gave her a completely new perspective on the responsibilities of both women and men, responsibilities that in the native country are bound for women.

When we framed the question of the achievement of goals, Virika said that she was trying to achieve them. She was feeling motivated to study again but, because of the lack of time, she did not continue with the plan. However, she is patient and firm in achieving them: *But yes, I know that in the future I will be able to achieve what I wanted to achieve.*

- ***Alliances among Women as Agent of Sustenance and Networking***

In the previous section, Virika told us that she was inspired by some women she met in the BC. She has met women from different places and this has broadened her perspectives: *I have a friend from Poland. She is a dearest friend of mine. Then, from Brazil, from Pakistan, one is from Japan and two of them are Spanish. So, I have a group.* The friend from Poland is her closest friend and she is one of those women who have set a good example for her: *She got divorced now, after forty years of marriage, forty years. I got so inspired from her. Yes. She took the decision. We are not able to do so. In India, it's very hard, very difficult to get divorced. Even nowadays because the family interferes. They talk: 'okay, okay, we will solve this, he will not do this again'. They talk a lot and you are like: 'okay, I will try once again with this man'. She got divorced after forty years. In India, nobody is going to think about that: 'you are going to divorce after forty years?' She is divorced now and she suffered a lot in terms of money because the government is not giving her any grant and she is not having a job but she is just...she was into pieces and she collected herself and enforced herself. So, I got inspired here from women. Everyone is educated. They are working, they are cleaning toilets but they are happy and they are proud of themselves. They are working. In India no.*

The alliance created with the woman from Poland had a positive influence on her. She felt surprised but also inspired, as it was something that she had never seen before. She

served as a role model of a strong and decisive woman, ready to fight against all the odds and it is not only by her. Virika claims that other women in the BC motivate her to be herself and accomplish her life goals by hard work.

Virika does not participate in any association of women but she is encouraged to start one with the aim to create a union among South Asian women in the BC: *Yes, I even thought to start one. Association for the rights of Asian women [...]. First, I wanted to make one WhatsApp group, “Indian Women in Bilbao”, something like that and then, I wanted to start one kind of a Association [...] if there is somebody who has a problem or somebody is suffering something. We can do henna. We can sell the Indian scarfs in many colours, jewelry and things like that. We can also celebrate our functions, then, if somebody is suffering in terms of economical suffering, we would arrange donations for her.*

The reasons for not participating in any association, as she says, is the lack of motivation and information: *Everyone has time if they want but I’m just neglecting it: ‘okay, maybe tomorrow, maybe in the coming future’. [...] I don’t have the complete information, where to go and what to start. This thing is lacking.*

We raised the question what would motivate her to be part of an association. Her answer was the possibility to help other women: *I would feel proud of myself, happy: ‘okay you have done something good’ and this would affect my whole life. In my relationship with my husband or my baby or my friends. If I’m happy, I give happiness.*

At the end of the conversation, we asked Virika to describe herself in one to three words after the migration to the BC. She repeated the same word as before migration by adding several more: *Confused again. Yes. Confused but freer, safe. I feel more independent, reliable, and more self-respectful. I have respect for myself. Yes. I’m fine. I’m doing fine.*

CHART 10. Summary of Virika’s Experience of Life

NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	STUDIES	MARITAL STATUS	MIGRATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Virika	New Delhi, India	31	Master’s Degree Bachelor’s Degree	Married	2013	English Language Teacher

VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN

- **Man-centred society**
- **Joint family**
- **Pressure on women**
- **Women's voice unheard**
- **Women as property**
- **Different educational practices for girls and boys**
- **Restrictions on women**
- **Sex as a taboo**
- **Women – private sector; Men – public sector**
- **Lack of security for women and children**
- **Menstruation = Dirt and disgracefulness**
- **Hinduism**
- **Caste-based society**
- **Arranged marriage**
- **Dowry system**

MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE

OBSTACLES

- **Discrimination**
- **Lack of family support**
- **Language barrier**
- **Diploma recognition**
- **Lack of qualified employment**
- **Less qualified jobs**

FACILITATING FACTORS AND INCLUSION

- **Legal status in the BC**
- **Husband's support**
- **Friendships and networks**
- **Employment**
- **Couple cooperation**

REMODEL VALUES

- **Social inequality is created not predestined**
- **Viewpoints on Hinduism and devotion**
- **Donation of money to Temples**
- **Rejection of caste system**
- **Importance of leisure in life**
- **The role of women**
- **Refusal of arranged marriages**
- **Education of daughter**
- **Life quality of elder people**

EMPOWERMENT

- **Persistence to achieve goals**
- **Financial independence**
- **Self-reliance**
- **Self-sufficiency**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Strength**
- **Decision-making capacity**
- **Freedom of choice**
- **Problem-solving capacities**
- **Networking among women**

Source: Prepared by the Author

7.5. SAKTI

We came in contact with Sakti through a non-profit organisation whose mission is to assist highly qualified people from foreign countries in the BC. We met at a coffee shop in Bilbao. After the explanation of the research, she decided to participate.

Her mother tongue is Hindi. We used English as a means of communication. Sakti has a proficiency level in English and she did not have any difficulty expressing herself. She is 33 years old and she was born in Karnal, a city in the Indian state Harayana. She migrated to the Basque Country in 2016 because her husband found a job in Bilbao. She has Bachelor's Degree in Information Technology and a Master's Degree in Business Administration and Human Resources. She lives with her husband Kiaan in Bilbao. She is currently working as an English language teacher in a private language academy.

The interviews were done in Sakti's home. During the conversation, the researcher did not follow the guideline strictly. She followed the natural order of the conversation. Sakti showed us some pictures and objects from India and some ash called "vibhooti prasadam". This ash is used for prosperity and she was excited to share the ritual with the researcher. She put the ash on the researcher's forehead, then on her neck and, finally, they ate it. As the interviews were progressing, she was feeling more and more comfortable with the idea of reflection on her life.

After one of the interviews, her husband prepared a traditional Indian meal and we had lunch together.

The name Sakti means "power" in Sanskrit.

7.5.1. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

FAMILY ORIGIN AND VALUES

Sakti was born in the capital city of the state of Harayana, Karnal. She has one younger brother and she lived with her family until marriage. We asked her for the relationship with her mother and father and she explained that her mother was the strict parent and her father was the soft parent: *My mother, though she was a bit stricter and she was more disciplined, so sometimes we used to get pissed of. But then, my dad was always there to make us understand [...]. The four of us, we formed a team and we were more like friends.*

Her father was her role model in terms of education and her mother was her role model in terms of social values: *[...] my father was a role figure for me in terms of the academics and the social values, they definitely came from my mother, moral values, getting social values, talking about spiritual values, talking about personal values. So, I cannot say that*

my mum did her part and my father did nothing. It was a field of responsibility with my mum and other things were definitely being managed by my father. When I was growing up, I saw them as very responsible, very mature kind of people. [...] they took quite a lot of decisions that were really good for their children, for their family. So, the things that I learned from my father was definitely the decency of being a human. [...] the most important thing that I learned from my father was to always be down to earth while fulfilling your duties, your responsibilities in life. From my mum, the best thing I learned was the connection with nature, the connection with the God, the connection with the souls. She always taught me love, compassion, tolerance, patience and she was unbiased for everything [...]. So you always have to be unbiased in life and secondly, always stand for what is right. Other thing that I learned from her was to always love unconditionally [...]. So the common part between my parents was that they were always down to earth people and secondly, they have always loved unconditionally [...]. The third part that I learned from them is to always be honest to yourself [...].

It is interesting to notice from the description above that even if both of the parents served as a role model, the father is associated with the public – with the qualified, the cultured, the scientific – while the mother is identified with nature, the spiritual, the sacred, the social, the moral. Nonetheless, the way they educated their daughter let her grow up in a mature, independent woman who shines with both academic and moral qualities.

Sakti says that her brother is her best friend. They have always had a good relationship and they have shared everything, like real brother and sister. They spent most of their time together until both of them married: *My brother is my best friend. I would rather say that. I mean, we would share each and every thing. The food we eat, the syllabus, even the studies, sometimes the clothes also. He's been a good brother to me. A younger brother, an obedient brother, a very respectful brother and he's being a gentleman kind of person who has always behaved well. Not only with the parents, with his sister, with his classmates, the neighbours, wherever he went. It was kind of a very good chemistry between us, very fair understanding, a very sound understanding of each other's feelings, emotions. We have spent almost every moment together.*

The way Sakti talked about her brother gave us the impression that her family made a great effort to educate a righteous girl and a boy. A brother and a sister raised equally was an unusual occurrence for the period and the context. We kindly asked her why her family stood out and chose a different path to follow. Her response was the following: *Well,*

because my parents always, they had been seeing from the past, how the girls were not normally treated in society or probably how they were treated by the family. Normally, in the past, the thinking of the girl's parents would be: 'we are not going to educate her', to get her into a job or maybe to be of a highly qualified kind of accenture. I believe that they might have seen such discrimination, the social discrimination between a boy and a girl in the past and they might have decided that they will never ever put this kind of pressure, being a girl on me. They always wanted to rise above all. That means that they always wanted us to give more, the utmost importance and care to the studies and the good values in life that are going to last forever.

In the case of Sakti, parent's education played a key role in the acquisition of knowledge and values. They were willing to foster their future. Based on their own observation, they realised that girls did not have equal opportunities in Indian society and they had a daughter. The decision they took was of maximum importance for the development of Sakti. They emphasised the importance of not depending on anybody for anything and raised two independent children: *So, you should be independent enough to think about the situation independently because you won't have friends, you won't have parents around the room to consult for everything. They have really developed us into more responsible people.*

Apart from her mother and father, she has adopted the belief that family is valuable and sacred through the rest of the family. Her family was a big family: *Both families, both sides, they have actually helped us to understand how relationships are really important in your life. They have proved how our family is different from the rest of the world.*

Sakti spent most of her adolescent years studying. She says that she did not have many friends but she loved those years because she did not have responsibilities other than studying hard and getting good marks. When leisure was discussed, she explained that she did not go out late at night because of personal choice, not for safety reasons or parental prohibition: *No. The thing was like, I was an early riser, so I always woke up at four o'clock. My parents always wanted that I should have a sound sleep of at least six to seven hours [...]. There might have been lot of friends who would go out partying and having a lot of fun and a lot of different stuff but most of my time was with the studies or maybe with the family.*

We assume that she was a responsible and dedicated person who gave primary importance to education. However, her parents were worried for her safety and asked her only one thing: not to go out alone. Here, the safety issue for women is reaffirmed: *Because you never know. The boys are of different nature. The boys are of different behaviour.*

- **Roles**

Sakti considers that she and her brother were raised in equal values: *We were raised intelligently, with lot of wisdom [...]. My parents were always cool with me, not only with me. With my brother too. We both were given equal opportunities for everything, not just to studies, to work, to choose whatever we want to wear, whatever we want to do in life. So, we were treated absolutely equally. There wasn't any kind of discrimination as we normally find in some kind of communities of our state, okay? Apart from that, yes, it has been kind of happiest childhood. I'd rather say that and we have enjoyed everything that any child would experience, enjoy in the childhood whether it be from the point of view of maternal uncles and aunts, relationships, the attention, the love, the care, the education point of view, the moral values, the kind of being disciplined, obedient, responsible, show social values, ethics, moral. We have been taught everything since childhood. So, what I find is that it was a complete childhood. Nothing was missing.*

The citation shows that her parents and close family were considerably involved in their upbringing and they tried to inculcate lifelong values to both Sakti and her brother. As she emphasised, the way they were brought up was unconventional for the surrounding environment where girls suffer discrimination and have a lack of opportunities: *They always taught me the things that a normal parent would never ever teach their daughter and equally for my brother. For example, boys are happy to leave their clothes anywhere in the house and they are always dirty. No! They always took care that there should not be any problem with my brother's upbringing and with his life partner, the girl who is going to get married to him. The parents shouldn't say: 'oh, what kind of boy have you raised? He is irresponsible, very immature. What a disgusting boy he is!' So, he always believed that responsibilities are equal for anybody and both of them should be prepared.*

She was educated in an environment where they were taught that both girls and boys have equal capacity to achieve anything in life: *[...] there is nothing in the world that a girl can't do and a boy can [...].* Her brother had a protective behaviour towards her: *[...] my parents never ever brought up difference between a boy and a girl and we both were*

provided with equal opportunities, equal rights. It's not like: 'he is a boy, he has to be given this' and because I'm a girl I have to be treated like this. No, never! They always kept us very simple and they always taught us the similar values whether being a boy or a girl. If he is doing something wrong, he will get the equal callings and if I'm doing something good, I always get backed up [...]. So there was no biasness between us. The role that he played in my life was more or less like of an elder brother though he is younger than me but he has always taken care of me very well [...].

It looks as if girls always need to be taken care of or protected by the family. In the case of Sakti, her brother took the role of an elder brother even though she was the elder sibling and it was she who was supposed to protect the smaller child. An interesting point that Sakti mentions is that she was raised like a boy and her brother like a daughter. We asked her to elaborate on this statement: *I never had any restriction. My brother has always had restrictions like: 'you're a boy, you should not step out outside the house', because you don't know what is going to happen outside the house good boys don't step outside the house. I mean, they raised him like a daughter and me, like a son and all the neighbours, they would always be very surprised: 'what kind of parents are these? Their daughter, she rides her bike so fast or she is with her friend'. They would say: 'She keeps on roaming in the scooty'.*

Sakti's family decided to be strict and to raise him in accordance to their values. The unusual kind of family they were surprised the neighbours as well but they did not care about other people's opinions. Sakti explains the reason for this: *In India, [...] that it's a male dominated society or wherever in the world, they feel they have the privilege of doing anything whether it's right or wrong. They have the privilege of saying anything, doing anything, behaving anyway...but my family was sure that the boys of our families are not going to be in that way. They are going to be responsible not just for the studies, not just for their earnings, the money. They have to be responsible for the house chores [...].*

- ***Education and Work Experience***

Education was of primary significance Sakti's family. Her mother ran her own school for more than twenty years. She was the principal and the founder of one of the primary schools in Karnal. Her father was a senior bank manager in one of the leading banks in

India: *They always believed that if you are educated, if a girl is educated, it means that she is not only educating the house. You are educating the society and in turn, she can be a major force to transform. She could be a reason for the big transformation in the society. She could be educated enough to solve her own problems because the parents are not going to be with her forever. [...] for education they were the most serious because they know that this is the only way, this is the way to liberation, the liberation of woman's spirit or maybe woman's thought. If you are not educated enough, you can't take a stand of your own. So, I believe that these are very few things that I have just mentioned, that separate my parents, that differentiates my parents from the rest of the society because there were few of the neighbours who would never send their daughters to school.*

The educational values were so important to her that she even makes a joke that she does not want to leave school ever: *I don't want to go out of school. I'm so fond of colleges, universities and schools. In India also, I taught for some time, two of the management subjects. I was so happy teaching them and I realised that. I'm really good. I enjoy this profession. The most important thing is that I love schools, colleges and universities. I'm just a dying fan of them.*

Sakti understood what her real passion was when she was a young student. She had the opportunity that many girls in India do not have: to discover her passion or talent. She holds a Bachelor's Degree in Science and Information Technology and double Master's Degree in Information Technology and Human Resources. After that she started working in a Research Academy as a teacher and coordinator. Before marriage, she moved to the human resources sector, in the recruitment department where she worked until the relocation to the BC. Even though her studies were directed towards the information technology area and human resources, what she enjoyed the most was teaching: *Well, to be very honest, over the time I realised that I'm a social kind of person and I love talking to people and the most important thing is that I really want to do something good for them. I really want to do something productive for them. I want to do something they can remember for life.*

Even though she studied a Bachelor's Degree and a double Master's Degree, Sakti regrets not having studied Engineering. There is a story behind this as she explains: *I was about to take the admission. There was only one seat wakened and that one seat was in the management quota. So, in the management quota enter students from a very bureaucratic*

kind of background or high-profile backgrounds or rich kind of families [...]. So, I was offered the seat but the only condition that was put up was: 'if you can pay this money, the seat is yours. Otherwise, we have another child of some Member of Parliament or some political leader. We are going to give the seat to him' and I didn't agree on that. Why should we pay extra money? Education is equal for all. I didn't support that. At that time my uncle was there, my father wasn't there. Somehow he and mum arranged the money and it was a quite huge amount at that time, ten years ago and I really wanted that seat but I didn't get it [...]. [...] maybe I would have been an engineer today. The regret is not for the seat. The regret is for the system who forced me to take such a decision. I know I stood for the right and for that I have no regrets.

The statement exemplifies the injustice of the system that is created by the rich and for the rich. She presents critical thinking towards the system that did not give her the opportunity to study the career she desired even if she accomplished the prerequisites.

- ***Traditions of the Culture of Origin***

When Sakti reflects on her country, she makes a reference to the wide variety of food including different fruits and vegetables, spices and the way of cooking. It is a diverse country with many different cultures in each of the twenty-nine states: *[...] there are so many varieties of fruits and vegetables and spices and the way of cooking because in India we have twenty-nine states and we have twenty-nine types of cooking style. [...] it's very famous in our culture to say that every ten miles the water changes, the environment changes, the people change, the colour changes, the clothes changes, the variety changes, the spice changes, the food also changes. The culture rather changes and at some places religion also changes. So, I would rather just shorten it by saying that we have twenty-nine countries in one country. In addition to the abovementioned features: We have a specific kind of dance. We have a specific kind of cloth or rather, we have a typical traditional kind of dress if that state. So every state has their own specialisation in everything, not only food. They have the varieties of having a state dance. They have a state spice. They have a state animal. They have a state crop.*

She describes her country as a holy place that gives significant importance to festivals and religious celebrations: *We are very much holy kind of a country and everything we do during the day has a significance, or the way we dress up has a significance and the way we cook the things or we do the cooking has a significance. Everything has a*

significance in our culture. So for example, the most common type of dress is the saree and they put bindi⁴⁷ and then, they put some sindoor on the forehead and they have candles in their wrists. They have a ring in their toes. They have anklets. Yes, every accessory of every jewelry on a specific place on the body part has a deep meaning. For example, the bindi that you put on the forehead, it is believed that whole of the focus of the body, the mind, your soul, your environment concentrates here. So, similarly, the men in India, they put, that's not a bindi, just a mark of tumeric or saffron in the morning when they take the bath and do the worship. It is believed that whatever you do during the day, all the negativity will be deviated from you.

We understand that the culture of Sakti is significantly symbolic and that everything they do has a purpose and meaning. She enjoyed the celebration of the festivals, making reference to Holi and Diwali.

- **Religion**

The majority religion of India is Hinduism. Apart from Hinduism, there are other religions in the country and sometimes there are confrontations among people mostly for political reasons. Sakti belongs to the Hindu religion and she respects religious diversity: *[...] it's not that I'm following Hinduism, I won't say hello or I won't recite anything from Quran. That's the Muslim Holy Book, or I won't say anything from Sikhism. If I'm Hindu, I celebrate the festivals of Sikhism and I enjoy the Muslim festivals equally.*

We asked Sakti for her religiosity and she explains that she is Hindu by tradition: *Well, honestly speaking, it might be socially that we are Hindus but I literally don't believe in this, castes and religions. I think that the only religion a person should follow is the religion of humanity. So if you are a human in true sense, that should be the only religion to be followed. So the values, the human values that I have come up with, have always taught me five things: love, peace, righteousness and justice and one more thing. So basically, I'm following a principle of five things and I worship God and I don't worship any particular figure. That's also another truth. We have gurus in India or probably we have saints in India we listen to so that they can help us understand the things related to spirituality.*

⁴⁷ A coloured dot at the centre of the forehead worn by Hindus in the Indian subcontinent.

We assume that Sakti is spiritual rather than religious. She has her own interpretation of religion and she sees God as energy rather than a person. This has been highly influenced by the family values and teachings: *[...] it's always better to serve the people with hands instead of praying to God. So about Hindum, I don't know honestly speaking. We used to worship Hindu Gods. I still worship them and probably I don't know all of the chantings my mum knows. I don't know much of them because I'm of a different kind of belief system [...].*

Sakti says that Indian society is living through a process of rapid modernisation and development and same-religion or same-caste marriages are becoming unpopular. The key reason for this change is education. In her surroundings, most of the people she knows are in an inter-caste relationship or marriage: *My own cousin. For example, we are Hindu and the girl is Sikh. That's another religion but no problem. You are getting married because she is a nice girl. All that matters is how nice a person is. [...] the bases should be the level of understanding with each other. If your value system matches with the other person's value system, if they are in alignment, everything is perfect in life. I think that the religion has nothing to do, how you do your life and anything. It's baseless actually.*

Sakti accepts love in all shapes and forms and thinks that religion cannot be given an unsubstantiated importance in the event that two people from different religions or castes fall in love.

- **Caste**

Our participant says that the caste of a person in India may be recognised by their surname or the background: *Yes, by the surname, by the background. Most of the time, most of the people, know about the caste. We have four kind of caste system. So we are basically divided into four parts and then we are subdivided into so many others. Yes. So normally everybody knows. In North India, if you go there, they already know what kind of caste do they belong to. If you go to South India, they have different systems.*

Sakti opposes the caste-based system in her country of origin. Rather than caste, she believes in humanity and equal opportunities no matter a person's caste, religion, ethnicity, economic conditions, etc: *Everybody should treat each other equally and with lot of respect, a lot of humanity, lot of love and everybody should have empathy for each other irrespective of age or class or whatever the status because I believe that God has*

given us just one life and we should always try to make it as lovely as possible and that's it.

- **Marriage**

Sakti did not have any previous relationships before marrying her husband: *If I talk about the love and relationships, you know, I was never in love with anybody but I always thought, I have always had a thought that it would be really good if I could know somebody before marriage.*

She always wanted to meet a good person and get to know them before taking a more serious step: *The only thing that I wanted from my parents at the time, I just wanted one thing that you know, the person should be a person, should be human, not behave like an animal. I can accept anything in life, but I can't accept person who is dishonest, who is not loyal.*

The marriage of Sakti was an arranged marriage. She did not know her husband before their families met to arrange the marriage. However, she did not feel pressured to marry her husband as do other girls in India. She was able to take her own decision: *Though mine was an arranged marriage, but I think my husband and me were probably or virtually somewhere on the same thinking pattern. So we took a courtship of around four months before the marriage and our parents told us to meet wherever and whenever we wanted and also left the decision on us. If we are perfectly fine with each other, we can go and get married. If we still feel like after three months, we are not getting enough things, you can simply say we don't want to get married. So we had that privilege, luckily. Normally not everybody has this privilege or this luxury or maybe this kind of luck that you know, they get to know each other first.*

As Sakti herself recognises, her relationship was an atypical one. She and her husband dated for four months before taking the decision to marry, an opportunity that many other girls in India do not have. Their families met through a common friend: *Yes, in our case, our families made us meet. It was through some common friend. It was a meeting in some restaurant and we met there casually. We had both the families. Both the family means, my husband and his parents, me and my parents and my brother. They gave us some alone time to speak to each other in case you feel like, the first instinct, how your first instinct goes. So I think that within 30 minutes we found out that we can move forward with this. So we decided, the both of us, to ask our parents to allow us to meet somewhere like, you*

know where nobody's here and we can talk about ourselves. Two days later we decided to meet at some place and I think in the first meeting it was like seven hours long time and that was the only talk we did. After that, I don't think even till today, we never ever talk so so long and I think that was the crucial time, you know to decide about your life partners and I would really thank both the families that they really supported both of us. Everybody in the family supported every opinion whether they liked it or not [...].

She told us that both she and her husband met other people before their meeting and the experiences were not that pleasant. For that reason, she always wanted to be accompanied by her parents: *The only reason I decided this was because when my parents started looking for a right match for me, I met two of the boys in the starting and they lied a lot to me about so many things, about their salaries or probably their lifestyle and their families also, what is their background. I really felt like in this way, if I go this way, the other person thinks that there is nobody by my side. So I ensured by the next time, whatever I need, I would like to be with you for the first time so that the other person also knows that I'm family kind of a person [...]. So that was the intent and that's why I asked my parents though they thought it was an awkward idea and I forced them: "No, please do that for me" and this was the only thing that I liked about my husband also, that he came with his parents and he did not ask me to meet alone in the first meeting before the parents meet. I think that was the only thing that I really like. The other thing that I liked was his smile. Before he said anything he smiled and I was like "ah".*

Sakti's marriage is an inter-caste marriage. She strongly disagrees with the caste-based tradition and so do her parents. Nonetheless, for other family members the decision to marry a person from a lower caste was shocking: *I don't believe in all these things, okay, I don't believe in colour. I don't believe in caste. I do not believe in social status also. I just believe if you are a human you should behave like a human right? We are of different castes. We are Brahmins and they are Kshatriya and everybody was like...my other family members were like: Didn't you see the caste? They are from different caste and my parents were like: 'do you have to eat the caste? Are they going to eat the caste or are they going to live peacefully together??' That's more important to me.*

Sakti has a kind relationship with her mother-in-law and her father-in-law. They gave her their full support for each decision taken. Unlike in many other South Asian families, she was not obliged to take care of the housework: *[...] my in-laws were there to support me for everything that I did, whether I wanted to study or maybe I just wanted to go to*

work. Honestly, I feel very lucky that I got such a nice husband and such a nice family. Evert time I have an issue and everytime I have a problem, or difficulty: 'no, no, don't work, just focus in your life, don't worry about anything'.

- ***Identity and Social Values***

Not all girls in India had the opportunity to educate themselves like Sakti had. She told us that in her surroundings there were many parents who did not send their daughters to school, but also that there were parents who educated them so that the girls were able to stand up for themselves in front of the husband's family, once they get married. Let's see one example: *I have also seen some families who would educate a girl so that if she gets married, the in-law family doesn't have to say: 'oh, she is a burden to the family, she is here just to take care of the family and that's it'.*

We understand that what she was trying to say is that some parents decide to educate their daughters with the aim of protecting them. Even if domestic work is the most important work for a married woman and many of them quit their jobs because they cannot balance both, at least they have their diploma and the in-laws cannot humiliate them.

Sakti explains that there is a significant difference between the metropolitan area and the rural areas and urban slums in India: *Yes, well, in my culture, we still have different scenarios honestly speaking. If I talk about the metropolitan area or probably the educated areas, I think that there isn't biasness, but if I talk about the cities or towns which don't come in the category of the top cities or probably the metropolitan, yes, there can be a role defining kind of criteria. Probably now also, in some areas, we find some parents or some societies that still think that no matter how good a girl is educated, she still has to manage the home as a first priority. For the boys, whatsoever the qualification of the boy is, he has to manage the society and the people outside the house. So, yes, at some places it's still existng but now, most of the things are changing and more attention is being given to education, the culture, the values, the hygiene but I think there is still some more time that we really need to bridge the gap between the boys and the girls so that they come to the equality. I think we still need some more time for this to be done because in some parts is happening and in some parts is not happening.*

One of the measures taken by the government for bridging the gap is positive discrimination: *[...] there are many schemes from the Government that are definitely enabling every level of women in the society so that they can earn their livelihood and*

their families based on specialisation, probably some skills or abilities. We have schools going on, especially for the women who are illiterate or probably uneducated or for the girls who studied up to a certain level and after that, for the purpose of marriage or for supporting their families, they left their education.

As we can see, the situation of impoverished women and girls is vulnerable and unjust. The programmes offered by the governmental sector aim at empowering them through employment for sustainable livelihood. Young girls who did not continue with schooling due to forced marriage or because they were the breadwinners of the family are also given the opportunity to return to school. Sakti states that in many cases, the parents are not interested in sending their daughters to school because they themselves are not educated and the only reference they have for earning money is through work.

The inequalities in Indian society occur on different levels. Sakti identifies the following: *If we talk about social status, yes, we have an inequality in our culture, social equality, the payment equality or maybe the education equality. There are so many inequalities and that's on different platforms.*

With reference to social values, Sakti has been taught to see people as equals and to respect people with a good heart: *[...] I never have to go by caste, creed, colour or religion. I'm just above everything. The only thing I really admire and I really concern about is the soul connection. I have always given preference to the beauty of the soul, not the outer beauty.*

We asked Sakti if she felt secure as a woman in her country. She responded that most of the time she did not feel fear but sometimes she has felt uncomfortable in the outskirts: *[...] these are the problems that are usually created by people who are not interested in their own growth and development in life. I would rather say that there are few elements in the society who create dirt rather. They just disturb the balance of the society [...]. So I think yes, media does exaggerate a little bit but I won't say that there is no truth behind that.*

Despite all the odds, Sakti loves India and the characteristic that makes her feel proud of being an Indian is the warmth of its people: *Okay, the thing I like the most about my country or maybe my culture would be that even we are overpopulated, we are overloaded with so many stress in life, despite that, we don't disregard or disrespect humanity. [...]* *we make sure somehow, directly, indirectly, that we don't have to break other person's*

heart. Sakti carries on: *People are very cooperative over there. [...] the worst thing that I don't like about my country is the population, a lot of traffic, a lot of chaos, a lot of noise, pollution and sometimes, the people really behave irresponsibly, immaturely. [...] and another thing that I wish for is people to become more aware about their education [...].*

We also asked Sakti, how she feels as a woman in her culture. She gave us the following answer: *I feel very blessed. I feel very lucky. Not because of the people around me, of course, that's the personal reason but otherwise, socially also. I feel very blessed to be born in a country which is full of everything, which is full of values, which is full of colours, which is full of culture. Even if I don't visit other country outside my own country, I can keep on doing different stuff in my own country [...]. So if I see myself as a woman, I feel myself to be a blessing from God in whosoever life I'm. First and secondly I feel happy that I'm a woman and I also feel very thankful that I'm a woman [...].*

Once again, the pride in being an Indian woman is highlighted. She is proud of the diversity of her country of origin and, unlike the traditional belief that having a girl is a misfortune, she considers that being a woman is a blessing and good luck.

Last but not least, we asked Sakti to describe herself as a woman before migration in one to three words: *You can call me a dynamic person, trustworthy person and a very full of life kind of person, lively person.*

7.5.2. THE MIGRATORY PROCESS

- ***Decisions for Migration***

Before her migration to the BC Sakti lived in a joint family with her mother-in-law, father-in-law, brother-in-law and husband in New Delhi. She says that she never thought of moving away from India, but this happened because of her husband's job: *Okay. First thing, I never ever thought that I would go or move out of the country for such a long time but yes, eventually, it happened because of my husband's job. He was trying to move somewhere outside the country, in the past also. He applied and he got the offers from three or four places. I think that some of them were from the Asian countries and some of them from the European also but somehow, the things could not materialise but*

eventually, when he got the offer from “IDOM”, then he really found that it could be a great addition to his career and eventually, we had to move out of our country and it was definitely my husband’s choice. He really wanted to have the international exposure but for me, it was like, wherever he will be, I have to be with him. So I had no previous thoughts about that, like: ‘if I ever move outside the country, I will be doing this, I will be happy or sad or whatever’. I had nothing like that in my mind.

We understand that Sakti made a sacrifice in the name of her husband. It was he who aspired to have a foreign experience and she adapted to his dreams. She followed him and, in some way, she opened her own path in the new society. We wonder what would have happened to her career if she had stayed in India. She continued: *So when I got this news, that we are moving out, I was working and it was kind of a random decision because the moment he asked me, he simply asked me: ‘will you be able to adjust if I go outside?’ So it was kind of a very confusing question for me. So I thought that maybe he wants to work outside India and I will be working here: ‘okay, fine. I’ll manage, don’t worry but take care of yourself’. So he said: ‘okay, fine, let’s talk about that later. And then, after few days, we had the interview at the embassy and we were submitting our documents. So at that moment, I got to know: ‘oh, I’m also going with you’ and it was kind of a surprise for me.*

At first, Sakti thought that it would be Kiaan who was going to work outside the country. It is interesting to note the capacity for resilience she showed at the moment he communicated his decision to her. As it was a misunderstanding, she thought that they would have a long-distance relationship, but she accepted the fact that they would be separated with serenity. Eventually, at the embassy, she realised that she was going to relocate as well. The first thing she thought of were her parents and the family: *Eventually, when I got to know about this, I was little confused because both of our families are in India and my younger brother, he is not at the country either. He is basically a resident of another country now and my parents are reaching the old age. They are not old but they are reaching the old age. So somewhere, I had the thoughts of who will take care of them. So it was definitely a very, very, very tough decision, more than for us, for our parents and they kept on asking us not to go because of course, they will be all alone, without us there [...]. I was also concerned that it might affect the health and definitely it’s going to make them feel really worse. I would say it was the toughest decision of not*

only my parents but his parents also but yes, ultimately they somehow understood our stage or maybe our situation [...].

At the beginning none of the parents was fond of the idea but, ultimately, they had to accept their children's decision. She didn't know anything about the BC before the relocation. Her husband had already been outside India, but not Sakti: *[...] my husband has been abroad [...]. So he had an idea of what foreign countries were like, but for me it was the primary and the first experience. So I was simply clueless and I had prepared mentally myself, very much for this thing: 'whatever the situation will be, okay, fine, we'll see it. I'm not gonna create so much chaos in my mind about what's going to happen; how will it happen'.*

It seems that Kiaan had already travelled outside India, but that was not the case with Sakti. On one hand, she felt lost; but on the other hand, she exhibited very mature and down-to-earth behaviour towards what was about to come.

- ***Life in the New Society***

Sakti and Kiaan moved to Bilbao in March 2016. First, they stayed in a hotel and then they found an apartment. She reflects on her first day in the new country: *The day we arrived in Bilbao, we were really tired and it was Sunday and whatever we saw it was closed and it was raining and we were surprised that on Sunday: 'how come no shop is open?' The first experience was like, first thing, the roads, another thing with the buildings, then another thing were the shops that were not open and the other thing was that we didn't know the language, not even a single word.*

The first impression of the Basque people was good, even if there was a language barrier: *They always tried to make us understand different things in a hope that we might understand or maybe we were in the hope that they might understand something.*

Soon after the arrival, Sakti started searching for a Spanish language academy but she had to wait until September.

- ***Difficulties and Obstacles***

The first difficulty Sakti encountered in the host society was the language. She did not speak Spanish. In addition to the language barrier, she added networking. She says that she did not expect that the language barrier would have been so marked: *I didn't know*

Spanish at all. Another barrier was the networking of course, because we didn't know any people here and top of it because of the language barrier, you can't speak to the people. So until we started learning Spanish and even after that also, we had to wait quite longer to understand people, to make them understand our things. So it took quite a long time, almost like one and a half, two years or something like that.

Another obstacle she identified was the difference between her own culture and the culture of the host country: [...] *the lifestyle here is quite different than what we had in India [...].*

In addition to the previously mentioned barriers, Sakti had difficulties finding a job, and that was again related to the language barrier. It is of utmost importance to mention that she sacrificed her job in New Delhi due to the migration to the BC. This sacrifice meant financial loss for her; she was obliged to depend on her savings and her husband's salary until finding a job in the host country. She claims that while they were in India they could not imagine how the employment situation would be. They hoped that there would be jobs for foreigners without any problems, but that was not the case: [...] *I think that companies here or maybe the employers here, prefer the people who have at least B2 certification in Spanish if they are foreigners and it would be better if you already have an experience in the Spanish market because when I came here, I was looking for the HR jobs and I found out that they were looking for the native Spanish or at least, if you are a foreigner, you should have a B2 level in Spanish and Euskera. So Spanish and Euskera was like a mission impossible. Then, I got two calls from some of the companies from Technology Park. We did an interview because they were looking for international candidates for the international operations into marketing and HR. So everything was well sorted out but then, all of a sudden, they put the condition if I can get a certificate of at least B1 in the next six months: 'we will hire you'. For us, it was completely impossible because we arrived here in the month of March and the classes were about to start in September.*

We assume that the Spanish language was crucial for finding a job even if the work was for the international market. When Sakti completed the basic level course of Spanish, she faced the fact that a high qualification did not mean a competitive salary: *I had to struggle of course because everybody wanted English but with Spanish, so Spanish was kind of a block in finding the right or maybe the good job because Izaro insisted and in fact, she suggested me from day one, that I should enroll in some Spanish course and because she*

had a lot of connections and because I'm from HR background, so she has a lot of business connections. So it was very easy for her to fit me in some good place but she really wanted that I learn Spanish [...]. For one and a half years, I was not able to find any good job. Few of the jobs that came in the middle were English teaching but they were not really paying me well. I simply rejected them and I focused on my Spanish and later, I found a course in teaching known as "CELTA". So I went for five weeks to do an intensive course for teaching and this is of course the starting point or maybe the acknowledgement point of getting officially into teaching English. [...] the other challenge is again finalising a right salary for you because I might be knowing much, you know better than other people but probably I'm not a resident here or maybe because it's Spain and people, they speak a lot of Spanish even in the English class.

One of the things that she noticed in the host country is the behaviour of some people towards her: *Maybe, sometimes, the people are very rude and very upfront. I won't say misbehaved but sometimes people are very, very blunt and sometimes they behave really stupid. I would say that and sometimes it's not required. But that's fine. It's okay. It happens. Not everybody is the same. Sometimes you come across with people like that but it's ok.*

Sakti did not specify what kind of rude and cold behaviour, but we venture to say that it may be related to her physical features as a non-Basque woman, or her way of speaking Spanish.

Sakti pointed to government migration policies as possible inhibiting factors that may affect the status of migrant people in a foreign country. Even if her status in the BC is legal, there is still some fear that one day the law may change and that may have a negative outcome for the non-European migrant community: *[...] the problems associated with being a foreigner. For example, our next permission, the card, we'll get our new card most probably by the first week of March so until then, we get the feeling we are foreigners, so you never know. So that kind of fear, that kind of tremors you keep on coming, or maybe if the country to which you go and they make out some new rules for their migrants, you always have this kind of trauma in your mind, you don't know what's going to happen if they change the rules.*

- ***Inclusion and Facilitating Factors***

Sakti and Kiaan took advantage of the first months after their arrival to explore their new home: [...]we utilised that time to explore the city, to explore different things in the city. We behaved like tourists until we started the classes. We felt as if we were tourists here.

Unlike many migrant women who struggle for years to obtain legal status in the host country or to obtain a work permit, Sakti had the advantage of having a work permit in the BC due to her husband's job. The company where he worked was in charge of handling the issue: *Yes, I had the work permit done by my husband's company. I got the unlimited work permit to work in Spain. No, not in Spain, in Europe. So, the benefit I got from that permanent work permit was that few of the employers, they were looking for those candidates that have a native level of English. So, that was one of the strongest things that I get, that got me a job.*

Sakti is conscious of the advantage she had for being given an unlimited work permit in Europe as a non-European person. It meant that it did not take a long time to find a job once she had a basic level of Spanish. She started learning the language several months after her arrival at the Official School of Languages. Before that she was so motivated and eager to start learning the language that she bought books from India and also used Youtube tutorials: [...] so I was trying to listen to some of the basic greetings at my house from two, three books which I bought from India, only because here, I couldn't find any book in English. Everything was in Spanish and I was like helpless. So the nother help came to me when we got the Internet connection and I was really thankful for that. So I could learn the basics from some channels on Youtube. This is how I could manage.

We see in Sakti's words an immense willpower to motivate herself and learn the language of the host country in a short period of time by using any possible means.

When Sakti arrived in the BC, she had the support of one person who helped her to find a job and, what is more, helped her to meet other migrant women: *We just knew "Bizkaia Talent" and Izaro. She is the one who enrolled me into profesional working networking group and she also arranged some kind of meetings so that every foreigner could reach to each other. Yes. She was the first point of contact actually. "Bizkaia Talent" and "IDOM", they are partners. They have the contract of whosoever foreigner is coming, to settle their hours or support everything being in the BC and especially their spouses, if they are working in India and they have to look for some job here.*

This contact was valuable to Sakti because it enabled her to meet more migrant people and, in that way, to network and find a job. Her second point of contact was the School of Languages. The people she has met in the BC, including neighbours and colleagues, and her informal friendships form part of her family and make her life more meaningful in the the host country: *Well, my family here consists of my husband, my friends and my really close friends, my neighbours, my colleagues. They are all my family here and to be very honest, if I talk about whether is the neighbours or the friends or the colleagues or whosoever we have met so far in the past three years, have become a family to us. I don't know why but directly or indirectly, even if we go to buy something from Eroski or maybe Carrefour, they already know us and they will say: 'how are you doing? We didn't see you the last week. Where were you?' and we were like: 'Gosh, we were in India for some things'. – 'Oh, you should have told me, you come here every week. I was looking for you every week. You didn't come'. She thought that we've left the place. So I said: 'no, no, no, we haven't left the place but we had to go to see our families in India'. So, if you get such kind of care and treatment from the people around you, you never feel that you are away from the family. In the past three years, we haven't feel like, alone kind of feeling, or lonely kind of feeling.*

Sakti feels part of Basque society and her friends, colleagues and neighbours have become her family in the BC. The treatment recieved by people in general has made her inclusion possible, accompanied by the feeling of being at home. She gives us an example of how helpful and cooperative the neighbours are: *For example, the building was under maintenance for nine or ten months and we had to take out the clothe line and we didn't have the tools and anything. As soon as they started making the scaffolding outside, the neighbour, he saw it from the window: 'oh, they are building up the scaffolding and the neighbours don't know anything' and he came running to the door: 'Sakti, Sakti, Sakti, you have to take it down. Where is Kiaan? Call Kiaan and tell him to come soon from the office. They will break this thing and you will have to pay so much money'. So if you have such kind of concerned people here around you, you actually live freely [...]. So we really don't feel like that we are away from our family.*

The example reaffirms the sentiment of not feeling like strangers in the host country: *[...] but before that, when we came here, it was like an alien country and we were like aliens for the Spanish people but whatsoever the hindrance, the barrier between both the people, both the nationalities or maybe both the cultures, everybody would try to help [...]. It's*

like my other home here. I have another friend like you, I have another family member like you. I have never ever spoken to anybody like this honestly speaking. So I'm really thankful for all this. I'm really thankful for everything. Every day, every morning, every person here. That's what I really feel about the city.

We were curious to know how she thinks her life would have been if she had stayed in India. She explained that: *If I would be India, I'm not really sure what would be my situation because probably, I might have been having a baby, taking care of my baby or maybe looking for another job but in teaching because at that time, when we came here, I was preparing for an exam to be a professor but because we came here I had to drop the idea, I dropped the exam. So probably, if I would be in India at this time, I would definitely be preparing for that lecturer exam or probably I would be pursuing my PhD.*

As we can see from the above, Sakti would have been working constantly on improving herself professionally. Apart from that, we were interested by the fact that she told us that probably they would have had a baby, living in a joint family. We kindly asked her to specify the reasons for that, and she told us the following: *Probably just because when you are with family, the family things are coming to you and they keep coming even if the family is not telling you anything [...]. So this I think it's something very natural, this is obvious I think because it's been more than four years in this marriage and if I would be there, I think that in one year or less than one year, we could be having a baby. You are in a place where the whole focus is on the relationships and the family, everything revolves around the family. So you start thinking a lot more about that [...].*

We understand that they would have had a baby by now because of pressure from the family. Even if that pressure is not explicit, it is something that the in-laws and her parents expect from a married couple.

The possibility to find employment that fulfills her was definitely an asset. Migrant women struggle with job-related obstacles, even when they are highly qualified. In Sakti's case, she was delighted to enter the education sector: *I love teaching and that's my passion. That's what I realised and I want to continue with this only. For HR...well, I have a gap of three years and I don't want to put all my energy into it because I'm not going to read, fill up that gap. I had to choose either HR or education. At this stage, I've chosen education.*

For that reason, she contacted her network group and asked for help: [...] eventually, when I completed my basic level, I started looking for a job. I got few offers but they were at quite low prices. So I approached few of my friends and definitely they suggested me some academies they had contacts with so somehow I started with low price but the only thing I had in mind was: 'okay, fine, at least you are in the market. We will see later. We will book the prices later but for the momento at least, get into the market, just get to know the actual scenarios in the market today'. So that's how I got my first job. After that, I'm still working but with another academy.

In this case, Sakti adapted and accepted the fact that she may not earn a competitive salary from the start, but she is going to earn her own money and work as a teacher, a work that she feels passionate about.

- ***Significance of the Culture of Origin in the New Society***

We asked Sakti if she wears the traditional clothing from India and the accessories from the host country. She explained that no, because the way she dresses has changed and she thinks that the bindi does not fit with the Western type of clothing: *I don't wear that so I don't put bindi with all this Western attire. I think it doesn't match really. It's like big contradiction but I really want to do it. When I'll go to India, probably this June or July, I'll bring a lot Kurtis [...].*⁴⁸

We have the impression that Sakti is confused and finds herself between the two cultures: the native culture and the host culture. She wears, as she calls it herself, "Western" attire that does not match some of the features of the country of origin. Nevertheless, she is willing to use them, and she is planning to use them in the future.

As previously explained by the participant, family is considered the most important pillar in Indian society. In the host country, she says that when she wants to contact somebody, she always has to think twice and think about not disturbing the other person. In India it is different: [...] but in India, whatever time it is, whatever situation is, you just give a call: 'I'm coming, are you free? Let's go and do this! So you know, I miss that kind of comfortability and I think is adorable, the way we naturally behave in our country and I

⁴⁸ An upper garment worn in the Indian subcontinent.

try to be the same with them. They were like: 'we don't like that much attention from people. We are not very used to it'.

Sakti misses the closeness among people that she was used to in her country of origin. Sometimes, she behaves with the same intensity as in India and encounters people who are not accustomed to being given so much attention and treated as if they were part of her family. Family is very important to her and her culture and it is something that she carries with her even if they are miles away from each other: *We have got a big family in India, both sides and it's so lovely to keep on meeting and seeing each other and I think that the first point of networking or probably connecting to the society is your family only. The way you treat your family, the way you come up with your family, the way you influence your family members, the part you play or the role you play with your family members is great, great contributor towards the uplifting or maybe the betterment of the society.* In addition to this, the identity of being an Indian woman is a feeling that she carries with her and that cannot be taken away: *[...] the most important thing is the roots we have been born and brought up with. It's not like we have left it, it's not like that we have disconnected from that. It's just like, we are coming on and off with that. [...] every country has its own culture so that doesn't really affect your own beliefs [...].*

Sometimes, this feeling is stronger and other times it is unnoticed, but it is constantly there. We have the impression that Sakti is not in conflict with her own culture and the host culture but, rather, she has clear thoughts on who she is and where she comes from.

- ***Couple Relationship***

Sakti is the only participant who does not have a child. Previously, she told us that if she had been in India, she and her husband would have had a baby, but in the host country things have changed: *[...] here, because we both are working and because we also think that after we start a family our time is going to get blocked a bit for some time. It's not that we have a problem here: 'okay, fine, you've come to some foreign country, enjoy the country first, understand the country first and then, we'll think about it. The baby isn't going anywhere.*

They live alone, far from pressure from the family, and they are able to make their own decision. They have decided to take their time and enjoy life as a couple and think about themselves. We consider that this type of behaviour may not be accepted in India, or that it would be branded as selfish. With reference to the household responsibilities, Sakti identifies two key aspects: cooperation and acknowledgement of the other person's efforts: *So of course, it is important that you have mutual understanding, mutual responsibility. If not responsibility, at least we should acknowledge someone's efforts.*

- **Free Time**

We asked Sakti how she spends her free time in the host country and if it was different from the free time in the native country: *In India, all the free time was bugged up by the household works or probably cooking something or maybe gossiping or maybe sometimes going out with the family of course, maybe for the shopping. These were regular things we would do. Normally, we didn't have much of free time in India but here, I had so much free time before the job and I was like: 'uf, what to do with this?'*

In India, the family takes advantage of free time to teach the girls how to do the domestic chores and after they learn, they actually do them. Having so much free time was unusual to Sakti: *I have spent my time in managing the things. I won't say managing, learning new things and secondly, keeping myself mentally occupied with the thought that when I get employed or when I get into the job, how would I manage with this kind of environment [...]. For the first year it was more or less like that but after that time, there was a phase was just thinking: 'okay, let me explore this area'. Sometimes I would go to my friends' for a moment and sometimes after the school I would meet some of my classmates and we plan for a coffee or something or the weekends we would go out for a grocery shopping and maybe go to "Ballonti" or "Mega Park", sometimes "Zubiarte". Sometimes going for a long walk from here until Abando.*

We can see that there is a difference in the free time spent in India and the free time in the host country. She has used this free time to reflect on her life and also to get to know herself better, to get to know what things she liked and enjoyed, like doing sports and taking care of her physical and mental health. Apart from that, she regularly meets her friends and they make plans together.

Another activity that Sakti enjoys is cycling. She feels happy going back to cycling again because in India it was very difficult to use a bicycle: *[...] I learned that you can cycle*

also because in India it's like a dream. You have cycles but nobody wants to ride it because of the pollution and a lot of the traffic. So it's impossible unless you are living in some small street and you don't have to go very far but here in Bilbao, if you have to go from here to Abando cycling, it's super fine and super possible without having the fear that I might get into an accident or maybe I might get terrified or get bumped into some car. So that's a new thing I learned and I started riding the bicycle again.

- **Remodeling of Values**

Concerning the value reconstruction, in the host country Sakti has observed new models of how to fight against social inequality and at least give people the minimum wage: *So here, the government has put a standard to the basic minimum wage irrespective of the professions [...]. [...] they have put the demarcation that this is a minimum for all. [...] but in India, we have different way skills according to your qualification, according to your experience. [...] they also consider some weird consideration factors like your background, the family background or maybe sometimes, the religion and the caste.*

The healthcare system in the BC has also given her new perspectives on how it would function better in her country of origin: *The doctors or the hospitals, they don't prescribe or they don't focus much on medicines. They focus on getting well by yourself, by having a good diet, being physically active. But in India is not the case. If you are not very well maybe for one day, two, the third day you go to a doctor and the doctor is very happy prescribing so many medicines. The health system, I find better here in Europe as compared to my own country.*

Yet another thing that she found fascinating in the host society is the effectiveness of the institutions as compared to on India: *[...] eventually, little by little, we started going to the government officers for the Identity Card. I took more or less like one and a half or two months to complete all the formalities but the best thing was that everything was very quickly here. In India, it takes time. Apart from that, another thing that I really liked is that the government work is really fast here and everything is centralised. So the citizens of this place, of this country, [...] they are not really facing that kind of harshness of life or maybe the struggles of life that we generally encounter day to day in our country.*

Sakti says that since they have lived in the BC they have lost the habit of giving so much importance to worshipping: *For example, we had the daily routine of getting up in the morning and taking a bath and worship before breakfast, bow your head to the God, we pray and then, we have something. But here, we do this, the worships and decorating everything only on the festivals. We don't know enough things to celebrate the festival. [...] whatever you want to celebrate, you have to cope up everything by yourself. Overall, I would rather say that we sacrificed to cope with the situations; we have changed ourselves a lot as an individual too.*

7.5.3. TRANSFORMATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT

- ***Migration as an Instrument for Personal Growth and as an Empowering Mechanism***

In this section we discussed the changes Sakti underwent with migration. We posed the question of what she learned from migration: *Migration is a term, which I would rather relate to adjustment, coping up with uncertainties and evolution of the person you could maybe never ever discovered before. The different things you never knew about yourself probably. New kind of talents or maybe new kind of abilities that in the past you thought: 'no, I won't be able to do this' but probably, when the destiny threw you into the improbable situations and you came out with altogether different colours, the variety of things that we explore about ourselves, about the people around, about the life on the whole, it's definitely worth learning. That's the thing I really learned about and apart from that, you are more confident [...].*

Sakti considers that migration enabled her to learn to adapt and to manage uncertain situations. It helped her to improve herself, to get to know herself and to be more self-confident. Then, it opened up to her a completely new world that she would not have met if she had not migrated: *Apart from that dealing with uncertainties, dealing with these kind of fears and still being confident and learning different things about the culture, about the people, about the food, about everything and about the country, exploring new places and understanding this thing; how this thing, how this experience adds to your own experience or probably have I ever dreamt about this in the past [...].*

The gained confidence and knowledge contribute to her personal growth and strengthening: *Apart from that, I learned to do so many things, the Government things. If I want to go to some place for certain things, I'm confident about different Spanish names now.*

This confidence that led her to be more self-assured, has prepared Sakti to be able to adapt to any circumstance that appears in her life. To know how the system of the host country functions has definitely made her feel more comfortable and undaunted: *I have definitely become more confident and of course, I have learned so much about the education system. I won't say so much but yes, I have started understanding a little more about the system, the education, about the culture, the society, the government, geography and everything. I feel that if I ever get back to India or maybe some other country, I think I'll be able to adapt and readapt to the other country quite well because now, I have become more aware of what kind of challenges the foreigners may be able to face [...].*

This citation demonstrates how migration had an impact on her evolution as a person. She has learned to adapt and she believes that she would be able to adapt to any other place in the world if necessary: *So I think I have evolved a little and I'm evolving and I would really like to keep on evolving from different perspectives, different points of life.*

We asked her to identify any transformations in the self since her migration to the BC. She recognised the following changes: *Yes. I have seen many changes in myself and yes, I have definitely seen the changes in the way I have started thinking about eating. I have become more aware about what am I eating, what am I eating [...]. Otherwise, when I was in India, whatever I used to like and whenever I used to like, I used to eat it without thinking. So, apart from that, yes, I have become a little more open about life, about understanding life from different perspectives because when I was in India, I had a set kind of routine for everything; I will get up and take a bath and then, worship and then, breakfast but here, everything is turned around. I would get up in the morning and I pray maybe once a week. After I started doing the job, it's been more than a month I haven't done it. After coming to this place or after coming outside the country, I realised that your work is your worship and God would never offend you, never disgrace you if you don't do.*

After her migration, Sakti started to be more conscious of her mental and physical health and decided to change her diet. In addition to this, she has learned to go out of her comfort zone and learn to accept different viewpoints and accept a different lifestyle without feeling guilty for not following the rules of her culture. Then, she has changed the way of dressing: *Another change is definitely the way I carry myself. It's another kind of a change because in India, I was very specific about the clothes I want to wear. It had to be all closed. [...] so after coming to Bilbao, I have learned to experiment with different kind of attires or different kind of outfits. That has again invited some self-confidence about my body [...].*

Changing her clothing style has brought her self-confidence and creativity to experiment with different clothes and to find her own style. She also felt more confident in terms of the clothes chosen. In India, her style was more reserved. Alongside this, she has changed her make-up habits: *Another thing, in India, wherever we go to some parties, when you meet someone, you always use make-up. I never ever liked make-up and honestly, wherever I had to go in India, I was pissed off and after coming to Bilbao, there is no formality: 'wow, I can be like this'. This was the best and nobody would say: 'hey, you are not looking good'. So I was so much mentally satisfied for this, that at least I got rid of that. So I take it positively because I think that everything happens for a reason and the reason would always be good. So I realised over the time, in the last two years that I'm living a life which probably somewhere I really wanted to live. For example, I always wanted to wear simple clothes and I always wanted to be eco-friendly, I always wanted to be close to the nature, I always wanted to be simple, without make-up and everything naturally. That should reflect the outside and apart from that. I also wanted to be around people who are very serious about the productivity not only on their life but for the people around also. I always wanted to be in a society, I wanted to create a society, not create exactly but help or maybe enable the things from my end to make other people believe that life is far above than pissing each other. Life is much more than just dressing-up and following your traditions and rules. Honestly, after coming here, that thing has really strengthened me somewhere from inside. There is a world somewhere in the whole world where you can be yourself.*

Migration helped our participant to find her place under the sky, look into herself, and discover who she was and what she wants or does not. In India, she felt the social pressure of being beautiful and dressed up constantly. In the host country, she can be herself without anybody telling her that she is not fulfilling society's beauty expectations. She says that she is actually living the life she was longing for before. She feels very inspired and self-confident to contribute to society and do some good deeds, leaving the traditions and rules of the host country behind. Migration made her realise who she was and that the place where she is now is her home.

The desire to continue improving her CV is strong and Sakti does not want to stop at the point where she is now. She is looking forward to finding a more challenging job: *So now, I'm kind of trying to get into this. Not exactly teaching but something related to universities or colleges and schools. It could be academics, it could be administration. It could be...I have a degree in Information Technology.*

The migration experience revealed new passions that she was not aware of before coming to the BC, as we can see in the next example: *No, it's just that, after coming to Spain, I realised that I'm very happy doing computers. I mean, I want to do something on computers or I want to progress as a teacher and develop as a teacher and probably be on a better position or maybe more responsible thing. More kind of an administration or more kind of a Project Manager kind of a thing but all in all, I want to be connected with the education industry.*

We asked Sakti what it meant to her having a job. She replied with the following statement: *Well, it means a lot. It almost means having a life. It's not like being financially independent, that's another aspect but I find job as a tool or probably as an instrument of expressing myself. So the job has a very good role. It's very important for being myself and of course, it acts as an instrument of expressing myself and I think that I can definitely contribute a lot to the students' life. Maybe I can give some kind of a direction to someone's thought while being in a teaching environment and maybe eventually, I end up making some contribution for the society also.*

- ***Alliances among Women and Networking as a Sustenance Agent***

Sakti has no knowledge of any support network among the community in the BC. She knows people from India or South Asia in the BC but does not have information about any existing association. On the other hand, she participates in “Bizkaia Talent” and the “Professional Women’s Network” and she usually attends the network’s sessions: *“Bizkaia Talent” is for everybody. It’s basically for the people who have come here for research or who have got a job in Bilbao [...]. PWN is only for women, professional networking of women. It’s quite interesting, it’s quite supportive and of course it’s for the betterment of the ladies, of the women who want to learn more about the professions here or who are looking to start something new and trying to understand the kind of environment they may be able to face in the future. So far, I have felt that the ladies are quite helpful. The organisation and if someone has a brilliant idea or some has a good expertise, whosoever has the opportunity or maybe ideas or suggestions, for that person or for that woman, they always get back to the lady or probably to the group of ladies.*

Sakti strongly supports the idea of the creation of alliances among women: *Yes, it’s very positive. It’s really required. It’s not just in India. I think across the world or across the globe, it’s very much required because the way women are still perceived is not very elegant or probably it’s not very acceptable because even after progressing so much overall, maybe in terms of education, maybe in terms of technology, maybe in terms of awareness, even then, a lot of expectations are from the women. From profession, as well as from their personal life. So even now also, if a lady is working somewhere, everybody has this expectation that she is the only one who has to take care of everything. I mean, the rest of the people; ‘if we don’t feel like doing that, okay fine, it’s her responsibility’, as she was given by birth that, to be her primary responsibility. So I think that this programme is a good initiative but I think it remains a good only when the intentions are really pure about uplifting each other [...]. People are meeting and behaving as if they were really interested in empowering women in their lives so I think that if you are taking the misuse of that thing, it’s really wrong, it’s very unfair, it’s very unjustified and it’s really rude rather. So if you really want to help other women, be it any perspective, be true to that, okay? Don’t compete with each other [...]. Women are women and it doesn’t matter if somebody is more qualified, someone white and someone is black or maybe someone has got more experience, less experience, it doesn’t matter [...]. So I think that if they work with this concept, the results, the outcomes will definitely be positive.*

Sakti believes in the alliances created among women as a tool for empowerment and the amelioration of women's lives because, as she says, even though many things have been improved, there is still the belief that women are responsible for the domestic chores apart from their work in the workplace; and this is a problem that persists not only in India but globally, which makes it a structural issue. She is critical towards some of the empowering programmes, as she has observed that nowadays the term "empowerment" has become fashionable and this does not empower women but, rather, is harmful. Sakti has no doubt that competition among women is an obstacle, while sisterhood is the key feature of the empowerment of women.

In PWN they do different activities that are mainly focused on the professional development of women. For example: *[...] they keep on arranging the workshops on different ideas or maybe different concepts. For example, accounting. If there is some new software in the market for accounting, they will send this news to everybody in their circle and they also ask them to spread this word for any woman who is into accounting and wants this and sometimes they don't even charge you anything for these workshops. This is the thing that I really like about them and you know, some of their seminars or maybe conferences are about the global problems, about common problems that every profession is basically facing or maybe sometimes their discussions are about balancing the work and the life. So the target is to cover up all aspects of life and mostly, the challenges, the problems that the women are facing in their day-to-day life, may be personally or you professionally. So that's one perspective. Another is that they feel responsible, if anything good is in the market or probably something really beneficial they have come across through their own experience, they should share it with everybody who's in the circle or probably who's connected with the members of this organisation. So the idea or their instinct is very much clear about what they want to achieve. They also want that if you have some specialty, if you have some expertise, you share that. It's like a platform for both of those things.*

In one of the meetings of the PWN, Sakti met a woman who has now become one of her closest friends in the host country: *So she approached me or probably we met at the meeting and we had a lot of conversation. She told me about her background, how she went to India and what her connection with India is. She has adopted a daughter, a baby girl from India around twelve years back. She is from Mumbai. That's how we got*

connected and from then, she made me meet another friend of hers, four of her best friends from class, from childhood and that's how the network kept on growing.

She met one woman and that woman introduced her to more women and then, those women presented to her more women and the alliance becomes stronger and stronger.

To finish, we asked Sakti to describe herself in one to three words as a woman after migration: *Evolved*.

CHART 11. Summary of Shakti's Experience of Life

NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	STUDIES	MARITAL STATUS	MIGRATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Sakti	Karnal, India	33	Master's Degree Bachelor's Degree	Married	2016	English Language Teacher
VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Male-dominated society • Joint family • Pressure on women • Pressure by the family to have a child • Different educational practices for girls and boys • Lack of security for women and children • Hinduism • Caste-based society • Arranged marriage • Lack of opportunities for poor people • Gap between women and men 						
MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE						

OBSTACLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discrimination • Language barrier • Diploma recognition • Unemployment • Less qualified job
FACILITATING FACTORS AND INCLUSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal status in the host country • Motivation to learn the language of the host country • Friendships • Support network • Employment • Cooperation in the couple
REMODELLED VALUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Viewpoints on Hinduism and devotion • Importance of leisure in life • The role of women • Refusal of arranged marriages • To have children is not always a priority • Importance of healthy lifestyle • Equality measures are possible for helping the poorest of the poor • The institutional organisation in the host country
EMPOWERMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to express herself in the Spanish language • Adaptation/ adjustment capacity • Financial independence • Self-reliance • Self-sufficiency • Self-esteem • Self-improvement

- **Freedom of choice**
- **Decision-making capacity**
- **Strength**
- **No imposition of make-up**
- **Persistence and endurance**
- **Creation of friendships and networks**

Source: Prepared by the Author

7.6. AARIN

We met Aarin through one organisation in Eibar. She participates in a project for the empowerment of women through learning Spanish language. First, we contacted her by email. Then, we spoke by telephone. She was eager to participate in the study, once we explained the aims of the research. Finally, we went to Eibar, a city in the Basque province of Gipuzkoa, and we did the interviews in the office of the organisation.

When we first met, Aarin was wearing a beautiful hijab, probably brought from her country of origin because it had some typical South Asian design traits. She was very kind and willing to contribute to the study.

Aarin was born in Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh. She is thirty years old. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Merchandising and she holds a Master's of Science in Textiles. She first migrated to Madrid in June 2014 and after two months, she relocated to Eibar. She lives there with her husband Guneet, their son Jai and their daughter Krisha, who was born in the host country. Aarin is currently unemployed.

Our participant used Spanish as means of communication. Although her English was fluent, she preferred to speak in Spanish because it is the language that she uses in the host country. Sometimes she mixed the two languages, especially when she was not able to say some words in Spanish. Her mother tongue is Bengali.

The citations from Aarin's story are translated into English for the purposes of easing the reading.

The name “Aarin” means mountain strong in Sanskrit.

7.6.1. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

FAMILY ORIGIN AND VALUES

Aarin was born in a small village where she lived with her family until she moved to Dhaka, the capital city of Bangladesh, for her studies: *Yes, I liked my life in my country, of course I liked it. All the memories with my family, with my brothers, my friends as well. I liked the streets I was walking before and the place where I studied. So many things.*

The village was her favourite place and she used every free day to go back to her parents’ house. She became independent from a very early stage of life because she spent most of her time living in a hostel in Dhaka, because of her studies. She was used to living in a joint family and she enjoys when families come together to do things: *They cook together, twenty people. In my house, in the village, there is a yard, so I loved when the families were gathering to celebrate a holiday, all the people together. More than fifty people. There is food, the people talk, they laugh. I prefer the joint family.*

We asked Aarin how the relationship was with her father and she explained that she had a beautiful bond with him and she felt even closer to him than to her mother: *My father was a very, very good person. For example, in my country, not only in my country but in Asian countries, they say that girls feel ashamed of talking about topics such as menstruation or sex, but I didn’t. When I had my first menstruation, I told my father that I had bled and I didn’t know what it was because I was studying outside home for ten years. I lived in a hostel and my father came. The teacher told him that nobody knew what was happening to me because I didn’t say anything. I was just crying. When my father came, I told him: ‘I have this problem’. We had a friendly relationship.*

The relationship that Arin maintained with her father was quite uncommon, taking into consideration the context in which she lived in. He was the first person she contacted when she had her first menstruation. We can see that girls were neither informed nor prepared to act independently when the first menstruation occurs. She was frightened, embarrassed and thinking that she had done something wrong. Aarin says that her father was more a friend than a father to her and that prohibition was not his manner of

education: *If I wanted something, my father never ever told me: 'no, you can't do it', 'no, you can't go there'. For example, when I was twenty-two years old, I was doing volunteering in BBC Bangla for two years and then I worked as an Assistant Production Manager. When I told my dad, 'I want to volunteer', he said: 'okay, where?' - 'In Dhaka'. Then he said: 'okay but how many days?' and I said: 'two days per week'. In my country it is not common for girls to go outside at night. They are scared, the parents are scared too because it's not like here. People steal, they abuse children sexually. Then, my father told me: 'okay, you know better, I don't have any problem, just take care'.*

Aarin did not give much information with regard to the relationship with her mother, other than that she was a good person and that she married when she was nineteen years old. She emphasised the fact that she was more connected to her father than to her mother.

Aarin's father studied Business Studies and her mother studied until she married. Usually, women finish their secondary education and then they marry: *In the past, it was not common for women to continue or to start their studies after marriage. Sometimes yes but in my case, we were a big family and they didn't think of it. When I grew up, I asked my dad: 'why is my mum not studying? She finished high school, you should tell her to study a Bachelor's Degree' but I don't know, my father told me: 'your grandmothers says no'. They were waiting for a permission from the elders, what his mother was going to decide. It was not like now: 'I want it and I'm going to do it'. In the past no. My father was waiting for his mother's response, but no. My mother was very intelligent and she had a scholarship. So I don't know why she did not continue with her studies. It's because she had to ask permission from her mother-in-law and my father's family was big – five brothers and three sisters. They all lived together and they needed money to study. It was impossible for everybody to study. They needed money for food and for studying, they needed even more money. Just one of his sisters studied, my aunt.*

This citation exemplifies that the financial resources of one family were prioritised for the male members of that family. Even if Aarin's mother was an extraordinary student, she was not allowed to decide whether she wanted to continue with her studies or not. In addition to this, she was not financially independent, so her future was in the hands of the elders who, eventually, decided not to send her again to school.

Aarin has a brother three years younger than she is. They have had a good brother-sister relationship although sometimes they argued. They were different from one another. She

was more independent and more ambitious than he, having a vision for the future. That is why she left the village and went to study in the city while her brother refused to leave the village. Nowadays, he lives in Bangladesh with their mother. Aarin's father died in 2015 and she was not able to go to the funeral due to her legal status in the host country.

- **Roles**

When she was a child, Aarin used to spend a lot of time with her cousins. They lived in a joint family: her parents, brother, aunt, uncle and two cousins. Aarin explains that she loved playing with them, but she refused to play with the toys that were traditionally associated with girls: *We always played together but I always wanted to draw. My cousins played with dolls. I don't know why but I was not interested in playing with dolls. For example, I was more interested in preparing clothes for the dolls, making clothes for them, building their house with the drawers. But the dolls, I was always like: Ah, no, no, 'I don't like them'.*

We asked Aarin if she noticed differences between the education she was given and the education of her brother. The response is in the following citation: *Yes. It happened not only to me. You can say it's cultural. The culture of my country is like that. Girls cannot do some things that boys can. For example, my brother could play with his friends further away from our home, but I was not allowed to. My mother was always telling me: 'no, no, no, you stay here so that I can see you', but boys didn't have any problems. Another example, going to the supermarket. Now, the supermarkets are closer to our house but before no, they were far away from home. So, my brother was allowed to go and buy things, but I wasn't and I couldn't understand why he could and I couldn't. Later, I understood that girls can be harassed. For that reason, my parents didn't let me to go out but at first I was like: 'why do you not let me go, I'm so angry at you, I want to go too.' Sometimes, my mother was sending my brother to buy eggs and sugar and I was like: 'why can't I go?' When I was very angry, she told me: 'okay, go with your brother, you buy eggs and you buy sugar'. In my country, they still don't let girls go out at night. Things are changing now, maybe in the city, but not in the village.*

What we understand from this citation is that Aarin felt confused as a young girl because she saw her brother being able to do anything he wanted to do and her life was full of restrictions. She also says that roles are very explicit in terms of the games and toys for girls and boys: *In my country, the mothers still buy dolls and cooking features for girls*

and cars for boys [...]. In my country, it is still not appropriate to buy as a gift a car for a girl or a doll for a boy.

Aarin explains that when she was playing with her friends, they were playing with dolls and the dolls always had to marry. She did not like that, so she found a different way to entertain herself by playing with dolls: *My father had a pharmacy and I was picking up the boxes and I was taking them home. In that way, I was able to construct beds for the dolls.*

The tasks that she and her brother had were different too: *I've not spent a lot of time with them because I was away studying, but when I was at home, since my mother used to think that her job was to be in the kitchen, to make the bed, so she was telling me to do that or to fold the clothes. She wasn't telling my brother anything.*

It seems that parents prepare the girls from a very early age to handle the household work and boys are not taught that this is their responsibility as well. If they do not teach their sons to be responsible for domestic tasks, they would grow up into young adults who not only are not able to manage basic domestic tasks, but also as young adults who are convinced that those tasks are exclusively for women.

In terms of the role of women and men in Bangladeshi society, Aarin states that they were rigidly marked: *Women in my country are always in the kitchen. They make the bed or they clean the house. My father went to work and when he came home he had a rest, he ate, he talked a little bit, and that's it. But one day a week, in the morning, he would clean the entire house. [...] sometimes, since we had a lot of clothes to wash by hand because we didn't have a washing machine, he washed the clothes. But I haven't see other men in my family doing that, only my father.*

As we can observe, women's place was in the private sphere while men's place was in the public sphere. Aarin emphasises the fact that her father helped with the domestic chores once a week. We believe that it was not a marriage based on cooperation but rather a union where her mother was responsible for the unpaid household work and her father for the paid job at the pharmacy. Aarin was not conscious of the fact that the work that her mother did was actual work. When we asked her if her mother worked her answer was "no".

- ***Education and Work Experience***

Aarin was a very independent girl. She left home and went to study in Dhaka, living in a hostel and sharing a room with flatmates. She has a Bachelor's Degree in Textile Design that she finished after getting married and then she finished her Master's Degree. Before enrolling at university, she felt pressured by her family, especially by her father, to study Medicine, but she was interested in fashion and design. Somehow, her father was able to understand his daughter's desire and support her. They went together to the public university, but there she was told that they did not have fashion design but Textiles. If she wanted to study fashion, she had to go to a private university. Aarin did not want to study in a private university because of the costly enrollment fee and she decided to study Textile and Market Merchandising. During her studies, she volunteered at the BBC two days per week and she had a pleasant experience: *Sometimes, the work was outside Dhaka and I was able to see other places. You go with them and you come back with them and you sleep in a five-star hotel. After volunteering I worked as an Assistant Production Manager.*

Given the fact that she obtained that job after her son was born, Aarin found it difficult to balance work and family life. The new job was far from her home as well.

- ***Traditions of the Culture of Origin***

Bangladesh is a country very different from the host country, Aarin observes: *It's different, the culture is different. The songs, the dances, the clothes, the dresses. Everything is different. In Asian countries there are Muslims like in Pakistan, Afghanistan, Bangladesh, then, Hindu, then, Buddhists. The culture is mixed.*

We did not discuss furthermore the traditions of the culture of origin because new themes emerged.

- ***Religion***

The majority religion in Bangladesh is Islam. Apart from Islam, there are other religions and diversity is respected by the citizens of the country: *For example, in my country, more than 80% of the population is Muslim, 10% is Hindu, 7–8% is Christian and 2–3% is Buddhist. So the culture is mixed. For example, I had a Hindu friend and a Christian friend. They come to my home for our festivals and I go to their homes for Christmas. In my country, we celebrate Ramadan and Kurban Bayrami.*

The sacred book of Islam is the Quran. We asked Aarin if she had read the Holy Book and what her interpretation was of the reading. She responded with the following: *Yes, yes, yes. I have read the Quran but I don't know what they preach. In countries such as Saudi Arabia or Morocco, they study Arabic so they perfectly understand what is written in the Quran. But in my country the first language is Bengali, the second language is English and Arabic is the third language. I know a little bit because when I was a child it was compulsory for children to go to the mosque. [...] I know some words only and I can read a little bit [...].*

This citation shows that many people in Bangladesh, including Aarin herself, are not able to read or understand the meaning of the Holy Book. Nevertheless, religion is inculcated in people's lives from childhood and they do not need to comprehend Islam. They believe in it by default. We wanted to familiarise ourselves with the values of Islam. Aarin brought us closer to her viewpoint: *In the past, when I was a child, my parents used to tell me: 'no, you have to go to the mosque and learn'. And I learned but I was not interested. I started being interested when I grew up. I was reading the Quran every day. I wanted to know what it says. Then, I downloaded the Quran on my computer in Bengali and I've read almost the entire book. Honestly speaking, I like what's written in the Quran. The Quran doesn't say what is obligatory or not. If it says so it's because it's a value. For example, the Quran says: 'don't do these things' but why does it say so? For example, men can marry more wives but you have to be equal with all of them. Your first wife has to consent. Only in that case can you marry four or five women. But nobody respects that.*

In addition to what has been said above, children are instilled with religion even if they are very small and the topic is too complex for them to understand or to show interest in. Aarin read and understood the Holy Book once she grew older. We want to believe that in some way, an unconscious way, she justifies polygamy in the name of religion, even if she does not agree with it and would not allow her husband to marry more women.

Aarin was the only participant wearing a hijab. Thus, we asked her for the meaning of the attire and if it is compulsory to wear it: *You have to wear it. The woman is more beautiful. For that reason, the Quran says that you have to cover yourself. I see myself as beautiful but when I take off the hijab, I'm even more beautiful with my hair.*

Girls start to wear the hijab before their first menstruation: *When you are four or five years old, your parents tell you that you have to cover yourself because if they do it later, the girl will refuse. For that reason, you have to teach her from a very early stage: 'it's okay to cover yourself, you have to do it' and step by step, they do it.*

The hijab is a sensitive topic in the feminist movement. On one hand, there is the belief that Western standards of beauty are not the only ones and Muslim women have the right to decide whether they want to use the hijab or not. On the other hand, there is the conviction that the hijab is a tool for the oppression of women. Aarin has decided to wear hijab and her belief system was not questioned at any moment of the interview. It is her faith and her culture. From what is said above, we assume that girls are taught to learn to love to cover themselves and the earlier the elders start teaching them, the less the possibility that a girl will be rebellious and refuse to use the cloth. However, Aarin states that there are girls who do not wear the hijab. Even Aarin herself. She started using the hijab after secondary school: *There are women who don't want to wear it! For example, I didn't use it. My father was telling me: 'you have to cover yourself' and I told him that I didn't like it and he was like: 'okay, you know better. But I prefer you to wear it'. He stopped telling me what to do and then, as I told you, I suddenly started to be interested in the Quran. I take it off at home, when I'm with my family, with my father, my brother, my uncle, with the people I can't marry. With the boys whom I can marry it is prohibited.*

- ***Caste***

The term caste was not mentioned at any moment during the conversation. In an informal talk with Aarin she explained that the force of the caste system is not as strong as in other South Asian countries. It was sixty or seventy years ago. Apart from that, Bangladesh is a majority Muslim country and the caste system is associated with Hinduism. We do not mean to imply that caste does not exist in Bangladesh, but that Aarin is a Muslim woman and she was not raised in accordance with the caste system. However, arranged marriage is a common practice in Bangladesh and when the marriages are arranged, factors such as religion, social class, education, etc. decide on whether a couple is eligible to marry. Thus, it looks as if caste does exist in Bangladesh, but in a more subtle form or with a different name. We did not discuss this issue because it did not appear as a primary topic during the conversation.

- ***Marriage***

Aarin had a boyfriend before marrying her husband Guneet. He was her cousin. She explains that in her culture, intra-family marriages are allowed: *Yes, I had a boyfriend. He proposed to me, my aunt's son, but he went to study in Ireland. Then, at university, I had a friend. It's normal that boys and girls like each other.*

Aarin did not want to give more details on the topic. We respected her decision and we moved forward with the interview. We asked Aarin how she met Guneet. It was quite an unusual story, taking into consideration the context and the culture of arranged marriage that persist in South Asian societies: *Ah it's an interesting story. I was studying and living in a hostel and close to the hostel there was another hostel so the boys were coming nearby, where we, the girls, were. They were coming to have a drink, but not very close to us, it's not allowed. There was a coffee shop so they used to go there. My husband, he had a friend who knew my cousin and he told her: 'I want to talk to your cousin but I'm feeling shy'. Then, my cousin told me that one of the boys was going to come and that he wanted to talk to me. I told her that I didn't have time. One day, when I was leaving work, when I was working at the BBC, he appeared there! He asked me if I had time to talk to him and I told him: 'well, take the bus with me because I don't have time to meet you'. After three days, he came to the hostel and invited me for a coffee and I told him that I wasn't interested in talking to him but in the end, we had that coffee and he told me that he liked me [...]. After that, I told my mum that I liked a boy and in my country this is not usual, two people to marry out of love. It's not common.*

As Aarin herself says, marriage for love was not considered as something conventional in Bangladesh, but it happened. She and her husband met in Dhaka. He was persistent in his intentions and they finally came to like each other. It is important to take note that Aarin did not have doubts at any moment and decided to speak to her parents. This exemplifies the close relationship they had, the education she received and the freedom of choice she was given in a quite closed-minded context. She first talked to her mother and then to her father, who went to his office to meet him: *They spoke around two hours and when he came back, he told me: 'he is a good person, I like him'. My husband didn't have a father. When he was in 7th grade his dad passed away, so it was very difficult for my mother-in-law back then. It was in 1993. She was a widow. So in 1993 it was very difficult for a woman to take care of three children without a father and it wasn't common. It wasn't common for a widow to go to work and fight for her three children. It was very difficult but my mother-in-law is a good person and she made it. So my father thought*

that he would have to take care of the family because my husband was the only one working and his two brothers were studying. It was difficult. I was studying too so my husband had to spend money on me as well. Three students at home. For that reason, my father had some doubts. But they figured it out. My mum and dad. My father knew that I liked him and he told me: 'well, no problem! If they can manage the situation, we don't have a problem'. Apart from that, my mother-in-law's husband was working in a bank and when he died, he left her money. She used that money for the food, the house. My husband was only paying for his studies. My mother-in-law also worked for many years. My mum and dad didn't know this when they went to meet them. We married after eight months.

The idea of marriage is completely different from the one in Western culture. Marriage is looked upon as an obligation and something that is decided within the family. Love is not as important as other factors such as behaviour, family status, education, economy, etc. In Aarin's case the norm of arranged marriage was not applied. After all, her family had more flexible viewpoints on the topic and they only wanted to see their daughter happy. In the previous quote we glimpse the obstacles that widows in South Asian countries face. Her mother-in-law was one of countless strong women who were able to rise from the ashes and run a family by themselves.

We asked Aarin what she liked the most when she met and came to know Guneet. She answered that she liked the fact that they were studying the same thing and that he would not stop her from fulfilling her dream, given the fact that fashion design sometimes requires to work during the night or involves communicating with men: *In the European countries and other countries, there is no difference if the woman works at night. But in the Muslim countries, in my country, it's not common. As a fashion designer, sometimes, you have to work with two men [...]. I had a dream to open a company or a shop so he had studied the same and in the future he wouldn't say: 'no, you can't do that'. I can go out alone, I can do things freely. It's the one thing I thought when I met him; we have studied the same so in the future, he will not give me problems.*

We believe that Aarin made a clever decision. Apart from liking her future husband, she was projecting into the future and could not see herself with a man who would not let her do what she loves to do.

After getting married, Aarin lived with her husband and his family in their house in Dhaka.

- ***Identity and Social Values***

The traditional attire, the saree, is something that is part of Aarin's identity as a Bangladeshi woman and she states that she wears it in the host country for special occasions such as weddings and holidays such as Eid or Ramadan. She started wearing a saree at the age of nine. In the past they were white and nowadays they are colourful.

We raised the question of how secure she felt as a woman in her country of origin and she says that she has never felt safe as a woman in Bangladesh: *No, no, no, no, no! If you go alone at night, you have to be at home before ten o'clock and you can't complain. It's impossible to be on the street during the night. This is just for girls, not for boys, especially in the village.*

She retold two incidents that confirm the fact that women's safety is at risk in her country of origin: *One night, when I was coming back from work, there was no space in the bus truck so I had to catch a rickshaw. I was scared, there was no light on the street. I was going to my cousin's house and I gave the address to the driver, but he didn't know the direction. I was alone in the rickshaw and there was one bar and four, five boys started shouting: 'I want the girl, I want her'. I got really scared and then I thought about why parents don't let their girls outside. I thought that I would never ever get back to work. I went down some metres away from the bar to ask directions and that's when they saw me and started saying: 'I want that girl, I want that girl, don't let her go'. I started running and I told the driver: 'go, fast, go fast'. Another day, they robbed me in the rickshaw. My bag. It happened after the wedding and I haven't told this to my husband because he warned me: 'don't go on that street, it's dangerous'. But the rickshaw driver didn't listen to me: 'don't worry, it's faster' and yes, I got robbed. I haven't said anything to my husband because he already told me not to go there and I went.*

She described another situation where she felt afraid for being a woman in her country of origin. Whenever she had to come back from work, Aarin was scared and did not feel comfortable. While working at the BBC, she had to go back at home alone and at night: *I had to take the bus and inside the bus, there are many men and fewer women. If I grab a cab, again, it's not safe. He can kidnap you. He can close the doors and you will have to go with him and they can take off your clothes, they can rob you or they can kidnap*

you and tell you: 'tell your mother to bring this amount of money and you are free', or they can rape you. So I was scared. If I take the bus, I'm in trouble. If I take the cab, I'm in trouble again.

For the first few months she did not say anything at work; but afterwards she did and they organised transport for her. However, the citation demonstrates the real picture of the situation of women who suffer problems like kidnapping, sexual violence or being robbed when they are going back home after work.

Finding a job in Bangladesh is difficult, as Aarin explains. The country still has corruption issues and the quality of life of its citizens is poor: *To search and find a job is very corrupt in Bangladesh. Now and before. For that reason, I was thinking that I would never be able to find a job. They publish the job offer in a newspaper and you go to the interview and they tell you that you are selected but you have to pay money to them. The corruption has increased. Now it's very, very difficult.*

Aarin explains that in her culture, having a relationship before marriage is still stigmatised and arranged marriages are a common practice. Girls in the rural areas marry when they are eighteen years old and in the urban areas after their twenties: *It depends on the family but when the girl is old enough to marry, she can tell the parents: 'no, I don't like this boy, I like another one' or 'I like another girl'. Now it's normal to marry when you are twenty-four, twenty-five, twenty-six. But in the past they used to say: 'no, she is so old, she is twenty-four, twenty-five'.*

The institution of marriage has a great significance in Bangladeshi society. The practice of arranged marriage is part of the culture. There have been some changes regarding the age of marriage. In the past, girls over twenty years old were considered old and the possibility of marrying was more difficult. Divorce is permitted and men do not have any difficulty remarrying, while in the case of girls it is more complicated. Polygamy is allowed in Bangladesh: *The religion allows polygamy. If the boy marries again, he has to tell his first wife. If the wife doesn't agree, he can't marry and then, if you marry for a second or third time, you have to be equal with all your wives. You have to tell them that you are going to marry again but who will allow this? No one. Men can marry two or three women but women cannot.*

It appears that the justification behind polygamous marriages is religion. Religion in Bangladesh allows this and men take advantage of a privilege that is harmful for women.

Even if Aarin says that it is something that the first wife has to approve, this circumstance positions women in a situation of subordination in the face of men's dominance that they probably consider their right.

We asked Aarin to describe herself in one to three words before migration. She did not say one to three words but a whole sentence, from which we can deduce that before migration she was a girl who was very attached to her family and the family was the pillar of her life. Later on, when we were discussing migration, she said that before migration she was a good girl, very emotional and calm.

7.6.2. THE MIGRATORY PROCESS

- *Decisions for Migration*

Aarin had never ever thought of living in a foreign country. Her husband did have a dream to leave Bangladesh and aimed at a better livelihood: *I never thought of it. He had a dream to go to a foreign country. My dream was to open a shop once I finished my studies. I saw myself in my country after my studies.*

She had never traveled outside Bangladesh while her husband had traveled to Europe because of his job. When Guneet proposed to her to go to Europe, she had to sacrifice her dream because the family did not contemplate that she would stay in Bangladesh while Guneet went to Europe: *My mother-in-law is a very good person so she told me: 'what are we going to do? It's not okay that you stay here. If he goes, you will have to go too'.*

At first she did not want to go. She had many doubts and fears related to the language, the job, the culture, etc: *I didn't know a thing because for other countries like Canada, Australia, you need a language certificate. But I didn't have a clue about Spain. I knew that the official language was Spanish.*

However, the situation in Bangladesh was very complicated, especially the working conditions. This was one of the main reasons for leaving their country: *[...] the job situation in any sector is very difficult and there is a lot of corruption. The government steals a lot. Now I think that we took the right decision to migrate four years ago because the problem is not only the employment, the money. People are feeling so insecure. At any moment the police may come or any other person to kill you. In the past, if you did*

something wrong, the police used to come to warn you or take to prison. But now they kill you outright. You can't say anything, you can't make decisions for yourself.

Apart from the employment issue, Aarin states that the government did not guarantee the basic human rights of its citizens and that they were living in fear. She was worried for her son as well: *[...] you can't take a decision for yourself, for your son either, that's the problem! So when I think about that now, I know that I took the right decision four years ago.*

Despite all the difficulties, Aarin is convinced that she did not make a mistake when they decided to leave their country of origin.

In 2013, Guneet visited Madrid for work with his boss from the company in Bangladesh. They were planning to do business with someone who was living in the Spanish. However, they never thought of migrating to Spain. They were actually trying to get a visa for Australia: *[...] we applied for Australia but we had to wait for more than two years. Apart from that, the response may have been positive or negative. We weren't sure. So when my husband went to Madrid with his boss, he stayed there a week and when he came back he told me: 'well, we've applied for Australia but things are quite difficult' and eight months had already passed. In 2013, the work situation was very tough in the textile industry and that's why he thought: 'I've already been there so I will apply for a tourist visa and if they give me the visa then, I'll go with my family. It was very difficult but he was already thinking about leaving the country [...].*

We can see that the main reason for leaving Bangladesh was the search for a more dignified life. The employment situation in Bangladesh was getting worse and they were trying to find a way to leave the country. They are non-European citizens, which automatically positions them in a situation of disadvantage. Guneet decided to apply for a tourist visa: *We applied for a tourist visa in June. As he already had been in Europe, they gave him the visa without any problem, but when we arrived in Madrid, the first two months were very difficult.*

- ***Life in the New Society***

Aarin and her family migrated from Bangladesh in July 2014. They spent two months in Madrid and in September that year they came to the BC. They had a contact in Madrid who was supposed to help them but he didn't reply accordingly: *Robert didn't pick up the phone and he didn't reply to emails. As we were already here and we spent our money to*

come here, we lived with a woman from my country. They had been living in Madrid for a long time and they offered for us to stay with them: 'stay with us, you don't have to rent another room and spend more money'. We stayed with her two months and we only payed for food and bills.

The first difficulty they faced was that they were left on their own when they were expecting for help in a country that was completely unknown to them. Things therefore did not go as they had hoped. They had to adapt and share a room with another couple from Bangladesh. The next difficulty they confronted was their legal status in the host country. After the tourist visa expired, they were in an illegal situation and this was reflected when Aarin had to take her son to the hospital and she did not have a healthcare card: *We had to take my son to the hospital in Madrid and we had to pay a lot of money because we were in an illegal situation.*

The migrant community from non-European countries does not enjoy the same rights as migrants from EU countries. Being an illegal person is even more vulnerable and harms the integrity and dignity of the person. After two months in Madrid, they decided to move to the BC because they discovered that there was a small Bangladeshi community in Bilbao: *The situation is very difficult, very difficult because you have one thing in your mind and when you go to the place, the situation is completely different or nothing works out.*

One of those things was the flat where they were about to live. They had to rent the flat by telephone because they were living in Madrid. Thus, they only saw their new house in pictures and, in reality, it was not as she expected: *The house was dark and I couldn't see anything. I don't like houses where the sun doesn't enter at all. There was only one window from which the sun came in and I had to have the light on all day long, in the living room and in the kitchen. I didn't like the house, but we couldn't leave it because we had already paid the money and we had a one-year contract. We are still here, after four years, because to change the flat is costly, more than 2000 euros. So, I will stay here and I haven't had the opportunity to change houses because I can't find a job. If a job opportunity appears in a different place, for example, in Bilbao, I would change. But now that's not the case. It doesn't make any sense to spend more than 2000 euros just because the house is dark. I don't want to.*

We have caught a glimpse of Aarin's character and we have come to the conclusion that she was able to adapt to circumstances that were not pleasant to her. To live in a pleasant environment makes a person feel good and experience their home as a lovely place to spend their time; but in this case, she did not have any choice other than to adapt to the situation. Apart from being able to adapt, she demonstrates the character of a reasonable and mature woman.

Aarin and her family, are the first family from Bangladesh in Eibar. Hence, one of the difficulties they encountered was not being able to express themselves in Spanish and the native people's lack of knowledge of English. Apart from that, there were no people from Bangladesh to help them or to speak to them in Bengali. She reflected on her first weeks in the BC: *It was very difficult, very difficult because the first thing was that I couldn't speak and you can't go everywhere with a mobile phone. Someone tells you something and you take out the phone and you translate. It's impossible. And at first, when I was going out, I didn't know the streets. I didn't have Internet on my phone, only at home.*

Given the fact that both Aarin and Guneet were unemployed, they were obliged to apply for a government grant. Their life was filled with insecurity because they did not know if they would be granted help: *[...] the worker from Social Security told us that we could apply after six months living in the BC [...]. We did not have enough money to live and in the end we had to ask for money five, six times.*

The two of them are working in the informal sector: *No, it's not with a contract. One day per month, sometimes two times a week, sometimes there is no job for two months. I know many people and I ask them: 'do you have a job for me? Do you know somebody who could give me a job with a contract?' So you speak to them and they usually tell you 'it's difficult but let's see if I can help you'. Sometimes they call me, if they have a party at home and I clean and they pay me for the hours I work.*

We are standing face to face with a woman with a Master's Degree who works in low-skilled jobs due to the fact that she does not have a residence permit in the host country. Not having the permit means having fewer or zero opportunities to find a qualified job given the fact that employers recruit workers who already have permission to reside and work in the country. The lack of a permit brings with it even more problems, as we can see in the next citation: *I don't have a residence permit yet so I can't validate my certificates, my degrees. That's my problem. I don't have papers. For example, my*

teacher knows that I have studied but at the interview they are not going to believe that you have a degree. They have doubts. And one more thing of course, I don't know when we are going to have the papers; it might be this month, it might be in one year. We are waiting. After we get the permit I will have to wait one more year to validate my degree. So, it's two more years. So I saw that all workers need to have a secondary school education and I have enrolled myself at the Adult Education Centre this September. There is one teacher who has known me since 2014 because I was learning Spanish at the centre and then I continued with Maider in 2015. So I used to come here in the morning and I would go to the centre in the afternoon. In 2015 I didn't continue in the Adult Education Centre with Maider just because I like it here more. The teacher already knew me because I was learning Spanish with her, and maths. She knew me and she told me that I didn't have to study at secondary education level again because I have a higher title than that. But I told her that I would need more than two years to validate my degrees and that it would be better for me to study here. The title would be recognised.

We recognise that the lack of legal status in the host country is the major hindrance to the improvement of Aarin's wellbeing in the BC. She is not able to find a job because she does not have a residence card and her degree is not recognised as valid. She cannot even apply for the validation because in practical terms she does not exist in the system. It appears that the barriers are interconnected and she is not able to escape the vicious cycle of injustice. Nevertheless, she has decided to enroll in an Adult Education Centre to gain time. Here enters the institutional bureaucracy and the long process of title validation. Thus, even though Aarin has Master's Degree, she started studying at secondary level again, with the hope that her life and the life of her family would improve. Our participant is eager to find a stable job and she is hoping that her husband can too, because both of them are highly qualified: *Of course, of course, of course. For example, in my country I was working for more than two years in the BBC and my husband was working seven years in one factory and he is highly qualified as well. So I suffer but my husband suffers more because he has eight years' experience. The first thing is that I don't have papers here. Even if I had them, I haven't studied here. In the countries where English is the official language it is easier to validate the title. You can change your MBA points and here it's impossible [...].*

Apart from the validation of the degree, she says that the type of jobs she could aspire to now are low-skilled jobs: *At first, they don't give you a first-class job. Jobs like cleaning,*

I have only had one so it's difficult. Now we have the grant [...]. If I find a job with a salary of 2000 euros we would not have any problem. But who is going to pay that amount if it's your first job? The low-skilled jobs like waitress or cleaning or caregiver have a salary of no more than 1000 euros, so we will have to suffer again once we have the papers.

Aarin explains that she was obliged to search for a job such as caregiving or the cleaning service in the BC: *I'm looking for a job with children, cleaning. In my country, I had never thought of looking for a job in the cleaning sector because I'm highly educated, but here, I had to adapt because I don't have a choice.*

Due to the fact that she and Guneet struggle to find a job in such a small place as Eibar, they have contemplated moving to Bilbao. Bilbao is bigger city and the tourism sector is more developed. However, they would confront another obstacle: finding an apartment: *We were thinking about changing cities because Eibar is very small and we don't have many chances of finding something. Bilbao, Vitoria, San Sebastian, are bigger. There are English-speaking tourists and more possibilities. There are bars for the tourists. One thing, in Bilbao, they don't want to rent you a house if you don't have a job, if you don't have a salary, because they want you to have a permanent contract, a salary. So they don't want to. The estate agent doesn't want to and the owner either. I'm looking for jobs all day long on the Internet, but nothing. If they call me and I tell them that I live in Eibar, they don't want me because I will have to go to Bilbao every day.*

It seems that they are at a standstill and do not know what the right path is to take in order to improve their welfare. Even if they want to change their place of residence and move to a city with more possibilities for working, they encounter difficulties with finding a place to live.

Despite all the difficulties, Aarin finds the strength to say that now they are fine: *So many problems but well...we are okay. We don't only suffer because we don't have the residence card, but also because we can't find a job. Before we were living one family in one room but now that's impossible, I need a bigger house. I can't live with another family [...].*

An additional disadvantage of the current situation is that their daughter was born in the host country and she has the right to apply for the Spanish citizenship, but they are not able to start the procedure because of their status in the host country: *Yes but I can't apply*

for her citizenship because I don't have the papers. When we have the residence card, yes, she automatically gets Spanish citizenship.

It was inevitable to ask Aarin if she had felt discriminated against in some way in the host country. She said yes and that she feels this is due to the use of the hijab: *Definitely yes! When I was 7 months pregnant, I had diabetes and I had to buy some medicine from the pharmacy. I went there in the afternoon and the lady working was an older one. I didn't know how to ask her because I didn't speak Spanish. I couldn't explain it to her. She asked me what I needed and I gave her the receipt. She told me that I had to come back again because they didn't have what I needed but I didn't understand her. I told her that I didn't understand Spanish very well and I asked her if there was someone who spoke English. She replied: 'nobody speaks English here, you are supposed to know Spanish!'. I started crying and I was asking myself: 'why me?! Because I wear the hijab? Or because I'm a Muslim woman?! Everywhere in the world, the international language is English. She is a health worker and she didn't know a single word of English. Is that possible? Hasn't she studied? Why? Because I'm Muslim? I know that it's my fault not being able to speak in Spanish [...]. She told me directly: 'no, you have to know Spanish, I'm not supposed to look for another person to translate for you'. One of her colleagues came. He saw that I was crying and he asked me what happened. I told him that I didn't understand Spanish and I told him what I needed and he gave it to me.*

We see Aarin in a situation of powerlessness because of the language barrier that did not allow her to defend herself to the health worker, who probably judged her because of her racial characteristics, her dress and her limited Spanish. We consider that this type of conduct is inappropriate for a worker in an institution that exists for improving the health of the country's citizens. Aarin also criticises the fact that a worker in a high-skilled job does not have a basic level of English.

In other situations, like during job interviews, Aarin has felt pressured not to wear her hijab: *When I go to a job interview, they ask me: 'Can you remove the hijab?' I tell them: 'yes, if there are only women in the house or the shop, no problem. I have a problem with men because it's my religion so don't make me do that. I don't have any problem removing it if I'm with women. Men are the problem because I'm a woman, a Bangladeshi woman. Every person has the right to live their religion.*

Aarin identifies herself with the Muslim religion and, according to its norms, she ought to wear a hijab if she is in contact with men. We are not going to judge her religion or her belief system, but we would like to note that it seems that native people are acting with a degree of a Eurocentric behaviour. They are convinced that their value system is the norm and everyone ought to follow that system.

- ***Inclusion and Facilitating Factors***

After the hard time spent in Madrid, Aarin and Guneet talked to a friend who was living in Bilbao and discovered that there were people from Bangladesh in the BC. He also told them that the Basque Government offers some facilities to unemployed citizens, the Income Guarantee Tax. Guneet went to Bilbao to receive some information about the facility because their friend did not know the conditions and eligibility for the grant. The first thing they had to do was to register at the records office. For that reason, they had to rent a flat. They decided to search for a flat in Eibar, a city in the Basque Province of Gipuzkoa, because they were told that there it would be easier for the grant to be approved: *We had to rent a house and after six months you can apply for the grant. Thank goodness, this thing workd out because I was not able to think [...]. We were lucky to find a flat. The lady from the estate agency told us that she would have to speak to the boss to see if they would rent the flat to foreigners. We had money for four or five months and we were lucky because the owner of the flat agreed [...].*

There is the misbelief that the migrant community takes advantage of the grants given by the government and do not want to work. One of the facilitating factors was the contact network they had in the BC, because without it they would not have had the possibility to apply for the Income Tax Rate.

As Aarin said previously, they were the first family from Bangladesh in Eibar and they did not meet people speaking Bengali. Luckily, there were a few families from Nepal and they could understand each other because she speaks Hindi: *[...] we talked to them for the doctor, the shops, etc. They helped us a lot. One day, we had to go to the doctor with my son and the doctor, she didn't know English, but our friend helped me and talked to her in Spanish.*

The educational system and health care are two of the things Aarin appreciates the most in the host country: *I don't have to spend money on education. My son is studying here. Both of my children are studying and I don't have to spend money, only sometimes if I*

have to buy them some book but not there! You have to spend money on education and health. It is more expensive than here. If you want to make an appointment, they would tell you: 'no, there isn't, come back in a month'. But you say that it is urgent and then, they will tell you: 'I'll give you the appointment but you should give me this amount of money'. So, you go to the doctor and they tell you that they don't have a date for you but if you pay, they attend to you immediately. Here it's not like that. I don't have to spend money on education or the health service.

The above citation illustrates that the level of corruption in institutions is high in Bangladesh. It looks as if the services were made for those who are able to pay while the middle-class and lower-class citizens have to struggle, whether for education or for health care.

In the previous section, Aarin told us that the language barrier was one of the greatest difficulties she had to confront in the host country. Nevertheless, she decided to study the language. First, she went to the Adult Education Centre but the deadline was already closed so she had to wait until the next year. However, she did not discourage herself but started studying Spanish at home for a year: *For one year I was studying at home with my mobile phone. I was translating, translaing and translating. First, the more common things like the days of the week, the months, food [...]. Then, I downloaded an app and I've learned so much from that app. I learned alone. That's why I think that I learned faster. I've seen people from my country who live here twenty years, ten years, the women who live in Bilbao, they still don't know. And why is this? Because they don't go to school. When they have a problem, they speak in Bengali among themselves. They don't speak in Spanish.*

Persistence and the willpower allowed Aarin to learn a language starting from zero. She observes that other women from Bangladesh have difficulty learning Spanish because, apart from not going to school, they are surrounded by Bengali speakers and they don't use the language of the host country. In her case, she was not in touch with women from her country in Eibar.

- ***Significance of the Culture of Origin in the New Society***

Aarin comes from an extroverted society, as she herself says. She feels that the people of the host country are reserved and introverted and she misses the warmth of her people: *People are different. The culture is different. Everything is different. Here. We are six*

neighbours and we only say “hi” or “goodbye”, “how are you?”, In my country they used to come to our house and they brought food. It was like a family. We were neighbours but it looked as if we were a family. Here, it’s not like that. As I told you, we are the first family from Bangladesh here so we don’t have anybody to talk to in Bengali. The girls from Nepal live in the centre. Here, there is nobody. People are not that extroverted and they don’t want to be. There are six families in our flat and three of them live alone. They don’t have anybody and they don’t want people to visit them or ask them questions but it’s cultural. In my country, a man never lives alone, he lives with the family. It’s different but the people are very nice even if they are introverted.

The family is of great value in Bangladeshi society. Aarin says that she was not used to so much individualism and that she was surprised that people live alone because in her country that is not a common practice.

- ***Motherhood and Relationship of the Couple***

Aarin has two children. Her son Jai was born in Bangladesh in 2011 and her daughter Krisha was born in the host country in 2014. The second pregnancy was not planned, it was by accident, but they decided to keep the baby. Her life has changed with the birth of their children. She does not have as much free time as before and when she happens to have it, she spends it with Jai and Krisha: *We were enjoying the weekends a lot but now it’s impossible. It is possible with the kids, but it’s not the same.*

With respect to the responsibilities with the children, Aarin says that when they were in Bangladesh she was the one who took care of the upbringing of their son; but in the BC the situation has changed: *My husband was working in my country and he didn’t know how to take care of a baby and that was expected because in my country women take care of the children, not the men, the husbands. From a very early stage they see that their mother, their sister or their aunt were taking care of them. The uncles or the fathers didn’t do that. When we arrived here, my husband didn’t know how to change a diaper, how to feed him, how to bathe him. When I was pregnant I got sick. It lasted around two or three months so my husband, step by step, he had to take care of our son, he had to prepare the food and everything went fine. After six months, he already knew to prepare the food, to change a diaper, to bathe our son, everything. Before, he didn’t want to do it and he didn’t know how to do it.*

Guneet did not feel the need to learn to change his son's diapers, to feed him or to bathe him because there was Aarin to take care of those responsibilities. However, in the host country, the roles have changed, or at least he had to accept the fact that he would have to learn the basics because his wife was sick and there was no one else who could substitute for her.

We asked Aarin how she raises her children and if the upbringing is different from the upbringing her mother and her father gave her. She said the following: *Of course, of course! They live in Spain and I have to raise them according to the norms here, not like there.*

- ***Free Time***

We did not spend time talking about leisure during the conversations. Aarin briefly told us that whenever she has free time, she tries to spend that time with her children or searching for a job.

- ***Remodeling of Values***

Aarin states that the problem in Bangladesh is the way boys and girls are raised. Boys are raised to work and be responsible for the finances and girls to do the domestic chores. In the host country, she has seen a new model where the couple cooperates: *In my country no. Men go to work, they bring the money and that's it. Sometimes, they spend some time with the children during the weekend or after going to bed. My father also. Why? It's culture. There, it's normal but here no. We both have to take care of them. My husband was saying that he didn't know how but it's a normal thing. He has to assume the responsibility and that's it!*

Another thing that Aarin observed and started to believe in is the possibility to live in a more equal society: *Here, there is freedom between men and women. In my country no.* In terms of liberty, she feels as a woman after migration she exemplifies the fact that in Bangladesh, a pregnant woman cannot walk freely in the street, something that she has done and enjoyed doing in the host country: *In my country, it is shameful for a pregnant woman to roam around with her stomach. So women try not to go out so often, they put more clothes on so that people don't notice that they are pregnant. If she is walking, they would say: 'where are you going with that stomach?'. If you walk with your husband you can't hold hands, you can't kiss him. In my country, Oh my god! Here, these are normal*

things. Here, you are free to do whatever you want and there you can only desire and you are not free. Here, you can work, you can laugh, you can kiss, no problem. All these things are changing in my country but not everywhere, only in the city, in the Capital or the big cities. Women can't work the same jobs as men. They have to work in lower-skilled jobs. Here, it's not like that. If you have an opportunity, you go and work.

The citation exemplifies the everyday struggles of Bangladeshi women and the transformation Aarin underwent with migration. She did not feel ashamed to walk down the street when she was pregnant and she did not feel the need to cover herself so that people would not notice the pregnancy. She can hold her husband's hand and she can kiss him. She can work without having to justify herself for wanting to advance her professional career. The decision to migrate to the BC was the right decision: *It's better that I've left Bangladesh because before the wedding, in 2009, he had already traveled outside Asia but not me. When you go abroad, you can feel the difference between the countries, the difference between the cultures, which place is better to live. If you haven't studied it's okay to live in Bangladesh; but when you know better, it's impossible.*

Migration has opened new views and has given new perspectives to Aarin. She has familiarised herself with a new culture, a new country, new customs and this would not have been possible if they hadn't take the decision to migrate. The relocation has given her the possibility to choose what is better for her future. The last phrase of the citation above illustrates the fact that not everyone is lucky enough to study in Bangladesh and to aspire for a better future.

We were interested to know whether Aarin would make her daughter wear a hijab or she would let her make her own choice. The response was: *If she wants, yes. If she doesn't want, I can't force her. My country is a Muslim country but not every girl wears the hijab because the culture is mixed. It depends on the father, the family. The upbringing doesn't just depend on the family but on the surroundings. I will teach her the values, but it will depend on her. If she wants to, fine. If she doesn't want to, that's also fine. I can't do anything.*

Aarin's daughter is the second generation of the family in the host country. Actually, she was born in the BC and her mother is conscious of the context in which her daughter is being brought up. Thus, she would not force her to wear a hijab.

We asked Aarin to describe herself as a migrated woman in the BC. As a reminder, she said that before migration, she had a strong bond with her family. She saw herself as a good and sensitive girl. After migration, Aarin perceives herself as a strong and practical woman, not a girl anymore. Overall, she is satisfied: *I'm happy, happier than before. Sometimes, I'm very sensitive but I'm happy.*

7.6.3. TRANSFORMATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT

- ***Migration as an Instrument for Personal Growth and as an Empowering Mechanism***

We kindly asked Aarin to reflect on how she perceived herself before coming to the BC and how she sees herself now, as a migrant woman. The answer was the following citation: *A pretty girl, a good girl, very sensitive, calm. Now I'm tough, more practical. It's because I've changed places, I've changed decisions, I've changed cultures, the people around me. It's not like in my country.*

Migration has made Aarin stronger and capable of taking decisions for the improvement of her and her family's life. In Bangladesh, she was a girl and in the BC she is strong and decisive woman who fights for a better tomorrow.

She told us that she feels freer now, after migration. We asked her to specify in which ways she feels that freedom: *For going out and at home as well. There, I was living with my husband's family. I was living with my mother-in-law, my husband's brothers. Then, I can wear a T-shirt and shorts but in Bangladesh no because other people were living with us. At home, I can make any decision by myself. I can watch whatever I want on TV. I can dress in whatever I want, I can eat whatever I want.*

The personal empowerment that Aarin developed after migrating is related to her everyday life as a woman. Now, she is able to go out freely without having to give an explanation to anyone. In addition, she does not live in a joint family, which gives her the chance to dress as she wants and to make her own decision without havin to justify herself in front of the family.

- ***Alliances among Women and Networking as a Sustenance Agent***

Aarin started going to the “Andretxea” to learn the Spanish language. She first heard about Maider, the girl who works there, through one of her friends from Nepal who told her that there was a Basque girl that was teaching migrant women to speak Spanish at home: *Maider started teaching Spanish language in her home. A girl from Nepal told me that they were going to give classes of Spanish for free. This was in 2014 [...]. Maider gives equality training to migrant women. Before, they were women from Nepal, now there are women from Morocco, me, myself from Bangladesh, one girl from Senegal and two girls from China.*

The participation in this group of women has helped Aarin to ameliorate her communicative abilities and to create a relationship of sisterhood with girls from different backgrounds. Apart from the work with the women from the Association, she has built a relationship of trust with her neighbour Ana: *My neighbor Ana treated me so nicely when I didn't know a thing. When I was pregnant, she told me that if I needed anything, any kind of emergency, I should call her, I should knock her door. I didn't feel comfortable because she was working and I didn't want to bother her but the day I gave birth, I started feeling so much pain. I called her in the morning and she called her workplace to tell them that she had an emergency and she couldn't go. She stayed with me until the evening and then another friend came because my husband couldn't stay at the hospital. The next day, she came back again. She has helped me a lot. For example, if I'm looking for a job and I need recommendation letters, I have one from my neighbour and another one from Maider.*

In addition to the alliances with migrant women from “Andretxea”, Aarin finds support in Basque women, as in the case with her neighbour Ana who has treated her as part of her own family. Thus, sisterhood not only exists among migrant women but also between migrant and native women.

Aarin is trying to help other migrant women with issues she struggled with when she came for the first time to the BC. As she herself explains, she did not have any support network to guide her or to give her the right information, and that is why she is eager to assist these women and to motivate them to learn Spanish: *When new people come, I help them because when I came here, nobody told me where I could learn Spanish, nobody*

told me that there was EPA and nobody told me that I could start a course. I have one friend in Bilbao and she didn't go to school and she came here before me. I asked her why that is and she makes excuses. When she has to go to the doctor or do the shopping, her husband goes with her. So, I have encouraged her to go because she is till on time. If she waits more, it would be worse. There is also one girl who came here with her son and her husband. I told her that she has to learn. I recommended Maider. It's better than the Adult Education Centre. I go with her when she goes to the doctor because she doesn't speak Spanish and she needs some help. If somebody is suffering, I will help them.

The citation illustrates how Aarin managed to become a role model for other migrant women in the BC. She is inspired by the difficulties she and her family went through and always tries to lend a helping hand to those in need. That is how the sisterly connection grows bigger and the roots grow stronger.

CHART 12. Summary of Aarin 's Experience of Life

NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	STUDIES	MARITAL STATUS	MIGRATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Aarin	Dhaka, Bangladesh	30	Master's Degree Bachelor's Degree	Married	2014	Unemployed
VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man-centred society • Joint family • Pressure on women • Women's voice unheard • Women as property • Arranged marriage • Different educational practices for girls and boys 						

- Islam
- Hijab
- Inculcation of religious values in early childhood
- Restrictions on women
- Polygamy
- Sex as a taboo
- Women – private sector; Men – public sector
- Corruption
- Precarious working conditions
- Lack of security for women and children

MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE

OBSTACLES

- Legal status in the BC
- Discrimination
- Lack of awareness by institutions
- Lack of family support
- Language barrier
- Diploma recognition
- Unemployment
- Lower skilled jobs without contracts
- Difference in lifestyle

FACILITATING FACTORS AND INCLUSION

- Motivation to learn the language of the host country
- Friendships and network
- Couple cooperation

REMODELLING OF VALUES

- The role of women
- Education of son and daughter
- Freedom of choice about the hijab
- No shame to walk freely in the street when pregnant

- **Freedome to hug or kiss in public space**
- **Motherhood and fatherhood**

EMPOWERMENT

- **Capacity to express herself in Spanish language**
- **Problem-solving capacities**
- **Persistence and endurance**
- **Freedom of choice**
- **Self-esteem**
- **Self-reliance**
- **Self-sufficieny**
- **Decision-making capacity**
- **Strong**
- **Role model for other women**
- **Creation of friendships and networks**

Source: Prepared by the author

7.7. MANASVI

We contacted Manasvi through one association, whose aim is to contribute to the creation of an equal society free from violence against women. We first met near her house and the conversation was informal. We explained to her what the aim of the study was and we asked her if she would be interested in participating. The answer was positive and she preferred to do the interviews at her home. We also proposed her to share some pictures of her family and her wedding day, but she refused. We understood that she did not feel comfortable and we did not insist.

As we said previously, we met near her home in the Bizkaian town of Getxo. She welcomed us in her home and we felt comfortable in her home, which was decorated with decorations from her country. It is a colourful place full of the smell of masala. The distrust she transmitted the first day we met was gone and she was willing to show us pictures of her wedding and her family.

Manasvi is 32 years old. She was born in Solukhumbu, a small village near Mount Everest. When she was a child, her family migrated to the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu in search of a job. She has two older brothers and she has finished her secondary education. After that, she worked as a pre-school teacher. Before her migration to the BC, she lived in Germany. Manasvi's family consists of her husband Abishek and their son Neer, born in the BC. They migrated from Germany to the BC in 2010. They live in Getxo, a town in the Basque Province Bizkaia. She is currently working as a child minder.

Her mother tongue is Nepali, formerly known as Khas – Khura or Gorkhali. Spanish was used as the means of communication and we did not face any serious difficulties of comprehension during the conversations. She was the most reserved participant of all. We would have preferred to discover more but the ethics of the researcher and the nature of qualitative research methodology do not coincide with forced behaviour. Thus, we followed the rhythm of our interviewee.

The name Manasvi means “intelligent” in Sanskrit.

7.7.1. THE EXPERIENCE OF LIFE IN THE COUNTRY OF ORIGIN

FAMILY ORIGIN AND VALUES

Manasvi was born in Solukhumbu in Eastern Nepal and when she was a child her family moved to the capital city of Nepal, Kathmandu. Her family moved to Kathmandu in search of work. The probability of finding a job in the city was greater than in a small village. She has two brothers and good memories from her childhood when she learned to value the small things in life and to be humble: *I was very happy even though we didn't have a lot of money. We were pleased and satisfied.*

She had a good relationship with both of her parents but she was more connected to her father: *My father travelled a lot and it was our mother who took care of us. He used to go to work in a different place, one month or two months and then, he came home to see us. My mother was very independent. She wanted to do everything by herself and even if she needed help, she didn't ask for it. She wanted to do it on her own. When my father left for the work she used to take care of us. She was at home and we used to have a small restaurant, a hotel and she was in charge of managing it. Almost everything. And we helped her.*

In her family, both her parents worked outside the home. Her father had to sacrifice and leave them for several months of the year in order to earn more money and her mother was responsible for the upbringing of the children, the domestic chores and the management of the family business.

As a young girl, Manasvi did not go out very often. She spent her time going to school and helping her mother with the hotel: *I didn't go out. Maybe with the family, but no, because we had the hotel. After school, I did my homework and then I helped my mother. I didn't have time to go out and we didn't have parties like here.*

Being a young adult in Nepal was very different from what Manasvi has experienced after migration. She spent most of her free time helping her mother.

- **Roles**

As she was brought up in a family with two brothers, we asked her if there was a difference in their upbringing and duties during childhood. Manasvi explains that her culture is a man-centred culture and girls have more household responsibilities than boys. However, in her home the responsibilities were divided among her and her brothers: *In our culture, usually the girls work at home. Girls work a lot at home and not boys, but in my family it was not like that. In my house, we worked all together. You have to help. Ever since we were children, we have helped our parents.*

Manasvi did not give any additional information on why, in her family, the domestic tasks were divided among each of the members of the family while in Nepal it was common practice to see women working at home and men working outside the home. It was her mother who was in charge of the domestic chores and she did not differentiate between boys and girls: *If my mother gives us the order, we have to do it. There is no excuse that this is only for girls.*

She explains that she and her brothers were taught from early childhood how to manage the domestic chores: *[...] when I was seven, eight years old, I was coming after school and my mother was teaching us how to cook, how to clean the house, everything. They teach us since childhood independently of being a boy or a girl because boys have to know how to do the things.*

Manasvi recognises that she was brought up with the mentality of marked gender roles: *We have the mentality that it is the father who has to work a lot, He has to earn money, bring that money back home and feed us.*

The socially assigned gender roles manifested in childhood games also. She mentioned with laughter that she was like a boy as a child: *I was like a boy and I didn't care. My mother used to tell me: 'don't play with these things' but I was a child and I didn't listen to her. We didn't have mobile phones like now or many other things. We played marbles and this was a typical game for boys but I played a lot! My mother used to get angry because we played far away from home. I also rode a bike, which again was typical for boys [...]. I was like a boy when I was a child. I had short hair and I hated long hair.*

When a girl behaves in a manner that is considered to be boy's behaviour, she may be scolded or it is believed that she is not behaving in accordance with the norms of how a girl is supposed to be. On several occasions Manasvi stated that she was like a boy. Why is this? Is this because she found the games that boys usually play more interesting? Or maybe because she found long hair uncomfortable and preferred having a more practical haircut?

- ***Education and Work Experience***

Manasvi's parents were uneducated and, for that reason, they insisted on their children studying. They did not want their children to suffer as they had: *It was very important. You know why? Because my parents didn't study. They faced many difficulties without an education and that's why they were always telling us: 'read, study, study, study, study'.*

Manasvi finished her secondary education and decided not to continue with her studies. As she herself explained, she has always had a working mentality, because she had to help her family and did not think of higher education: *[...] in the end, I worked a lot because I needed a salary. I have a money-earning mindset, that's why I didn't continue with my studies. I had to work a lot and I couldn't concentrate on both things. I stopped studying and I started working. I worked as a pre-school teacher and as a receptionist there.*

- ***Traditions of the Culture of Origin***

In relation to the traditions of her country of origin, Manasvi said that they celebrate holidays that belong to other religions, not only to the Buddhist tradition. In fact, her

favourite holidays are part of the Hindu tradition: *It's not from our culture. Holi. I miss this festival so much. It's not part of our culture, it's Hinduism, but we celebrate it. We celebrate all the holidays in our country. Holi, Dasain...Dasain is not our holiday either. I love especially Holi and Tihar. Tihar worships the God. There is a holiday of the dog, holiday of the cow. They protect our homes and the cow is like the mother. That's why in Nepal, we don't eat cow. It's not allowed.*

- **Religion**

Manasvi is a follower of Buddhism. In Nepal religion is diverse and the majority religion is Hinduism. Apart from these two religions, Islam, Kiratism, Christianity, Sikhism and Jainism are among the religions of Nepal. We asked Manasvi to explain the principle values of Buddhism and the meaning of her religion to her, and she replied with the following:

I'm not very good at explaining religion. I don't care if people are from a different religion from my own because I've lived in a community, all of us together. I was going to monasteries and temples too. For me, everything is the same, Buddhism, Hinduism. There are different principles but I go both to monasteries and temples.

Manasvi says that marriages between different religions are not accepted. If the couple decides to be together despite all the odds, they may suffer the refusal of their families: *For example, I'm a Buddhist and I can't marry a Hindu. You can do it now but it's difficult. If you marry someone from a different religion, the family would not accept you. You can't go back home anymore, you can't talk to them anymore. We have had this mentality forever.*

During our conversation about religion, Manasvi showed us a small bowl that they use for morning prayer: *It's for praying. We fill the bowl with water and we take out the water in the afternoon and then we light the incense.*

Women in Nepal are not allowed to touch God, in this case Buddha, when they are menstruating.

- **Caste**

Our participant explains that the caste system forms a very important feature of Nepalese society and that many social injustices are based on the caste division: *In my country,*

people who sew clothes, tailors, shoemakers, belong to very low castes and if you go to a village and you want to have a glass of water, they can't give it to you because it is considered to be bad.

In addition, marrying a person from a caste lower than your own is not permitted. She does not agree with the values of the caste system and she claims that during her upbringing she did not give significant importance to the caste division. This was due to the fact that they had their family hotel and she had the opportunity to meet people from different backgrounds: *Where we lived, in the city, we didn't give so much importance to caste. As we had the hotel, all types of people came and we couldn't tell them: 'you can't sit here because of your caste'. We had a good relationship with all the people even if their caste was lower. We didn't ask them 'what is your surname?'*

- ***Marriage***

Before marrying her husband, Manasvi had two boyfriends from different cultures, as she explained. This was an unusual and rebellious behaviour for a Nepalese Buddhist girl back then. Her mother discovered the relationships and she had to end all contact with the boys. The name of her husband is Abishek. They met in Nepal and married there before migrating. Unlike many marriages in Nepal, her marriage was not arranged but was a love marriage: *We fell in love and then, I told him to ask for my hand, to speak with my brothers and my father, and they said 'yes'.*

- ***Identity and Social Values***

In Nepal, girls do not have the same freedoms that boys enjoy. For example, going out at night, apart from being unsafe for women, is considered as inappropriate: *If a girl comes home late at night, not only the parents but the neighbours will start talking: 'your daughter has been out so late'. When boys go out, there is no problem. [...] in my country, there is the mentality that if a girl goes to a disco, she's a bad girl.*

Manasvi explains that women do not have sufficient independence to travel alone in Nepal: *It's difficult if you want to go alone. You can go in a group with schoolmates or with your family but if you want to go alone with friends, you have to lie. Nobody would say: 'mum, I'm going to travel with friends'.*

In the same way, having relationships before marriage is not permitted: *You can have a boyfriend but you can't tell anyone. Your parents have to approve the relationship first. They have to talk with him first and then they give you permission.*

While we were talking about marriage and religion, Manasvi gave us the upsetting information that in some religions in Nepal wife beating is not punishable. She did not specify the religions. Here is the citation: *In our culture, in my country, there are different religions and in some of them men, beat their wives. The woman tolerates it.*

In addition, men can divorce and reconstruct their lives easily but women have even more difficulties than before: *Men remarry easily and it's difficult for women.*

Arranged marriage is the most common type of marriage in Nepal. Manasvi says that nowadays things are changing but that in the past, children were obliged to obey their parents: *[...] you couldn't say no. You had to marry him. I know many people who have married and they have seen each other only once in their life.*

She says that women are used to suffering and do not divorce their husbands. Only recently, some couples divorce: *They put up with it. If you can't stand it anymore, you divorce. Your parents tell you: 'you have to marry this man'. She has to endure this even if the husband is a bad person. Divorce is allowed, but no one divorces. If there is some problem in the relationship, they always blame the woman. They say: 'it's your fault, you didn't manage the household'.*

Women in Nepal undergo restrictions when they have their monthly menstruation: *You can pray. In my culture it is not that important but in other cultures you can't go to the kitchen for six days. In Buddhism there are many castes but we don't give too much importance to this. However, it's prohibited, you can't go to the kitchen, you can't have direct eye contact with boys. For example, in the village, you can't eat with the others. You have to eat separately and you can't enter the kitchen. You eat alone.*

To menstruate is considered to be dirty and, for that reason, women are not allowed to touch the God, to go to the kitchen, to eat with the rest of the family or to contact male members of the family.

To finish off, we asked Manasvi to tell us how she perceives herself as a woman in her country of origin. She said that she was free from any responsibilities as compared to now.

7.7.2. THE MIGRATORY PROCESS

- *Decisions for Migration*

The migration to the BC is not the first relocation of Manasvi and her husband. They first went to Germany. The migratory experience in Germany was not encompassed in this study. Manasvi observes that ever since she migrated she has a mind set for earning money and helping the family: *I have to earn money and then I have to save for my family, for my future.*

We understand that one of the crucial reasons for leaving Nepal and migrating either to Germany or the BC was the economic factor. They migrated to the BC after four years spent in Germany because her husband already had some contacts in the BC. Her family did not try to stop them because they were already living in a foreign country: *They didn't say anything because we were already outside Nepal. So they didn't feel bad about it. The aim was to earn more money because in Nepal there is no work. You don't earn enough for an entire family, you can't live off that. That's why we decided to move.*

Life in the New Society

- *Difficulties and Obstacles*

Manasvi and Abishek did not have permission to reside in the BC. Thus, their legal situation was an obstacle for the first three years. She did not mention at any moment that they were receiving the government grant destined for people in disadvantaged positions. The only financial resource was their savings: *In those moments, you have to live off your savings and that's very difficult.*

One of the primary difficulties Manasvi encountered was the language. She did not know the language of the host country but this did not discourage her. Since she already had experience in a foreign country, she knew that it was an obstacle that she had to overcome. Not being able to express herself at the beginning made her feel powerless in situations where she would have loved to be capable to speak the language of the host country: *As I don't speak the language very well, I can't express myself properly. When we start having an argument, the words don't come out of my mouth because of the language. When we go to the park, something always happens to the kids and then, between the parents. So the words don't come out of my mouth and I have many things to tell them.*

For that reason, I don't say a word. It has happened to me several times because of my son or because of other things. Some things that don't seem right to me and you want to express yourself but you can't.

At the beginning, she was not able to find a job because they were living in a small village. Then they decided to move to the city. Again, it was not easy, but she did find a job: *It was difficult. Maybe it was because I was in a small village. I couldn't find a job in such a small place but when I came to the city, I did find one. It was not easy but I found one.*

Another obstacle identified my Manasvi is the recognition of her diplomas. The key difficulties are the long-lasting process, the costs and the disillusion afterwards: *When I came here, I was told to submit my diplomas for better working opportunities. It's very difficult and costly. I didn't dare to submit them because I didn't have money to spend on that. I would like my diploma to be recognised and have the certificate so I can work in another sector but I also see that there are many people who are highly educated and they still work in low-paid jobs. It's not worth it. I know many people with an excellent CV and they still work as waiters. Then, I said to myself: Why would I get my diploma certified if I have to work as a waitress?!*

Manasvi is disappointed and disillusioned with the idea of the title recognition because she has observed that apart from all the difficulties in getting her certificates, her acquaintances still work in precarious jobs. Thus, she does not feel motivated to start the procedure.

One of the difficulties Manasvi encounters as a migrant mother is the balance between motherhood and work: *Now it's difficult because I can't spend so much time with him. I'm working in the afternoon as well and I don't have enough time to spend with him. I feel so sorry for that. When I go to work, he is leaving for school with his dad and when I come back, it's time to go to bed so I don't have enough time.*

The reconciliation between private life and employment is one of many difficulties that women face. Manasvi feels that she is not spending enough quality time with her son due to the fact that she has to work both in the morning and the afternoon in order to earn money and run the family.

Last but not least, Manasvi misses her family and she thinks that there is an exaggerated bureaucracy behind the procedure for non-European citizens and the possibility to have

their close family visit them: *They can't come. They need permission. They need visas and it's very difficult. Many documents. We are trying, let's see. Apart from that, they have to go to India for that because we don't have an embassy in Nepal and it's very difficult. It takes a lot of time and you have to spend a lot of money.*

Her greatest desire is for her parents to come to the BC: *My biggest dream is that my parents come. We are trying. My father has traveled to many countries. I'm not worried about him but my mother has never been outside Nepal. Just to India. I want them to come and visit this place. I really want her to come! I don't know when but I really want her to! It's difficult because of the bureaucracy. You have to prove that you have enough money in your bank account. A lot of trouble!*

Manasvi identifies the family as the most significant sacrifice she made when she migrated. She also says that it is very difficult for them to save money in the host country because of the high living costs.

- ***Inclusion and Facilitating Factors***

One of the advantages Manasvi had and many other migrants do not have is the fact that, first, her husband came to the BC and after that, they were united: *He had everything here. That's why I came. I wouldn't have come if it wasn't like that because he was always telling me that he didn't speak the language and that the early months were very difficult for him. I was lucky because he was here [...].*

One of the things that made Manasvi feel as if she were at home was the fact that she found the BC similar to her country of origin: *It looks as if it was my country. The streets. If you go in the old part of the town, you think you are in my country.* In addition to this, she has always had good experiences with the people: *They have always treated me nicely, they have always helped us.*

We asked her if she has experienced any bad treatment due to her condition as a migrant and the answer was negative: *No, no, no. Not up to now. Maybe sometimes but not directly towards me.*

Manasvi enrolled at an Adult School Centre where she started learning Spanish. Although the language and the alphabet were completely different from her mother tongue, she learned basic Spanish in a short time. Currently, Manasvi is working as a child minder. She likes going to work because that way she feels that her day is more fulfilled. She

started working in 2013 and she is happy with her job: *I have always worked with children. In my country, I was also working with children [...]*.

She considers the decision to migrate appropriate because in Nepal the rate of unemployment was high and the wellbeing of people was low: *There weren't good jobs. I don't regret coming here. Here, it's much more secure and there are more facilities.*

Manasvi feels happy as a migrated woman in the BC: *I'm fine. I don't want more or fewer things. I have a job, I have time to spend with my son. I feel happy. I don't ask for more. I don't have a lot but I'm satisfied with what I have.*

- ***Significance of the Culture of Origin in the New Society***

Manasvi has tried to teach her son to speak Nepalese and to teach him the values of Nepali culture. He has never been to her country of origin and she does not want him not to know his roots. However, her son prefers speaking in Spanish: *He almost doesn't speak Nepali. He understands but he doesn't want to reply in Nepali. He says: 'no, I don't want to'.*

The importance of family is a feature that Manasvi carries with her from her country of origin to the host country. She has noticed that in the BC children become independent very young: *Here, children leave home when they are eighteen and we don't do that. We stay with our parents as much as possible. We all live together. That's different from here. The mothers are in a hurry to chase their children out. On one hand, I think that the independence is good but on the other hand, it's better with the family.*

In addition to what she expressed in the previous citation, she would love to have her parents near to her: *For example, my poor parents are always alone. I always think about them. They are not very old but I feel that they are: 'Oh my parents are old'. My father is not even sixty years old. Here, everybody is telling me that my father is young but I feel that they are old and I always worry about them.*

- ***Motherhood and the Couple Relationship***

Manasvi and Abishek have one son. His name is Neer and he was born in the host country. In terms of the responsibilities for their son, Manasvi and Abishek cooperate between themselves: *We organise ourselves because I work in the morning and my husband is free in the morning. He takes care of him, he takes him to school and in the afternoon, I pick him up. We manage to do it by ourselves.*

We wanted to know if her life has changed since motherhood and she told us that she felt a drastic change after being a mother: *Before, we were able to do anything we wanted to do. We could go any place without worries. Now, we have to think twice because of our son. We can't go everywhere. If we want to travel, it's not that easy anymore. It's quite difficult with children actually. Now, we make more 'childish' plans. We enjoyed going to concerts in the past. Now we don't. We are more responsible. Every time we do something, we think: 'oh, wait, we have a child, we have to take care of him'.*

In relation to Neer, she tries to teach him the moral values that her parents taught her, to be a good and polite person.

- ***Free Time***

Manasvi tries to spend her free time with Abishek and their son. She also uses the free time to finish the domestic chores:

I do things at home first. I clean the house and then, I go out with my son. If it's sunny we go to the beach or we do something fun to spend time together. We walk. He always has plans. He knows that I'm free on the weekend. We sometimes watch films.

- ***Remodeling of Values***

In the previous section, Manasvi explained that girls are not allowed to touch God during their menstruation. If this was a common practice when she was living in her country of origin, in the host country she has changed her viewpoint on menstruation: *I do it now. Even if I am menstruating, I do it. I don't think that God will tell you: 'no you can't touch me'. That's what my mother used to tell me.*

Manasvi reshaped her opinion on how women are supposed to behave once they reach a certain age: *Here, women who are forty years old want to have children. In my country, if you are thirty and you are pregnant, everybody starts talking, saying that it's not good, that you are old, why do you want to have children? etc. I love the fact that older women dress so well, they dress up. They go out a lot. In Nepal, when you are thirty, you are considered to be old. I'm thirty two and I don't feel old because I'm here and because I see that women who are forty years old, they enjoy life. There, you feel bad. It's the mentality. The truth is that here, women take care of themselves. When you see the ladies on the street, they are all dressed up and I like that. There, they are strong but they do not dress up. It's always been like that. They have always taken care of the children.*

There, other people speak their minds too much about you; what they say about you, the neighbour, if they say something bad about you.

She realised that life does not end at thirty and that she is able to feel good at any age. This has encouraged her to think more about herself and that women are not exclusively in charge of the upbringing of their children. She has also learned not to bother herself with what other people think of her. She says that women in Nepal are strong but they do not dress up. We interpret “strong” as women who develop resilience and stay strong in the face of the everyday difficulties in their lives.

Manasvi has changed her views on the life quality a person, especially what an older person can have. She is worried for her parents and she believes that they would have a better lifestyle in the BC: *Here, there are residences for older people but there, it's not like that. It's very difficult. Even if there are, they don't treat them like they do here. What I like the most here is the healthcare system because we almost don't pay a thing. In Nepal, it is not like that. You have to pay for everything. My mother feels sick all the time and I always say: 'I wish she was here!' because I know one woman who is nearly the age of my mother and when she was in her country, she was feeling like that too, but since she arrived here she feels much better because here you don't have to do the domestic chores, you don't have to wash the clothes by hand. We don't have a washing machine there. [...] without money you can't buy one. It's expensive. There are issues with the electricity and my mother is still handwashing the clothes. I'm worried about her.*

Our participant has seen that it is possible to have a better quality of life with more dignified conditions than in her country of origin. This means a better healthcare service and a better everyday lifestyle. For that reason, she is worried for her mother, whose conditions are harsh in the country of origin.

Finally, we asked Manasvi to describe herself in one to three words as a migrated woman in the BC: *A responsible woman! That's the right word!*

7.7.3. TRANSFORMATIONS AND EMPOWERMENT

- ***Migration as an Instrument for Personal Growth and as an Empowering Mechanism***

Manasvi identifies independence as a key feature that she learned with migration from her country of origin: *To be independent. For example, if you have a child and you live*

with your family, they would help you with everything. I was alone. Nobody is here to take care of me. So, if you want, you can do everything by yourself. I've learned that. If I had received help from others, I would have become lazy. I guess.

We understand that Manasvi learned how to rely on herself due to the fact that she did not have any support network in the BC. She even feels gratitude for her circumstances because she would have not become as strong as she is now if she had had help from others.

Life in the new society has opened new perspectives. She finds inspiration in other women to improve herself and her welfare: *I take care of myself. I want to live to be more than sixty years old. I see the women here and I also want to be like them, not like the women in my country. When you are sixty, you feel sick and old. You feel dependent on other people.*

The ability to take her own decisions and to distribute her time is the next characteristic that empowers Manasvi. If she had been in her country of origin, her life would be centred exclusively on the family and instead of deciding she would have had to obey other people's decisions: *I think that if I had been in my country, I would have been loaded with the family burden. I also have family here, but I can do whatever I want to do. There, I would have been with my family and I would not have been able to do what I want.*

Manasvi has gained self-confidence also as compared to other women in their thirties in Nepal: *There are women who have migrated and have come back to Nepal and are confident in themselves, but those who live in Nepal all their life, no.*

- ***Alliances among Women and Networking as a Sustenance Agent***

Manasvi feels motivated to participate in different activities related to women's issues. She participates in the Association "Mujeres con Voz" and she discovered them by accident. She saw a flyer about an activity they were organising and she decided to enroll. Apart from her own participation, Manasvi has invited other women to join. She likes the activities because they help her improve her Spanish: *It's good for the language also. You go there and you meet many people. [...] I have sent several people there and they are pleased.*

In addition to the friendships that have arisen out of the participation in the association, Manasvi has met other women through the friendships of her son with his schoolmates. She knows that they can count on her and vice versa: *We know each other through our kids. The mothers, we gather and we talk. I don't feel lonely. If I need help, I tell them and they help me. If they need help, they tell me and I do what I can.*

CHART 13. Summary of Manasvi's Experience of Life

NAME	PLACE OF BIRTH	AGE	STUDIES	MARITAL STATUS	MIGRATION	CURRENT OCCUPATION
Manasvi	Solukhumbu, Nepal	32	Secondary Education	Married	2010	1. Child Minder
VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN						
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Man-centred society • Joint family • Pressure on women • Women's voice unheard • Different educational practices for girls and boys • Restrictions on women • Sex as a taboo • Women – private sector; Men – public sector • Lack of security for women and children • Precarious working conditions • Menstruation = Dirt and disgracefulness • Buddhism • Caste-based society • Arranged marriage 						
MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE						

OBSTACLES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal status in the BC • Lack of family support • Language barrier • Diploma recognition • Precarious employment
FACILITATING FACTORS AND INCLUSION
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Motivation to learn the language of the host country • Friendships • Finding a job • Cooperation in the couple
REMODEL VALUES
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attitude towards menstruation • Viewpoints on Buddhism and devotion • Self-care • Life in her thirties and beyond • Importance of leisure in life • The role of women • Education of son • Quality of life of older people
EMPOWERMENT
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capacity to express herself in the Spanish language • Financial independence • Self-confidence • Self-reliance • Self-esteem • Decision-making capacity • Employment • Strength • Freedom of choice

- **Creation of friendships and networks**

Source: Prepared by the author

7.8. DISCUSSION

In this section, we are going to discuss the five interviews together. We are going to focus on the differences and the similarities between the participants. We have looked through the categories that repeat in the interviews and we consider they are relevant enough to be encompassed in the group analysis. Here, we are not going to repeat what has been said previously, but we are going to relate the categories with the bibliographical references.

Dhriti, Virika, Sakti, Aarin and Manasvi are women whose countries of origin are situated in the southern part of the Asian continent. The interviews were done in an individual way but they coincided in most of the topics discussed. We would like to emphasise the fact that the aim is not to overgeneralise about Indian, Nepalese or Bangladeshi cultures. We are simply transmitting the personal perceptions and the experiences of life of five migrant women from South Asia.

7.8.1. VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN

- *Male-centred society*

The five participants said that their cultures are male centred. Dhriti explained that in her family the birth of a male child was very important and her mother had to give a birth to a male child. Her health conditions and the circumstances in which women were obligated to give birth were not considered but what mattered was the idea of having a blessing in the family so that the family line is not stopped. Thus, girls were considered to a burden while boys were seen as a blessing. Boys were meant to run the family and girls would marry into another family. Thus, caste would no longer exist with a female child. The reader may think that this may have been the case in the past, but history repeated itself with Dhriti's own sister. She is still under pressure from the family to have a male child.

In South Asia, the outcome of son preference is selective abortion of female fetuses or pressure on women to give birth to a male child if the first born is a girl. However, selective abortion was only legalised in 2002. Our participants were born many years before it became legal. That means that selective abortion was not common until 2002 and women had more children until a son was born (Hatlebakk, 2017).

Hatlebakk (2017) in a study on son preference in Nepal discovered that the consequences of a first-born female child led to better education opportunities for later-born male children. One of the possible explanations for this tendency is religious beliefs, apart from caste and family surname preservation: “Son preference is expected to be stronger within particular groups depending first of all on religious beliefs. It is for example considered important for some social groups to have a son who can light the funeral pyre” (p.3). Thus, girls are less valued than males: “For example, the birth of a boy in Nepal is celebrated, however a girl is a disappointment. This is not uncommon in patrilocal societies where male children are expected to care for their parents in their old age while daughters leave their biological family once married” (UNICEF, 2019: 36).

Virika’s mother suffered various miscarriages but she did give birth to a male child. In her case, when she was a child, she felt inferior to her older brother because he was born after the first miscarriage. Virika noticed that her brother was spoiled and he was the focus of attention while she desperately tried to come closer to her parents. In their study of son preference, Das Gupta, Zhenghua, Bohua, Zhenming, Chung and Hwa-Ok (2010) relate patriarchy to the kinship system. They aimed to understand how daughters are received in the family: “[...] only men constitute the social order, and women are the means whereby men reproduce themselves. Women are the biological reproducers, but it is through the father that a child acquires a social identity and is incorporated into the social order. Since only boys remain in the lineage, the significant social reproduction is that by the father of the son. Women are recorded, if at all, only in the capacity of the wives of the men who gave rise to succeeding generations of men” (p. 161).

Virika said that in India there are many restrictions on girls imposed by men because the socially constructed norms are actually constructed by men. For example, if men divorce, they are able to rebuild their lives again and even get married again, but the situation becomes very difficult for a divorced woman. Thus, men’s position is unchangeable in the social order and women’s position is volatile. They leave their homes and lineage and they belong to the husband’s family lineage. The woman would never be able to have a

central position in that lineage. In the event that the couple divorces, the woman encounters many difficulties reconstructing her life. The authors give the example of one divorced woman who returns to her father's family with her child. The father decided to accept her but her brothers did not. The father had to leave the house and share a small piece of land together with his daughter and nephew. Their relatives lived nearby but they never considered her for anything. They actually ridiculed her and condemned her as the principal guilty party for the break up of the marriage. An interesting point stated by Virika was that women in India are eager to change this but they do not have the key tools to organise themselves and be the change they want to see. They lack female role models who would show them a different pattern from the pattern of their mothers. It has been argued that parents prefer sons because, as Das Gupta et. al (2010) claim: "[...] their perceived net value is higher than that of daughters. The argument is that sons can help on the family farm, and provide old age support to their parents – while daughters have much less to offer and can even be a major economic drain if their marriage expenses are high" (p.168).

The testimony of Sakti concurs with those of the previous participants. The society of her culture of origin is a male-dominated one where men think they have the privilege to do whatever they want no matter if it is right or wrong. This is due to patriarchy, which establishes roles in accordance with gender, age and generation: "Patriarchal structure – roles, responsibility, control, and distribution of resources within the family are strictly determined by age, gender and generation" (Sonawat, 2001:180). The existing discrimination against girls and the belief that men are privileged by birth for the mere fact of being born male need to be dismantled through policies that: "raise the value of girls to their parents, relative to boys. It is not enough to hope that policies aimed more generally at raising the status of women will be equally effective at reducing discrimination against girls" (p.175).

In the case of our participant from Bangladesh, the male centredness goes even further with the male privilege of being able to have a polygamous marriage. Littrell and Bertsch (2013) consider that in Muslim-majority societies, the patriarchal customs are deeply instilled within the society and that systematic changes towards equality will be slow: "[...] in the Muslim majority nations in South Asia typical, traditional patriarchal practices are embedded and institutionalised, changes (e.g. egalitarianism) will likely take decades,

perhaps centuries to manifest in index measures such as the UN's Millenium Development Goals" (p. 321).

Manasvi explained that in her culture women who go out late are considered to be bad women, by men, the family and society. Men have freedom to do whatever they want without being judged. She also stated that in some of the cultures in Nepal, men have the right to be violent with their wives and that women are used to putting up with bad treatment from their husbands. This is basically for two reasons. On one hand, women do not divorce because divorced women face many problems afterwards. On the other hand, women are blamed if the situation escalates and the couple separates. In most countries, except Bhutan and Nepal, marital rape is not criminalised (UNICEF, 2019: XIII). This means that women are not legally protected from marital violence, legitimising violence against women. In their study with divorced women from Bangladesh, Akter and Begum (2012) discovered that the main reason for the break-up of marriages was the physical and verbal abuse by the husband. This was followed by dowry-related problems, interference from the in-laws and extramarital affairs. Although women are the subjects who suffer in abusive marriages, they are blamed for the breakdown of the marriage.

For thousand of years the patriarchal societies have systematically prohibited women's participation in public life. Public life was exclusively created for men, maintaining the unequal power relations between women and men (Littrell & Bertsch, 2013). The authors claim that changing patriarchal societies, in our case South Asian societies, from man-centred to gender egalitarian is a long task and it may take centuries to uproot patriarchal values. Traditional patriarchal attitudes persist in these countries even if the education ratio and the access to information are constantly increasing. One of these concepts is the previously discussed issue of the birth of a female child in the family: "[...] a girlchild is only a "visitor" in the house where she is born and [...] eventually she has to go to her 'real' or married home. That is why she has no rights and is considered to be the most unimportant part of the household, thus making education and other opportunities in life unnecessary for her" (Niaz, 2003: 180).

- ***Roles***

In spite of the considerable progress, gender gaps in South Asian countries still persist due to the fact that: "patriarchal values and social norms tend to privilege men and boys' access to opportunities and control over resources. These inequalities are manifested

across the life cycle – from conception, to birth, to childhood, adolescence through to adult life” (UNICEF South Asia Gender Mainstreaming Strategy 2018-2021). The report shows that in countries like India and Nepal the child mortality rate for girls is higher than for boys.

During the interviews we realised that the roles women and men were given in the country of origin of the participants were rigidly marked by biological sex. The testimony of Dhriti exemplified the role of women as limited to the private sector and the role of men as the breadwinners, those who belong to the public sector. Her father had a small business and her mother was in charge of the domestic work. In that time, only boys were sent to school because the mentality was that women need to stay at home and prepare themselves to be good wives. The woman is the one who wakes up first in the morning so that the house is clean; she prepares food for the rest of the family members and looks after the animals if there are any. Her personal experience was that she and her sisters were taught from an early age how to deal with the domestic chores while her brothers spent their time as they wanted.

According to UNICEF (2019), Bangladesh is a country with a very high level of gender discrimination, together with India and Nepal. In their study they observed that in all of the South Asian countries, girls were less likely to complete secondary education than boys: “Girls and women are more likely than boys and men to not be in employment, education or training in adolescence and early adulthood. This gender gap is likely related to highly differentiated gender roles that allocate unpaid domestic and care work to women, and paid work to men” (p. XVI).

Virika’s reality was similar to Dhriti’s. Her father had a private business and her mother was a housewife. Her father studied but her mother did not. She stated that all her life she had the feeling that her mother did not have a personal opinion, i.e., she always agreed with her husband’s will. At one moment in the interview, Virika compared her mother with a cow. She endured so much pressure from her husband and the aunts that she got used to staying silent and doing what is expected from her. She explained that she had constant conflicts with her brother whenever she wanted to meet a boy, even if the nature of the relationship was friendship. The issue Virika had with her elder brother is a common issue of many girls in India and it is a topic that usually is not discussed within the family. One of the issues is the freedom to go out independently, to be dressed as they wish and to come back home safely. She experienced pressure regarding how she was

supposed to behave just for being a girl and in protest she did the opposite. Women in South Asian societies carry the burden of the domestic chores and men do not usually feel obliged to cooperate. UNICEF (2019) observes that these gender and social norms are not only harmful, but they relegate: “[...] women and girls to domestic and reproductive roles, male dominance and masculine violence” (p. XVIII).

Sakti’s parents identified the social injustice against girls and for that reason emphasised the equal treatment her brother and herself. As illustrated in the report by UNICEF (2019), girls in South Asia carry the burden of the domestic chores and boys go to school and learn not to be responsible for the household work: “Girls bear a greater burden of household chores than boys, reinforcing the gender stereotype that this is women’s work. Parents would rather invest in their son’s education to maximise his earning potential than have him work in the home” (p. 36). They taught both of them the importance of being independent and self sufficient in the face of any kind of challenge that life might put in front of them. Her father worked as a senior manager in a bank and her mother was a teacher and a founder of a school in Karnal.

In times past, women did not used to go to school in Bangladesh. Aarin told us that her mother was an extraordinary student but she did not continue with her studies because the family did not have sufficient financial resources to support all the family members. Priority was given to the male members of the family. Then she married and needed permission from her mother-in-law. The answer was negative. In Bangladeshi society, women are usually in charge of the private sphere and men are in charge of the public sphere. UNICEF (2019) identifies *preference for investing in boys rather than girls’ education* as one of the reasons for girls dropping out of school. In addition to this, there is the perception on the part of the parents that *school is not relevant to a woman’s role as a wife and mother* and, last but not least, the *lack of female role models in the schools*.

As a child, Aarin differed from other girls. She did not want to participate in the games that were typically assigned to girls of her age. She was confused because her brother was able to play with his friends whenever and wherever he wanted but she was not.

Manasvi’s mother ran a small hotel and apart from that, she managed the domestic chores. In Nepali culture, by tradition women are responsible for the household and men work outside the home, as the participant stated. Thus, women in South Asia carry the burden of unpaid domestic chores and caregiving and, in cases such as Aarin’s mother, work

outside the home as well. The burden doubles because the woman is obliged to manage paid work *and* housework, including bringing up the children. We would like to note that even if women in South Asia do enter the labour market, the entrance is not as easy as it is for their male counterparts, the wages are lower, there are fewer possibilities for job stability and there is exploitation in the workplace and labour market (UNICEF, 2018).

Manasvi said that when she was a child, she behaved and acted like a boy. She was not interested in playing the games girls used to play and she did not like long hair because it seemed uncomfortable to her. She enjoyed riding a bike, something that was associated with boys, not girls.

- ***Joint Family***

All of the participants lived in joint families before their migration to the BC. What is more, after marriage they each lived in a joint family as well. The latter case consisted of the mother-in-law, the father-in-law and sometimes the brothers or the sisters of their husbands. The only exception is Aarin, who lived in a student hostel in Dhaka from a very early age. Her parents and her brother stayed in the village.

The family occupies the central place both in South Asian societies and in the lives of individuals. It builds identity and shapes social, cultural and technological changes. Nonetheless, South Asian societies are experiencing transformation with the change of era and modernisation and the joint family model is not as stable as in the past. For instance, our participants left their countries and broke the joint family tradition. In the case of Sakti, their parents resisted at first but eventually, realised that they could not force their son and daughter-in-law to stay with them. In the rest of the cases, Aarin, Manasvi and Dhriti feel a constant emptiness and pity for leaving their parents alone in their respective countries. Migration is only one of the factors that influences these changes in the joint family tradition: “Being largely dominated by a patriarchal lineage and a family system, South Asian societies are witnessing changes as evident in the increasing participation of women in the work force, the rise of youth culture that shapes the experience of new intimacies, and a public discourse of love and companionship, as well as amendments to existing laws and the enactment of new laws. The family therefore, finds itself propagating continuity of certain normative behavior as it is also compelled to adjust its norms and values. These complex processes of modernisation, the increasing use of technology in everyday lives, migration, and the imaginations and desires of South

Asians, raise the question of the place and role of the family in contemporary times and how it adapts to—and also shapes—these changes”. (Bhandari, Titzmann, 2017: 1.2). In South Asian societies, family represents the primary link between a person and their community. This is due to the fact that the societies are patriarchal: “Family has been recognised as a basic unit of society and is a link between individual and community. Current trends indicate that there is a definite change in the basic system of family, especially the role of elders and disharmony in husband-wife relationship”, (Sonawat, 2001: 185).

- *Arranged Marriage*

In South Asian societies the common belief is that a woman’s place is in her father’s house until she marries. Not marrying is quite a rare scenario and definitely not considered by the family. Das Gupta et al. (2010) say that: “Parents are under much social pressure to ensure that their daughters marry [...]” (p. 167). The definition of arranged marriage provided by Bhandary (2018) is the following: “[...] it is a heterosexual marriage that rejects autonomy and individualism as the guiding values for marriage, it identifies the extended family, not the nuclear family, as the basic family unit, and it correspondingly incorporates a value of respect for elders into the marital and familial practices” (p. 197).

Dhriti married when she was nineteen years old. It was an arranged marriage. She didn’t have other relationships before marrying her husband. She did not want to marry but her parents put pressure on her because, according to them, he was a good opportunity; he did not drink nor smoke, he studied, his family was nice and, most importantly, they would go abroad together. They did not want to let her migrate alone. Our participant explicitly told us that she was not in love with her husband at the time of their marriage. She married to please her mother. We venture to say that she also married because she wanted to live in a foreign country and marrying her husband was the way to accomplish this. During the conversation, we got the impression that she was trying to justify her mother’s behaviour towards her; she believes that her mother pressured her because she wanted the best for her.

As with Dhriti, Virika’s marriage was an arranged marriage. She did not know her husband previously. She was not in love with him but she obeyed her parents, who thought that marrying her into a good family would mean a brighter future. She and her husband belonged to the same caste. Interestingly, Virika claims that she has always been attracted

to boys from her own caste. Niaz (2003) states that arranged marriages lead to the loss of identity of their daughters, who become objects that can be bought or sold (referring to the dowry): “Marriages were arranged by parents; they lost their identity as an individual or as a member of community and became more like a commodity which could be bought and sold” (p.174).

Sakti did not know her husband before their family met for the first time with the aim of finding the right match for her. Her husband was her first love relationship. Even if it was an arranged marriage, the scenario was different from the usual occurrences around marriage where children are not given the option to choose if they were not convinced by the match their parents found. She dated her husband for four months before taking the decision to marry. What is interesting to note is that she is the only participant with an inter-caste marriage, having married a lower caste person. She belongs to the highest caste, Brahmin, and her husband to Kshatriya. Even if her marriage was an arranged marriage, Sakti said that the Indian society is changing and love marriages are common as well. Bhandari and Titzmann (2017) affirm that there is this tendency, at least in public discourse if not in actual practice: “An aspect of change that has characterised modern India is the shift—real, imagined, purported—to ‘love’ or choice marriages. At least in public discourse, if not in real practice, there is an insistence on choosing a spouse based on feelings of compatibility, affection, connection and love” (p. 5). The authors claim that love marriages represent the detachment of children from their families and their path towards individuation, finding their own identity. However, in some way, individuals reattach to the family even if they do not live in joint families as in the past: “In other words, the family is not necessarily absent in spaces of dating, pre-marital relationships, and live-in arrangements. In fact, they continue to have presence in these everyday intimacies” (p. 6).

Our participant from Bangladesh told us that she had a relationship with her cousin before marrying her husband. In her country of origin, marriages within the family are allowed. Aarin is one of the two participants who first met the person she liked and then her parents approved the relationship. This is a very uncommon situation, as she herself stated. She was living in a hostel and studying in Dhaka when her husband came nearby her hostel to have coffee with his friends. At the beginning, she did not want to have anything to do with him but finally he managed to convince her to have coffee with him and they fell in love. Since she had an close relationship with her parents, she immediately told them

about him. Her father went to his office to meet him and everything worked well except one thing: his mother was a widow. Her father was worried that they would not have enough income to run the family and the burden would fall on him. This turned out not to be the case and they married after eight months. One of the doubts we have and did not discuss with Aarin is whether her social class and religion and that of her husband were the same. We venture to say yes, because in an informal conversation with Aarin, she said that when a person marries in Bangladesh, factors such as background, education, class and religion are taken into consideration, with a special emphasis put on religion. An additional feature is the fact that they had the same educational background.

Manasvi did not feel comfortable giving too much information about her love life and her marriage. We respected that and we did not insist on asking for too many details. The short account we received from her was that as a young girl she did not behave like most of her female friends. She had two boyfriends in secret until her mother discovered this and they had to stop the relationships. Manasvi met her husband and they talked to her family who approved the relationship and, later on, their marriage. We assume that both of them belonged to the same caste because as she stated previously, inter-caste marriages are still not accepted in Nepal.

- *Dowry*

Arranged marriage in South Asia is associated with the tradition of the dowry – an amount of money or material gifts that the bride’s family gives to the groom’s family. Tewari and Tewari (2017) claim that the dowry practice comes from ancient times: “[...] women were given Stridhan⁴⁹ when they departed from the house of their parents. This amount of money was given to her as a gift which she can use on her and her children but her in-laws did not have any right on that amount. This amount was supposed to help the girl in time of need. Slowly this tradition became obligatory and took the form of dowry” (p.42).

Dhriti’s family followed this tradition. She explained that her husband’s family did not ask for a dowry but her parents insisted on giving a gift to the groom and his parents. They did it out of obligation because, Dhriti stated, the groom’s relatives would talk behind their back. Dhriti says that the dowry tradition is exaggerated and that some

⁴⁹ Woman’s estate in South Asia.

families spend a big amount of money and even do into debt in order to present themselves in a good light in front of the groom's family.

Virika disagrees with the dowry practice. She told us that in the past the groom's family used to ask for gifts explicitly and shamelessly. The gifts were usually expensive material goods.

The dowry is considered to be one of the key factors in a family's preference for a male child over a female child. In Bangladesh the dowry is one of the main reasons for violence against women (Akter and Begum, 2012). White (2016) agrees with Akter and Begum (2012), stating that in Bangladesh the dowry is associated with violence: "[...] women may be threatened or beaten either when their parents have failed to pay what they promised, or as a means to extort more money after marriage, leading in the worst cases to 'dowry deaths'" (p. 252). Even though dowry was outlawed in India in 1961 and in Bangladesh in 1980, it has not been outlawed from practice. The author claims that this custom reinforces the idea of the involvement of the family in the arrangement of marriages in South Asia: "For the parents of daughters the threat of economic ruin can make love marriages appear in a more positive light, as the only chance to escape paying a hefty dowry, other than marrying their daughter to someone whom age, poverty, health status, character or an existing wife make clearly undesirable. Overwhelmingly, however, dowry gifting indicates that marriage in South Asia is not predominantly about the romance of young love, but a collective investment in advancement. The emphasis shifts from the social or emotional strongly into the economic" (p. 253).

- *Poligamy*

This category was not considered in the researcher's initial illustrative guidelines. However, the category emerged in the interview with the participant from Bangladesh. Akter and Begum (2012) report that polygamy is a common factor in divorce in Bangladesh: "In this study, most polygamous men were also found to be involved in criminal activities. They showed no concern for their first wife's feelings. Having more than one marriage is a recreation for these men, and they get more dowries each time they get married. The desire for a son was mentioned by two women as a reason for their husband's polygamy" (p. 648). G.P.P. (2008), in their case study on polygamous marriages in South and East Asia within Muslim communities, discovered that it was believed among them that Allah would provide paradise for those women who could find

a second wife for their husbands. They also believed that if the men want to go to heaven they needed to be polygamous. The author makes reference to one chapter in the Quran that clarifies that: “polygamy is neither mandatory nor encouraged, but merely permitted. The permission to practice polygamy is not associated with male lust but allowed because of “compassion toward widows and orphans [...]” (p. 41). Sisters of Islam consider that Allah’s “will” to have more than one wife is actually abused by men because they do not follow the orders regarding the responsibilities and the implications of what a man with more than one wife has to do: “[...] this injunction by Allah in the Qur'an has been taken to indicate a blanket freedom to marry more than one wife without considering the implications and responsibilities that accompany this permission, including financial, psychological, and social implications and responsibilities” (Sukhri and Owoyemi, 2014: 67).

- ***Safety and Violence against Women and Children***

Violence against women and children remains one of the biggest challenges to be solved in South Asia. According to UNICEF (2018), South Asia has the third highest rate of violence against children. In addition to this, child marriage is another form of violence: “South Asia also has the second highest prevalence of child marriage in the world, with 59% girls being married before the age of 18 in Bangladesh, 40% in Nepal and 27% in India” (p. 9).

Dhriti, Virika, Sakti, Aarin and Manasvi agreed that their countries of origin are not safe for women and children. None of them was able to go out freely at night. Virika considers that the main reason for this phenomenon is the mentality of people. Men in some parts of India are very conservative and do not respect women. Sakti believes that there are people who are a waste and disturb the balance of society with their violent actions. Aarin explained that in Bangladesh women do not stay out late at night and this is especially noticeable in villages. Men do not have to face this issue. Because she was working at BBC Bangladesh and her work was at night, she used to feel terrified everytime she had to catch the bus or the rickshaw. At that time rape, robbery, kidnapping and blackmailing for money were quite common. Once, she was harassed by a group of boys and another time she got robbed. Both times were when she was going home after work. Niaz (2003) claims that the violence against women in South Asian countries is the result of the rigid cultural and patriarchal norms that subordinate women. This is supported by the local

laws. The author presents three theories that may give a response to the violence against women phenomenon in South Asia. The first one is: “[...] the perception of males as macho beings. Aggression is an important aspect of macho traits. Men consider themselves strong and show off their strength by being aggressive to women” (p. 180). The second theory is the theory of male chauvinism: “It explains that, in South Asian society, life is considered indispensable without males. Women consider themselves insecure, incomplete, ineffective and inefficient without males. On the basis of this concept, the male member is dominant in society and the female members are expected to be docile. The men are able to exploit women’s weaknesses” (p. 180). The last theory is the concept of loss of control: “According to this concept, when a male member of society finds that the woman is somehow getting stronger either by her educational qualifications or economic independence, he tries to regain control by battering or other forms of violent acts until she surrenders. The purpose of this evil act is to limit the personal growth and progress of women” (p. 180).

Niaz (2003) concludes that violence against women remains an enormous problem in South Asia and criticises the governments’ inadequate response to the problem.

In the interviews we did not manage to touch upon the topic of sexuality. We evaluated that it was not a topic the participants were willing to discuss. Virika was the only one who openly said that she had had boyfriends prior to her marriage. Dhriti did not have any other experiences of love except with her husband. Aarin and Manasvi said that they had boyfriends but it was not something serious. Actually, they did not even kiss. All of them explained that sex is a taboo topic in their countries of origin and young people are obliged to hide from their parents if they start a pre-marital relationship: “Sexuality is a complex and silenced subject when it concerns South Asian women. The dynamic nature of cultural processes and the increasing role of religion means that women remain under surveillance which in turn means challenging sexist and homophobic practices and discourses is to take significant risks” (Takhar, 2013).

- ***Menstruation***

As reported by UNICEF (2018), menstruation is a taboo topic in many South Asian countries: “[...] with deep rooted social norms and practices that prohibit women and girls from using sanitation facilities while they are menstruating. For instance, the practice

of 'Chaupadi'⁵⁰ continues unabated in some parts of Nepal, despite being criminalised through a national legislation" (p. 9).

Dhriti explained in detail her traumatic experience of "Chaupadi" when she had her first menstruation. She had to stay in one room of the house and she was not allowed to go out until the bleeding was over. As she explained, when women have their periods they are not allowed to see male members of the family or any male in general. Nevertheless, Dhriti told us that she even felt lucky because her mother let her stay at home. Usually, girls are sent to the relatives' homes or the stables with the animals. The latter refers to the rural areas of Nepal where many girls die from the cold, malnutrition or rape. Girls are not allowed to touch the food. If they touch the food, the rest of the family members will not eat it because the girl has polluted it. Dhriti claimed that the reality now is not as different as we may think. When a woman is menstruating she does not go to the kitchen, she eats separately and she stays in a separate room. During her volunteering service in Nepal, Robinson (2015) observed that in the undeveloped, rural and mountain areas of the country women were considered polluted and once a month they become untouchable. As Dhriti stated previously, women have to eat separately and have no contact with men; they cannot touch the tap to take water and they have to sleep in degrading conditions until the menstruation passes and they are clean again: "This custom is called chaupadi, derived from two Hindu words: chau, meaning menstruation, and padi, meaning women. The Nepal Supreme Court banned chaupadi in 2005, but government regulation does not reach remote western regions" (p. 193). The author is critical towards the tradition and strongly believes that it ought to be analysed and questioned: "The practice of chaupadi is dangerous because it breeds the idea that periods, and therefore womanhood, are negative, shameful things" (p. 193). Robinson (2015) questions the practice because it is harmful to women, as the following citation exemplifies: "One of my fellow volunteers discovered that boys at the local school throw stones at girls when they are menstruating. This is the kind of gender-based violence in Nepal that is learned and accepted. The stigma surrounding menstruation creates a culture of fear and rejection that translates directly into other aspects of life" (p. 194).

Virika's reality was different. It portrays the fact that menstruation is a taboo topic that is not discussed with girls. The outcome is desinformation and a lack of knowledge that

⁵⁰ Practice in Nepal that does not allow women and girls to participate in everyday activities when they are menstruating.

lead to not knowing how to handle it when the first menstruation occurs. Virika was at school and she felt embarrassed and scared. Scared, because she thought that she had done something wrong and her parents would be angry with her. She did not know what to do nor how to use sanitary material. Gundi and Subramanyam (2019) studied menstrual communication, a taboo in India with boys and girls from Nashik District in India. The findings showed that both boys and girls manifested a significant resistance to communication: “The resistance to communicate combined with taboos and parents’ lack of awareness regarding healthy menstruation seemed to take a toll on girls’ reproductive health. Although hiding menstrual symptoms was not common among urban girls from educated families, several urban girls from lower socioeconomic background refused to reveal their menstrual complaints (including itching, dryness, excess white discharge) to anyone, especially to a male doctor” (p. 10). It looks as if their own perception of menstruation caused them feelings of shame and fear. The data showed that children learn from their parents not only to create an uncomfortable atmosphere when menstruation is discussed but that this is also harmful for their health: “Evidence suggested that feeling fearful of talking; being unable to communicate menstrual illness; facing avoidance; being communicated severe taboos, adversely affected adolescents’ health” (p. 15-16). The authors suggest an increase in effectiveness of the public campaigns offering information on menstruation and a: “[...] more nuanced communication-strategy that addresses the roots of communication inequality and communication taboos around sensitive topics” (p. 22).

Similarly to Dhriti, Manasvi said that menstruation is equal to impurity in Nepal and women undergo restrictions. Women are not allowed to enter the kitchen, they have to eat alone and they can’t have direct eye contact with boys. Kadariya and Aro (2015) state that from a public health perspective the practice has a negative effect on the health of many girls and women. Even if it has been declared illegal, Chaupadi still exists and is put into practice. The authors identify: “[...] illiteracy, ignorance, traditional belief system, gender disparity, and power difference” (p. 54) as the major factors that reproduce the custom. One possible solution would be the complete abolition and education at community level of the: “[...] natural character of menstruating and the harmful practice of Chhaupadi. This also requires a lot of patience with the recognition that age-old practices do not die easy” (p. 54).

We consider that there is much work to be done in order to eradicate the stigma of menstruation. One proposal would be to raise awareness for menstruation. Another would be to invest in sanitary facilities in public institutions, as reported by UNICEF (2018).

- ***Religion***

The participants of the study are followers of three religions: Hinduism, Buddhism and Islam. Niaz (2003) claims that: “In South Asian countries the amalgamation of Buddhist, Confucian, Hindu, Islamic and Christian traditions have shaped the personalities of women and determined their social status” (p.173). Hinduism and Buddhism were indigenous religions while the conquerors introduced Islam and Christianity. The impact of religion was felt on two levels: the first is the way of life and the second is the status of women. We are going to look briefly at these religions without focusing too much on the religious question. First, because religion requires extensive research, an entire study focused on it, and second, religion was not the main scope of this particular study.

Hinduism and Buddhism

Dhriti, Virika and Sakti are followers of Hinduism. Mansvi is a follower of Buddhism.

Dhriti makes reference to Bhagavad-gita, the Holy Book of Hinduism. She stated that in the book is written what a good Hindu follower is: someone who respect all people, especially the elders, does good things in life and is righteous with everybody, helping others. However, she explains that not everyone practices what is preached. During the interview, Dhriti brought pictures and decorationg objects of the Hindu Gods and Godessess. It is interesting to note that, unlike with the Godessess, behind every God there was a story. The Godess was the God’s wife. Tewari and Tewari (2017) claim that Vedic literature represents the foundation of Hindu religion. Nonetheless, Godessess have never been given a central role in the texts, which were mainly male dominated. Their presence is actually not mentioned in the literature.

Virika said that religion is introduced in children’s life from a very early stage. They start going to the Temples regularly and they listen to the stories that usually fascinate them. She was taught to pray to God in order to be happy and protected from evil. As a grown adult she has come to the realisation that maybe God does not exist as she was previously taught and more than religious, she would describe herself as a spirirtual human being. The donation of money to the Temples is a common custom in the Hindu religion, a

practice that she strongly disagrees with. This is due to the fact that, instead of helping the most vulnerable group of people in India, the rich and the powerful donate money to the Temples that could save somebody's life or could lift many families out of poverty: "Many individuals serve through giving a monetary donation to a religious or other nonprofit organization. While it is easy to open your wallet or purse and give, say, \$50, selfless service offers a more serious commitment, requiring the sacrifice of one's time. Selfless service need not be limited to the temple; it can be done at work, at school, wherever we are in the world" (Veylanswami, 2013: 11). This citation serves as an example of Virika's statement that instead of donating money to religious institutions, in fact, Hinduism preaches sacrifice from those who have to help those who do not have.

Sakti grew up in an environment that taught her to respect diversity and to celebrate other religion's holidays. She claimed that she is Hindu by tradition but she opposes castes and religions as such. The only religion she follows is the religion of humanity: love, peace, righteousness and justice. When she worships God, she does not worship any particular figure but something that is more spiritual than religious. She strongly believes that you can better help those in need by offering them a hand, rather than praying to God. Finally, she explains that in her surroundings couples belong to different religions. That means that what matters is the person you are, not the religious background. Sakti even says that religion is baseless. Veylanswami (2013) says that: "[...] the sum total of Hinduism is to follow dharma, to live virtuously and fulfill one's duty, and that there is no need to do more. Hinduism is a way of life, but it is a spiritual way of life, encompassing good conduct, worship, selfless service, scriptural study and meditation" (p.10).

Manasvi belongs to the minority Buddhist religion in Nepal. She does not consider herself a rigid follower of her religion because in her life experience she has encountered people from different religious backgrounds. However, she states that both in Buddhism and Hinduism it is still very difficult for people to have inter-religious marriages. The obstacles are mainly on the part of the family. Another interesting fact is that women are not allowed to touch Buddha, the principal figure of Buddhism, when they are menstruating. Sirimanne (2016) considers that the different scriptural sources of Buddhism may present an ambiguous view on women in the religion. In addition to this, discriminatory practices and attitudes persist today in the various Buddhist countries: "There may also be doubts about the accuracy of the scriptures themselves, as well as their misrepresentations viewed through the opaque prism of each culture as Buddhism

incorporated many of the existing beliefs and cultural norms as it spread across different regions” (p. 285).

Niaz (2003) writes that Satiavata, the first man on Earth according to Hinduism, preached that girls ought not to be sent to school and that their lives ought to be limited to the private sphere. In addition to this: “His dictum that a wife ought to respect her husband as God and serve him faithfully, even if he were vicious and void of any merit, was accepted as applicable to all women. Under these laws, women become weak and subservient” (p. 174). Similarly to Hinduism, Buddhism subordinates women. The eternal blame on women becomes salient with the belief that women tempt men on their way to achieving Nirwana. Niaz (2003) claims that the status of women in these two religions is complex or even dual: “At one level she is considered as a Goddess (Devi). Like SEETA the wife of RAMA, a personification of sweet long-suffering wife, she is the embodiment of motherhood who bore a male child, therefore having the potential to become LAKSHMI (the harbinger of luck). On the other hand, she is blamed for all the ills and degradation of man’s moral and spiritual self” (p. 174). Tawari and Tawari (2017) say that in ancient times, women were equal to Goddesses. They were powerful and had control over every area of life, including the selection of their life partner. In the Vedic era, women started losing their rights: “Gender inequality started creeping into the society. Slowly women's status degraded to such an extent that they were not given the freedom, which was available to even Sudras (lowest caste of ancient Hindu society). They were not given the basic rights. They were debarred from religious practices. They began to lose their political freedom as well. As Vedic age progressed, the status of women became worse” (p. 36).

Islam

Aarin was the only participant who belongs to Islam, the majority religion in her country of origin. Even though she is Muslim, during her life course she had the opportunity to meet and communicate with people from different religious backgrounds and that gave her the opportunity to accept religions other than her own. As a child she was not interested in religion but going to the mosque was a practice that her parents inculcated from a very early stage. She started to have a growing interest in religion as a young adult when she read the Quran in depth and she drew her own conclusions.

Niaz (2003) observes that the position of women in Islam was much better than their position in the previously discussed religions. Women had the legal right to own property, to marry and to divorce. In the early stage of Islam, women stood out in disciplines such as medicine or warfare. Nonetheless, with the passage of time, Islam absorbed many customs from the surrounding religions that actually worsened the status of women: “Islam absorbed the Hindu culture patriarchal values which support female inferiority and these values were transmitted to the younger generations, resulting in family violence tolerated as a male right to control those who are dependent. This interpretation came to include all the negative implications of other religions such as the inequality and subjugation of women, denying women’s rights of inheritance, divorce and marriage etc. Today the culture prevalent in the South Asian Muslim countries is completely contrary to Islamic religious teachings” (p. 175). On the other hand, there are authors such as Saadawi (2016) who are convinced that the hijab is the symbol of oppression. She even raises the question of: “Why men do not cover themselves with a cloth? [...] women have always covered their lower parts out of modesty to insinuate female sexuality, but why do we have to cover our heads? There is our knowledge on why it should not be covered. Is it shameful to show to the world what we know?” (par. 6). Saadawi rejects Islam and all religions because they have one thing in common: none of them supports women but quite the opposite: “I would never be able to defend Islam. In fact, I do not defend any religion. They are all the same. I have read the Quran many times and I have compared it with other holy books of other religions and they are similar. In what? They are all against women” (par. 8).

Sukhri and Owoyemi (2014) analyse the views on the Muslim religion of Sisters of Islam, an Islamic Feminist movement in Malaysia. Sisters of Islam interpret the sayings of the Holy Muslim Book in a way that both women and men are equal before Allah: “[...] no one has special privilege over the other in spiritual or temporal matters. This is especially evident when Allah himself affirms that “the most noble of you in the sight of Allah is the one with the most taqwa (piety)” (Qur'an 49:13) —a statement that Sisters of Islam believes is universal to both men and women because it has no gender connotation” (p. 62). The authors say that Sisters of Islam are trying to bring about a new interpretation of the verses in the Quran that traditionally placed women in a lower position than men: “[...] these interpretations were deliberately chosen to favour the male sex in a male-dominated society (or a patriarchal society, as it is called in their discourse), which sees

women as part and parcel of men's property” (p. 70). This statement helps further the interpretation of Muslim traditions, making women and their opinions visible and finding their place in positions that were usually reserved for men. In addition to this, the number of educated women is in continual growth. Thus, the more educated the women, the more critical they are towards the Islamic traditions, looking through the feminist prism and creating their own interpretations of religion (Sukhri and Owoyemi, 2014).

Aarin wears a hijab. Her parents taught her when she was a small girl what the hijab was and the importance of wearing one. As a young girl she refused to wear it but when she started to be more interested in religion, and she read and understood the Quran, her own decision was to wear it. Afroza (2017) worked with women from Dhaka and analysed the practice of wearing a hijab. The results revealed that most of the respondents answered that they wear the hijab through their own choice. Only 16.1% wear the hijab because they follow family tradition and 3.2% for social reasons. The answers they repeated the most were that the hijab gives them freedom, its use is important for society and that the hijab ought to be mandatory for every woman. Wearing the cloth gives them a sense of identification and belonging to the Muslim religion. It gives them freedom and respect and makes them feel more confident and comfortable. There is the existing belief that: “Hijab is a shield of bad things, evil eyes and thoughts of sluggish people. It is a part of purity, personality and gives respectable image in the society” (p. 345). Islam preaches that the hijab is not used so that men respect women or to save their beauty for private but because it represents women’s devotion to Allah (Afroza, 2017).

- *Caste*

In South Asia, the existence of caste is an issue that cannot be ignored. The topic appeared and reappeared continually in all of the interviews except one, in the conversation with Aarin from Bangladesh. Jodhka and Shan (2010) argue that the Muslim communities of the region have created their own hierarchy where some citizens are considered more equal than others: “Such notions of ‘(caste) hierarchies’ are also justified by referring to the religious texts or traditions of Islam” (p. 100). Culturally speaking South Asian Islam has hierarchical characteristics that divide people on the notion of purity and pollution. The practice of endogamy, the custom of marrying only within the community or caste, strengthens the caste.

We did not ask the participants which caste they belong to as it is considered inappropriate and from our side unnecessary. Caste is defined as: “[...] one human mode of social inequality and differences. It is a mode of power, a weapon of action, one of the criteria of making people’s collective voice and developing the understanding and misunderstanding between and within groups. The study of caste and its dynamics helps us to learn and recognise that humans are influenced by a social life that conditions and powerfully shapes not only thoughts and feelings but also their sense of self and relations with others”, (Subedi, 2016: 321). As it appeared in colonial India under British rule, colonial writers described the caste system as a constantly reproducing system through the ideas of karma, purity and pollution (Jodhka and Shan, 2010). It became a rigid tradition that persists in today’s South Asian societies.

Dhriti named the general classification of the caste stratification: Brahmin (priests and teachers), Kshatriya (warriors and rulers), Vaishya (farmers, merchants and artisans), Shudra (labourers) and Harijan or Dalits (who fall off the caste system). This was the original caste stratification made in the Holy Book of Hinduism, Bhagbad-gita (Rao, 2010). One common pattern that caste-based societies follow is poverty: “In each nation, the people in lower castes are assigned menial jobs. This helps in explaining why there is so much poverty. These lower caste members are not allowed to move up the career ladder and instead remain poor. There also are additional country-specific restrictions with various degrees that further the exclusion-poverty cycle” (p. 105).

Dhriti said that there is an enormous injustice towards people from lower castes, especially in the rural area. Referring to the lowest caste, she explained that they are not allowed to enter upper caste people’s homes, they cannot take water, etc. There is the belief that they are polluted and if they touch pure castes bad luck would follow them. As expected, inter-caste marriage is still an unsolved issue in Nepal, even though the situation is slowly improving with positive discrimination measures from institutions.

Similarly to Nepal, in India inter-caste marriages are not socially accepted. The refusal is especially visible towards Muslim families. In the villages parents even give up on their children if they marry a person from a different caste.

Sakti reluctantly rejects the existing caste system in India. She would rather treat a person according to their qualities as a person than their caste background. As a matter of fact, her husband belongs to a different caste from her own. She did not want to expand on a

topic that causes her unpleasant feelings. However, she told us that people recognise a person's caste by their surname or background. The caste system is divided into four big castes and many subcastes. The presence of this social stratification is significant and there are many differences within the system according to geography, i.e. the system in North India differs from the system in the South.

Manasvi's testimony was similar to Dhriti's. She thinks that the caste division is more emphasised in the rural areas of Nepal where lower caste communities are treated with disgrace. In her personal life experience she did not focus on caste because she lived in the city and in the family business they had to greet people from different caste backgrounds.

The caste stratification has existed in South Asia for centuries. Subedi (2016) claims that the common theory of caste was written in colonial India under British rule: "The colonial writers developed theories and models of the caste system as a peacefully integrated system, constantly reproducing itself through the idea of karma (doctrine), dharma (religion) and notions of purity and pollution. According to this understanding, caste was found among all Hindus and without any internal variation or difference" (p. 320). Caste-based discrimination is prohibited by law in the constitutions of most South Asian countries but that does not mean that it is eradicated from the daily practices of its citizens.

CHART 14. *The Caste System*

BRAHMINS
KHSATRIYA
VAISHYA
SUDRA
HARIJAN

Source: Prepared by the autor

7.8.2. MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE

- *Decisions to Migrate*

The International Labour Office –ILO, the International Organisation for Migration – IOM, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights – OHCHR (2001) recognise different reasons for people taking the decision to leave their country of origin: “[...] the offer of employment or a social connection, such as marriage. For many others, there is little or no choice, due to political, social, economic or environmental pressure and necessity. It is clear that most people prefer to stay in their home countries when they can do so in safety, dignity and well-being” (p.13).

Our participants have one thing in common. Whether it was their desire or in some cases, their husband’s will, they all left their countries in order to improve their lives, either financially or personally. Dhriti, Manasvi and Aaarin left Nepal and Bangladesh because the working conditions and the job opportunities at that time were unstable and complicated. Virika and Sakti, the participants from India, relocated to Bilbao because their husbands had employment in the BC and they were aiming to improve their professional careers. Three of the participants have completed their university studies. Manasvi finished her high school education and Dhriti started college but did not manage to finish it. Regmi, Paudel and Bhattarai (2020) claim that the labour market in developing countries is characterised by low wages and high rates of unemployment and migration from a developing country to so-called developed countries affects the economy of both: brain drain versus brain gain. The authors observe that the dynamic of decision making for migration from developing countries are difficult to understand because there is still a lack of reliable data.

Dhriti was willing to live in a foreign country before marrying her husband. Nonetheless, her parents thought that the best for her would be to have support abroad and for that reason the condition was to marry. She did marry and after that, she and her husband started planning their relocation to England. Financial wellbeing was the principal reason for migrating from Nepal. She wanted to improve her own life and the life of her family. Finding a job was very difficult at that time and the only way to move to a European country was through education. She enrolled at college where she started studying Tourism. During the stay in London, she suffered a spontaneous abortion which influenced her motivation for studying and working. Feeling exhausted, they decided to contact one of her friends who was living in Eibar, a city in the Basque province of Gipuzkoa. An additional factor was the college fee in London, which was very high and they were not able to meet the expenses.

Unlike Dhriti, Virika had never aspired to move to a foreign country. Eventually, she married her husband, an Indian living and working in Bilbao. Given the fact that it was an arranged marriage, he went back to India just to get married and then returned to Bilbao. Virika's decision to migrate was related to her husband's physical location.

Sakti's story is similar to that of Virika. She never imagined that she would live in a different country from India, but she told us that her husband was eager to improve professionally and he was applied for international jobs until he was contracted by an engineering company in Bilbao. As she said herself, the decision to migrate was definitely his choice, but she knew that wherever he went she would support him and go with him. It was her first experience outside India and she was willing to experiment and learn as much as possible. Vandana and Das Gupta (2018) observe that there is a general assumption that when men migrate to improve their professional careers and women accompany them, the women are just companions and their contributions and sacrifices are not considered: "[...] when men migrate for work and women join them as wives, the assumption that they are simply following their men, besides negating their contribution to the family (as parents, carers and house workers), negates their identity as individuals who possess an identity and have self-esteem apart from possessing qualifications and skills. What this assumption fails to acknowledge is that at times these migrating women tend to put their professions on hold to help their men find stable and financially meaningful jobs. They also fail to realise that many of these women find it difficult to get jobs either because of policy reasons in the receiving country or because of underemployment despite their qualifications" (p. 98).

Aarin's story resembles Sakti's story. She did not think of migration until she got married and her husband told her to move to a different country. The motives were corruption, safety issues and the difficulty in finding a job. At that time, the conditions in the textile industry, the sector they both worked in, were precarious. First, they applied to go to Australia, but the process was long and her husband had already been to the BC as part of his job and proposed to her that they go there. They applied for a tourist visa and even though people from South Asia have bureaucratic problems with visas, in their case it was not like that because of his previous stay in Europe. We understand that they came with a tourist visa and then decided not to go back to Bangladesh. When the visa expired, they became undocumented residents. At the time of the interview, their status had not changed.

In their study with highly-qualified migrant women who accompanied their husbands to a foreign country, Vandana and Das Gupta (2018) revealed that women were obliged to compromise and make sacrifices with their own professional careers, as in the case of our participants. They all responded that the decision was mutual, but they also told us that they never thought or aspired to move to a foreign country before their husbands proposed the idea: “Although the decision to move has been termed as a mutual one, a family decision to care for family or for advancement in the career, a closer scrutiny shows that the women, while arriving at this mutual decision, made compromises. These compromises bring to light the inherent familial and societal patriarchal mindsets that govern the life of South Asian women despite the level of their education and in spite of their high skill jobs or earning capacities. When the husband was offered a better career opportunity or when the family required a helping hand, the wife decided to sacrifice her job and the social circle for the betterment of or caring for the family” (p.99).

Before migrating to the BC, Manasvi and her husband lived in Germany. They migrated from their country of origin to earn money and to help their family. The principal reason for migration identified by Manasvi was financial improvement. Castelli (2018) explains that the majority of working opportunities in developing countries are in the informal sector, with low incomes and a lack of social protection of the worker. Dhriti and Manasvi coincide with the above-mentioned statement: “Poor health services, little educated and qualified work force and poverty are a fertile background promoting migration of individuals in search of better life” (Castelli, 2018 :3).

- *Obstacles*

Almutairi (2015) observes that migration to a foreign country is a complex process that involves adaptation and acceptance. As our participants also testified, they were not able to imagine how life in the new society would be before the actual relocation happened. They undergo challenges in everyday life that they usually have to face by themselves or, in our case, with their emotional partners as their only point of reference in the host society: “Family ties and deep friendships are frequently severed during immigration. Immigrants often lack the required social resources to support them through new experiences and difficulties in a new country. Feelings of loneliness and isolation are quite common, as newcomers grapple with a new environment as well as settlement issues” (Almutairi, 2015: 693).

Legal status in the host country and bureaucracy issues

Dhriti and her husband came from London to Bilbao on tourist visas. Thus, she felt an enormous pressure to find a job before the visa expired so that she could apply for the Foreign Identification Number Card.

Dhriti's country of origin is a developing country and the migration policies for non-European citizens are rigid. As a consequence, her family cannot come and visit her and she does not want to go home without her husband, who is currently unemployed and does not have a Foreign Identification Number Card.

Dhriti has not been to Nepal for 10 years. The right to migrate is part of Article 13(12) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights but the reality is different. Many migrants from developing countries have difficulties in obtaining visas to enter so-called developed countries: "The past two decades have seen a dramatic realignment of international visa and direct airside transit visa regimes. In many parts of the world, such restrictions have cut across traditional bilateral and sub-regional routes limiting the movement of migrant labour and merchant traders where relatively free movement had existed before, sometimes for centuries (ILO, IOM, OHCHR, 2001: 5)

Sakti's testimony about the constant feeling of being a foreigner exemplifies the fact that even if she were in a better position compared to some of the other participants, there is a continuous fear about whether migration policies may change and the ways those changes would affect them as foreigners.

Aarin experienced the difficulties a person has when they find themselves in a situation where they need a healthcare assistance and their status in the host country is illegal. The institutions of the host countries are expected to design policies to facilitate the integration of the migrant community. This would help the migrants to feel that they are equal citizens with the rest of the population. D'Isanto, Fouskas and Verde (2016) state that the governments of host countries ought to create policies that would improve the position of illegal migrants: "Ideally, we would like to see a policy that will convert the existing inflows of unauthorised immigrants into legal inflows, allowing the hosting economy to reap any productivity benefits from low-skilled workers and forcing both employers and employees to adhere to the rules" (p. 1133).

Similarly to Dhriti and Aarin, Manasvi arrived with a tourist visa and she obtained the Foreigners Identification Number Card after three years.

Manasvi would love for her parents come and visit her, but she complains that the procedure is very long and costly, and it involves them travelling to India where the nearest embassy of the host country is located. Her dream is that her mother comes because she has never been outside Nepal.

Language barrier

Isphording (2015) observes that: “Low levels of language proficiency create high hurdles to participating in the labor market, joining in the political process, and engaging in everyday social interaction” (p. 2).

All of the participants encountered the language barrier once they arrived in the BC. None of them had any knowledge of the local languages spoken in the BC. Dhriti and Aarin were obliged to go to the hospital several times and the feeling of impotence when trying to understand and to express themselves in emergency situations made them realise the importance of knowing the local language. Virika did not feel motivated to learn the language. She unsuccessfully enrolled in several schools until she realised that the language barrier was affecting her attempts to find a job; it was then that she found strength to learn at least basic Spanish. Not speaking the language of the host country was frustrating for Aarin. She explained that it was tiring to use the mobile phone for every single phrase she wanted to utter. Manasvi finds the Spanish language difficult. The language barrier does not allow her to express herself properly or to hold her own in discussions or arguments.

The local language of the host country plays an important role for integration in the host society. Wang, Graaf and Nijkamp (2018) observe that similarities between the native language of the migrant and the language of the destination country facilitate assimilation and integration. However, the native languages of our participants are significantly dissimilar and the above-mentioned processes are slower. IOM (2013) states that: “For certain categories of migrants – namely the medium-skilled or those in medical professions – the lack of adequate knowledge of the host-country language, to the level needed to perform the specific professional activity, may be an obstacle to adequate labour market insertion in their destination countries [...]” (p. 39).

Discrimination and lack of social awareness from institutions

Minorities that are easily recognised by their facial characteristics or dress face discrimination, being prejudged and assigned stereotypes associated with their community. Most of the participants experienced some kind of discrimination: “[...] visible minorities in our society are sometimes faced with discrimination, being misunderstood, and prejudice. As in any society, more established groups are usually suspicious of newcomers” (Almutairi, 2015: 694).

All of the participants, except Mansvi, had had an unpleasant episode of being treated differently because of their obvious physical traits or their accent. Dhriti told us that on many occasions she has asked herself if she would have been treated differently if she was not a foreigner. The actual example she gives was the treatment received when she had to go to the hospital due to her son’s health issues. Another example is the behaviour by some professionals from social services. They are two different phenomena but they do overlap. Racism refers to discrimination based on physical traits such as skin colour, dress, etc., while xenophobia refers to the feeling of denigration of people who are foreign to a certain community (ILO, IOM, OHCHR, 2001).

Virika experienced one unpleasant situation while they were walking with her friend and someone started treating them with disrespect and telling them to go back to their countries. Luckily, in her experience, these type of behaviours are not more common than the positive ones. Xenophobia against non-nationals, especially migrants, is one of the strongest forms of contemporary racism. Among the key obstacles that migrants encounter in the host countries are the: “[...] anti-migrant sentiments and discriminatory practices. Such sentiments and practices are often reinforced by legislation, regulations and policies to restrict migratory flows, as evidenced by the increasing tendency to criminalise irregular migration. Addressing negative perceptions of migrants within host communities is therefore a key element of promoting their integration and enhancing their contribution to development” (The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, par.3).

Sakti observed that sometimes, there are people who treat her with disgrace and disrespect but similarly to Virika’s case, these incidents are fewer than the pleasant experiences she has had with native people. ILO, IOM and OHCHR (2001) report on the common anti-foreigner hostility globally: “These include incitement to and actions of overt exclusion,

hostility and violence against persons explicitly based on their perceived status as foreigners or non-nationals, as well as discrimination against foreigners in employment, housing or health care” (p. 9).

Aarin feels discriminated against mostly because of her physical appearance. Usually, when she has a job interview, she is asked if she could remove the hijab in the workplace. Another time, she experienced an unpleasant incident in a pharmacy. She was not able to understand the pharmacist and she was treated with disrespect and even questioned about why she does not speak the Spanish language. In their study on discrimination against women who wear headcurfs in job interviews, Ghumman and Ryan (2013) discovered that: “[...] Hijabis experience both interpersonal discrimination in the form of greater perceived negativity and less perceived interest and formal discrimination in the form of being less likely to be given permission to complete applications and to receive call backs as compared to non-Hijabi job applicants” (p. 688). The use of veil or hijab in the West is stereotypically seen as a threat or a sign of gender segregation. Zempi and Chakraborti (2015) consider that: “Taken in isolation or collectively, these stereotypes are commonly presented as justification for expressions and acts of hostility towards veiled Muslim women” (p. 44).

Finding a job

According to the IOM (2013), the underutilisation of migrants’ skills in European countries is quite significant: “In many Member States there is a considerable gap between the employment levels of third-country nationals and EU nationals” (p. 17). George and Ramkissoon (1998) claim that: “South Asian women are often forced to accept jobs that are beneath their qualifications and abilities because their credentials are not accredited and there are negative stereotypes of women of color⁵¹ in many workplaces” (p. 111).

There is an existing belief that migrants come to the host countries to take the jobs of native people. Constant (2014) disagrees with this statement and claims that: “Whether high- or low-skilled, migrants rarely substitute directly for native workers. Instead, migrants often complement native workers or accept jobs that natives don’t want or can’t do. They create new jobs by increasing production, engaging in self-employment, and easing upward job mobility for native workers. The presence of immigrants increases

⁵¹ We cite “women of colour” but we would have used the term “racialised women”.

demand and can spur new businesses to open, creating more jobs for immigrant and native populations” (p. 1). Native workers and migrant workers differ in language fluency, professional networks and social and cultural knowledge, states the author. As a matter of fact, the above-mentioned characteristics are some of the obstacles migrants find in their attempts to gain employment. Morokvasik (1984) points to the fact that women always work even if they are not in the labour market. The difference is that they are either paid or unpaid for their work depending on whether the work they do is recognised as an economic activity or not: “Women always work. They are not in and out of economic activity, but at various stages of their life cycle they are either paid for their work or not and their work is either recognised as economic activity or not” (p. 888).

At the beginning, Dhriti faced difficulties in finding a job. She associated this barrier with the language barrier. Most of the jobs offered were live-in jobs. At the beginning, she refused this type of job because she wanted to be with her family, but life circumstances made her accept a job as a live-in employee. However, the experience was not pleasant. After two days of hard work, the employers communicated to her that they were not able to offer her a work contract. This meant that she would not be able to apply for the Foreign Identification Number Card. What is more, they paid less than previously agreed. In another place, she made a mistake and did not tell her employers that she had a child. When the truth was discovered, they fired her. The explanation behind the lie was that many of her Nepali female friends told her that employers prefer single workers. Shirmohammadi, Beigi and Stuart (2018) worked with high-skilled migrants and their insertion into the labour marker. They discovered that participants were concerned about finding a job that would match their qualifications due to the lack of connections and networking. In our study, neither Sakti, Virika nor Aarin work in a sector that matches their qualifications. In the case of Aarin, she is not even participating in the formal labour market despite her qualifications. Sakti and Virika work as language teachers and we dare to say that if they had had the opportunity to work in jobs that match their qualifications, their salary would be higher. Sakti studied Information Technology and Human Resources. Virika studied Law. Shirmohammadi et. al. (2018) recommend that skilled migrants inform themselves about the variables that may affect their search of skilled jobs, ideally before migration. In addition to this, they ought to be aware of the fact that language proficiency is crucial in the search for a job.

Dhriti was the only one employed in her family at the moment of the interview. Her husband is not employed and she explains that the burden of having only one income in the family is heavy.

Virika came across difficulties when she started to search for a job and realised that without certain level of Spanish, she would not be able to find one. She explained that even if she had studied law, she is conscious that her focus ought to be aimed in another direction because a legal career in the host country is completely different from in her own. Apart from that, she was motivated to start a Master's Degree but she dropped the idea because of the high costs. Before working as a language teacher, Virika worked in the housekeeping department of a hotel in Bilbao. Constant (2014) claims that migrant workers are capable of accepting jobs below their qualifications in order to enter the labour market of the host country.

In the same way as the previous testimonies, Sakti had difficulties finding a job even though she is highly qualified and had permission to work and reside not only in the BC but in the Schengen Zone. She relates the employment difficulty to the language barrier. Vandana and Das Gupta (2018) claim that very often, highly skill and educated women follow their husband's dreams to move to a foreign country and after reaching it, they realised that they have fewer opportunities to match their qualifications with employment. Thus, they need to overcome this new challenge and compromise.

Aarin is the only participant who at the time of the interview was unemployed. Occasionally, she works as a housekeeper, but it is a job without a work contract. She and her family were obliged to ask for a government grant. She believes that one of the factors that prevents her from finding a job is the recognition of the diplomas which is also related to her legal status in the host country. She thinks that with the diploma recognition she would be able to aspire for a more skilled job. Aarin confessed that she never ever thought that she would have been working in the cleaning sector when she was in her country of origin: "Many accept jobs they would not have dreamt of while studying at school back home" (Favell, 2008: 711). The author claims that many qualified migrants become the servant class in the host countries.

Favell (2008) says that many migrants work below their qualification level in order to gain a wage and to run the family. Usually the jobs they take are the ones that Western

citizens no longer take as in the case of Manasvi, Aarin and Dhriti. The three of them work in the housekeeping sector.

Living in a small village did not help Manasvi to find a job. This, in addition to the language barrier, made her journey towards economic stability and inclusion more difficult. The language barrier affected all of our participants' search for a job. Nonetheless, once the basic knowledge of Spanish language was acquired, this obstacle transformed into an asset, as we will see in the next section.

Münz, Straubhaar, Vadean and Vadean (2007) recommend three measures that would help establish a better integrated labour market in the host countries: The first measure is to improve mobility in general. The second measure that applied to our participants is to improve free mobility and access to the labour market for migrants from developing countries and finally, to implement measures for economic migrants.

Degree Recognition

The IOM (2013) recognises various factors that affect the possibilities that migrants from developing countries will find a skilled job. Apart from discrimination and the language barrier, which have already been discussed, they add the recognition of their degrees: "In most EU Member States, foreign qualifications, especially if earned in third countries, are largely discounted in the labour market. The same applies to work experience abroad" (p. 18).

Virika decided not to submit her documents for the recognition of her university degrees after being informed of the procedure – a procedure that is time consuming, costly and may suppose an additional sacrifice – repeating an entire university degree in her case (she studied Law). Unlike Virika, Aarin is willing to submit her university degree for recognition but the obstacle she encounters is her legal status in the BC. She does not have a residence permit in the host country. Consequently, she is not able to start the procedure. Although Aarin has a Bachelor's and Master's Degree, she has decided to study Secondary Education in an Adult Education Centre with the hope that in this way she would have some kind of educational background in the host country.

Manasvi is not encouraged by the idea of submitting her diploma for recognition. This is due to the fact that she has observed other people's experiences; some of them are more educated than she is but they still earn low wages and work in low-paid sectors. The IOM

(2013) observes that there are constant changes in the range of competences in the modern labour market which seeks skills other than those obtained through formal education. This has led to: “[...] increased interest in developing the procedures for the validation of nonformal and informal learning in many EU countries. Following the European Commission proposal of September 2012 for a Council Recommendation on the validation of non-formal and informal learning to establish relevant national systems, governments may consider taking into account the specific needs of migrants in the validation of competences gained through non-formal and informal learning. Such an approach could bear an additional positive impact on the labour market integration perspectives of migrants through detecting and recognising the value of additional skills and qualities both of already-residing and newcomer migrants. It further facilitates job mobility and the matching between migrants’ skills and labour market needs, with a view to addressing skill gaps” (p. 39).

Reconciliation of Work and Family Life

At the moment of the interview, Dhriti’s husband was unemployed. However, thinking about future, she is concerned that if her husband finds a job they will not be able to take care of their son or finish the household responsibilities. In addition to this, they cannot afford a babysitter. Bonizzoni (2014) says that: “Work–family reconciliation is also jeopardized by the unfriendly work schedules (live-in arrangements, holiday/evening or night shifts) [...]” (p. 17). She further states that some women are forced to leave their jobs or opt for casual employment because there is no one to take care of their children. However, this is not an option for Dhriti or Manasvi because their residence permit in the host country depends on their employment, as does the sustenance of the family.

Manasvi is willing to spend more quality time with her son. She finds it difficult to balance work and family life because she works in the afternoon and her son comes back from school in the afternoon. Bonizzoni (2014) notes down that there is a lack of research on the coping strategies of migrant women in balancing work outside the home and family life. Research has been focussed mainly on transnational caregiving strategies. In her study, she worked with migrant women from Italy whose profile was characterised by unstable, low-paid jobs, whereas informal work was common not only among undocumented women but also with documented migrants. Burnet, Gatrell, Cooper and Sparrow (2010) claim that “gender-neutral” work-family life policies fail to acknowledge the fact that domestic chores are gendered and, usually, women are the ones who take

care of this responsibility: “[...] this lack of acknowledgement allows the very much gendered imbalance still present in many modern dual-working families to carry on under a false veneer of increased parity and balance” (p. 546).

Lack of Networks

Meeting new friends in the host country was a new challenge they faced. The only reference they had upon arrival were their husbands. Thus, the situation was challenging given the fact that they did not know the local language and they were adults who had to start from zero and out of their comfort zone. Virika said that even if her husband had already lived in the BC for many years, he did not help her to meet more people. She had to do it herself. Sakti observes that at the beginning the language barrier was the principal obstacle to network and to expand her acquaintances. Aarin and her husband encountered obstacles from the very first moment. They had a contact person who was supposed to help them, but he did not respond. Migrant networks are the social structures that connect migrants and play an important role in the current migration flow (Taylor, 2016). Wnag, Graaf and Nijkamp (2018) state that on one hand, strong community networks may be harmful for the integration of migrants but, on the other hand, it may be beneficial in the short term: “For example, strong migrants networks may yield lower native language proficiency leading to persistent cultural barriers between native and migrant communities” (p. 76).

- *Facilitating Factors for Inclusion*

Legal Status in the Host Country

Virika is one of the participants who migrated with a residence permit in the host country, which automatically gave her permission to work. Virka, herself, is conscious that she was in a privileged position as compared to other women migrants who had to struggle significantly to obtain the residence card or even to risk it and to stay without documents. Sakti is the second participant who migrated with permission to reside and work in any Schengen country.

Positive Attitudes towards Migrants and Lifestyle

The attitudes of native people towards migrants are more important for shaping migration policies than any other factors: “[...] attitudes toward immigration are shaped by (and possibly shape) views about a variety of different channels through which immigration

affects the economy, national culture, and the social status of natives. Views toward immigrants are also shaped by (or possibly shape) underlying attitudes about social homogeneity and the desirability of social contact with other people” (Card, Dustmann, Preston, 2005: 39).

Although the participants pointed to discriminatory experiences, in most of the cases they encountered native people who were kind and eager to help them. Dhriti directs the attention to one local woman who helped her while she was feeling sick. Virka feels comfortable in the host country despite the difference that separate her culture from the host culture. She thinks that it is a good place for women compared to India. In addition to this, she enjoys the lifestyle of the local people. Apart from that, even if she did not speak Spanish, local people were cooperative and willing to help her whenever needed. Another feature that affected her inclusion was the feeling of safety that she did not manage to experience in her country of origin. She makes special reference to her daughter and the sense of peace she has in terms of her daughter’s safety. If they were in India she would have been worried in the same way that her parents were worried for her. Sakti enjoyed exploring the city soon after migrating. She also feels delighted by the kindness of the neighbours and the local people in general. What Aaarin mostly appreciates in the host country is the healthcare system and education. Manasvi likes the host country because it makes her feel as if she were at home. Despite the differences, she finds similarities in the infrastructure. Apart from that, she finds Basque people kind and cooperative. Borgonovi and Pokropek (2019) in their study discovered that education plays an important role in the levels of opposition and acceptance of the migrant community: “Our analyses indicate that education was strongly associated with how opposed to migration individuals in Europe reported to be, with better educated individuals expressing lower levels of opposition than poorly educated individuals” (p. 14).

Motivation to Learn the Local Language

Isphording (2015) claims that language skills increase with the time spent in the host country, always by learning and doing. The author associates language proficiency with better employment opportunities. The general recommendation to foster language acquisition by migrants is the following: “Point-based immigration selection rules, language classes, and citizenship incentives are policy options that can be used to encourage language acquisition” (p. 1). When motivation is discussed, Isphording (2015)

says that the ability to communicate in the local language is one of the advantages for social and economic integration: “Having adequate language skills allows immigrants to progress along the job ladder, increases their employment probability, and eases their access to better-paying jobs” (p. 2).

The willingness to learn the language of the host country is one of the factors that impacted the faster inclusion in the new society. All of the participants except one were highly motivated to speak the local language. In the case of Virka, even if she did not want to, she learnt basic Spanish. Dhriti’s will is manifested in the fact that although she cannot manage the schedule to go to a language school, she learns Spanish on her own, via the Internet. Sakti was very motivated to learn the local language. By the time the classes started, she had decided to learn on her own through books and the Internet. Aarin started learning Spanish at home and then she enrolled in an Adult Education Centre where she continued learning the language, until she started attending the classes in the “Andretxea”.

Employment

Könönen (2019) claims that employment offers a means of support and in many occasions is the precondition for a residence permit and rights in the host country: “In addition to offering means of support, employment had a strategic role in accumulating the funds to fulfil income requirements for residence permits or in obtaining a more secure status by applying for a work permit” (p. 789). Furthermore: “The function of employment as a precondition for residence and rights points to a new kind of neoliberal selective logic in immigration policies, by which economic contributions become decisive criteria for qualification” (p.790).

Employment is an important feature of inclusion in the host society and for insertion into the labour market that in Dhriti’s case meant a work contract and permission to reside in the BC. Virika changed her mindset and applied for jobs that did not match her qualifications. However, she was eager to find a job and for that reason she had to compromise. The motivation to find a job affected her low motivation to learn the local language. After learning the language, she encouraged herself to change sectors and teach English, which helped her to obtain the Cambridge Language Certificate. One of the assets for Sakti was the fact that she had a work permit in the host country and a support network to assist her in the search for a job. After migrating she realised that teaching motivates

her more than Information Technology or Human Resources. Aarin is the only unemployed participant in the study. However, she and her family applied for the Income Tax Rate, a Government grant that helps them to carry on while they are in search of employment. Manasvi found a job in the childcare sector and she feels comfortable in this sector because in Nepal she worked with children too.

Friendships and Networks

The Nepali community in the BC is strong and Dhriti relies on them for any issue or problems they have. They also gather for festivities and holidays. One of the advantages for Virika was the fact that her husband had already been living for years in the BC, he spoke the local language and he knew places. As a result of her husband's employment, Sakti had the possibility to be part of a support network whose aim was to assist the family members of foreign employees in the BC. The network support assisted her in finding a job and connected her with some language academies with whom they collaborated. Manasvi migrated to the BC only after her husband was there. She stated that she did not have to struggle like other migrants who go to a foreign country for the first time because, in the meantime, her husband already knew places and had a basic level of the local language. Light, Bhachus and Karageorgis (1989) state that networks enable migrants to find a job or housing easily and they can rely on people whom they trust. They put an emphasis on employment: "A big improvement over existing push and pull theories of migration, including world systems theory, immigration network theory still needs to recognise that immigrant networks create employment; they do not just facilitate the immigrants' job searches" (p. 7). Meeteren and Pereira (2018) claim that migrant networks are an important part of understanding migration flows and as a resource to new migrants in the face of a lack of assistance beyond migrant networks. Ryan, Sales and Tilki (2008) agree with the previously cited authors on the fact that migrant networks may help provide basic requirements, including employment, any information needed or housing. Nevertheless, they warn that sometimes these networks limit the migrant community, i.e.: "[...] such networks may lock migrants into specific ethnic niches thus exacerbating competition, rivalry and exploitation. This can result in migrants remaining within thick bonds of trusted family and friends [...]" (p. 686).

Friendships helped Dhriti to find employment. One of her friends suggested she search for a job on an employment website. Virika has made friendships on her own, through the School of Languages and at work. She gets along with her neighbours too. Sakti described

her family in the BC as consisting of her husband, her friends, her neighbours and her colleagues. The relationship built with them makes her feel as if she had never left her country of origin. Aarin is thankful to her friends who are always there for her and help her with the Spanish language. In their study with migrants in Poland, Ryan, Sales and Tilki (2008) discovered that some migrants managed to construct a wider circle of friendships from diverse backgrounds (usually other migrants). Rayan (2015) states that the focus on friendship among migrants gives a completely new meaning to the processes of relating through social networks. However, the path towards making new friends in a foreign country is not that simple. Migrants may encounter difficulties, as in our case, with the language barrier or the context. For example, if they do not work it is more difficult to expand their social network. Women who enrolled in a Language Academy had more opportunities to meet new people from different backgrounds: "People may form friendships based on a wide array of shared identities not just ethnicity. Rather than being a given, a-priori condition of bonding, shared identities may be an outcome of interpersonal relationships; gradually co-constructed over time" (Ryan, 2015: 1680).

Cooperation in the Couple

All of the participants claimed that their partners were cooperative at home. In Dhriti's case, it is her husband who takes care of the domestic chores and their son because currently he is unemployed. Virika told us that their life changed with the birth of their daughter and that they became more responsible. They cooperate in the upbringing of their daughter. Sakti and her husband do not have children but they both take care of the household chores. Aarin explained that her husband changed after migration to the BC. The education he received was a patriarchal one, where women were responsible for the domestic chores and the upbringing of the children. In the host country, he was obliged to learn the basics of raising a child and household activities. Manasvi and her husband cooperate in terms of the domestic chores and their son. They usually talk and then they organise between themselves how to accomplish the tasks.

Torosyan, Gerber and Goñalons-Pons (2016) claim that international migration can reshape gender relations in the host country. In a study with Polish migrants in Norway, Żadkowska, Kosakowska-Berezecka, Szlendak and Besta (2020) discovered that living in a society such as Norwegian society, with high gender equality policies, encourages migrant couples to adopt gender equal norms regarding household chores and parenting. In addition to this, the results showed that men were willing to motivate other migrant

men to be involved in domestic chores and children's upbringing if the host culture was more inclusive and less threatening to migrants: “ [...] our results show that these indicators will be higher in countries where welfare state policies support it, are seen as profitable, and that advocating for other migrant men to become more involved in household and childcare duties is stronger when one feels that his or her values are not threatened” (p. 17).

7.8.3. REMODELING OF VALUES

Lonnqvist, Jasinskaja-Lahti, Verkasalo (2011) highlight the fact that although migration may seem an ideal atmosphere for studying the changes of values that migrants undergo, there is almost no research on the topic. Previous research has shown that second-generation children of migrants adapt more easily than their parents to the values of the host country.

Williams, Thornton and Young-DeMarco (2014) claim that research scholars have understood that values have a significant influence on decision-making, gender roles, marriage, childcare, divorce, the couple relationship and other aspects of social life. Furthermore, the longer the migrants spend time in the host culture, the easier the adjustment to that culture. Then, values may change as a result of different migrant experiences. Rudnev (2014) investigated the value adaptation of migrants through the role of country of birth and host country. The results of his research showed that: “the link between migrants' values and values in the country of their birth is not significantly stronger than the link to values of their residence country. Furthermore, the values in the country of residence are even closer to the individual values of migrants than the values common among the population of the sending country. This finding is the same for the respondents fully socialised in the country of their birth (i.e., migrants who had more opportunities to adopt the values of their country of birth before emigrating)” (p. 1638). We assume that networks among migrants are highly influenced by the host societies and for that reason, they fail to reproduce the values of their countries of birth, as observed by the author.

- ***Attitudes towards Menstruation***

Dhriti does not follow the norms of her religion regarding menstruation in the host country. Women in Nepal are not allowed to go Temples and worship God when they are

menstruating. Similarly to Dhriti, Manasvi has rejected the norms that women follow when they have menstruation. She practises her daily prayers without any remorse.

- ***Rejection of the Caste System***

The caste system does not exist in the host country and Dhriti has realised that living in a society where social difference among people is as not as visible as in Nepal makes her feel more satisfied. Not having to think about caste at every step she takes makes her life more comfortable. Virika does not support the caste system. In the host country, she has come to the understanding that people have more or less equal opportunities and that they are not based on their social class background.

- ***The Role of Women***

Since Dhriti's migration to the BC was her second migratory experience, she told us that her mindset changed after leaving her country of origin in relation to domestic chores. Coming from a culture where the private was reserved for women and the public for men, she has learned new ways of coping with the household and parenting in the host country. These ways involve the cooperation of her husband.

Virika remarks the difference among Indian women and native women after migration. She noticed that women in her culture of origin are lacking freedom to take their own decisions and do what they want to do. Watching other couples coping with the domestic chores and parenting had an impact on her behaviour towards these issues. She decided to accept the values of the host country and redistribute the responsibilities.

Our participant from Bangladesh has learned that couple cooperation is the key to a healthy relationship. She comes from a culture where men's role was in the public sector and women's role in the private. Now, both she and her husband have changed their mindset and cooperate. Another thing noticed by Aarin is the freedom of women to behave according to their own will. For instance, pregnant women in Bangladesh have to behave in a certain way and their freedom of movement is limited. She was pregnant in the host country, but she felt free enough to go out in the street without any shame or remorse. In addition to this, kissing and hugging in public is not a "crime" and she does not feel as if she is a bad person doing it.

- ***Arranged Marriage***

Dhriti married to satisfy her parent's will. Nowadays, she believes that arranged marriages are not the best choice because, usually, they are not based on personal decision but on that of the parents. Virika does not consider arranged marriage for her daughter. Her daughter is the one who needs to decide whether she wants to marry in the first place and then, to whom.

- ***Transmission of Values to Children***

The way in which Dhriti educated her son differs from the education she was given by her parents. She puts a special emphasis on education. Her parents were not educated and she did not have a model to follow. She teaches her son the importance of education for a better future.

Virika claims that she would like to have an open and close relationship with her daughter, a relationship that would be quite the opposite of the one she had with her parents when she was a child.

Wearing a hijab is part of Muslim culture. We were interested to know Aarin's opinion on the matter, given the fact that her daughter was born and raised in the BC. She firmly states that she would never force her daughter to put on the veil. She will teach her the values of Islam but she would not impose wearing the veil.

Manasvi teaches her son in accordance with the values of the host country.

- ***Importance of Leisure/Lifestyle***

Migration made Dhriti realise that spending quality free time is of utmost importance. She has observed the lifestyle of people in the BC and understood that apart from work, women have the right to enjoy life. This is due to the fact that in Nepal, women spend their time dedicated to household chores or parenting.

Virika decided to pay more attention to her wellbeing after observing the lifestyle of people in the host country. Doing sports and eating a healthy diet is one of the changes introduced after her migration. In addition to this, she has learned to enjoy the small pleasures of life and spend quality free time either with her husband or by herself. Another thing perceived in the host country is the quality of life of older people.

Manasvi agrees with Virika on the quality of life that elderly people have in the host country. In addition to this, self-care is another feature that she has introduced into her life after watching other women and the time they dedicate to themselves.

Social Inequality is Created, not Predestined

Dhriti has noticed that in the host country, the gap between social classes is not as marked as in her native country.

Virika observed that unlike the host society, in India there is an enormous gap between social classes. On one hand, people are extremely poor and on the other hand, there are people who are very rich and they do not take action to improve the life of the most vulnerable. Another example that portrays this is the treatment people receive in the hospitals. Thus, in India, the language used in hospitals is English and many people from lower-class backgrounds are not able to understand when the staff talks to them. In the host country, the language used by the staff is the local language of the country. A further example is the selectivity based on social class when the children enrol at school. If parents are not educated, children are not able to study in certain schools.

The testimony of Sakti is similar to Virika's. She has observed that in the host country the minimum wage has been established for all people irrespective of their background. In India, factors such as family background, religion and caste are taken into consideration. Moreover, the work of the institutions is far more effective than in her country of origin. Another thing that she likes the way the medical staff treats their patients.

- ***Viewpoints on Religion and Devotion***

Before migrating, Virika followed some customs of Hinduism that now she disapproves of. For example, she used to donate money to the Temples, a custom practised by rich and poor followers of Hinduism.

Sakti states that she has lost the habit of praying and worshipping God every day. Furthermore, she does not give too much attention to the celebration of the festivals.

Dhriti and Manasvi do not follow the menstruation tradition when they have their monthly period and they pray or worship.

7.8.4. EMPOWERMENT

In this study, the aim was to portray the stories of five migrant women as agents of change and as women who can inspire other women. Although migration is often associated with disempowerment, our objective was to describe the experience as a catalyst of change and human development. Kweun Yu (2007) states that disempowerment in migration has been given a great importance where: “[...] their individual agency and their ability as social agents to negotiate and transform the structure are denied outright” (p. 13). The focus on empowerment rather than disempowerment in this study does not deny the existence of disempowering features.

Allah Nikkhah, Redzuan and Abu-Samah (2010) associate empowerment with development: “Empowerment is a central concept in the elaboration of an alternative vision of development. It encompasses both the process of emancipation, the shifts in power relations which begin to enable the oppressed to take control of their own futures, and the ultimate goal of an equitable and just society” (p. 226). In this study we were interested in the individual empowerment of migrant women in the BC. Moyle, Dollard and Biswas (2006) define personal empowerment as focusing on: “[...] individual strength and self-esteem to gain control over available resources and to exercise their right to obtain quality of life for themselves and their family” (p. 248). In their study on the empowerment of rural women in India they discovered that through specific empowerment programmes, women: “[...] have enhanced meaningfulness in their daily lives, increased personal control over spending, enhanced social networks, reduced boredom, increased decision-making power in the home, enhanced independence and purpose” (p. 260).

From our study, we have concluded that the very act of migration is empowering to women. Given the fact that they come from countries where the family bond is significant, becoming independent and relying on their own had a positive effect on their improvement. Similarly, Shakya and Yang (2019) in their work with migrant women from Nepal detected that the experience of mobility: “[...] enriched and empowered women. The idea that living and travelling far from home is in itself an education is well-known” (p. 119).

The women participants in this study are seen as agents of change: “In other words the decision to move produces a set of changes in the socio-economic status of the migrants

and their families, which, directly and indirectly empower the female migrants and broadly speaking can be seen as development” (Venditto, 2018: 88). In addition to this, we discovered that the migratory experience despite all the obstacles is: “[...] growing process; in the end the migrant has undergone a profound transformation” (p. 98).

- ***Capacity to Express Themselves in the Local Language***

Being able to speak in Spanish made Dhriti feel more confident in everyday situations. Even though Virika showed a resistance to learning the local language, once she achieved the basic level and was able to understand local people, she was able to express herself and to find a job. Sakti was so willing to learn the language of the host country that she started learning it on her own. Being able to express herself in Spanish is an empowering feature for both everyday life situations and employment. Aarin feels comfortable speaking in Spanish to the extent that she preferred to do the interviews in Spanish rather than in English. Manasvi also chose to speak in Spanish rather than in English.

- ***Decision-making Capacity***

Migration gave Dhriti the opportunity to decide by herself. While she was living in her country of origin, every decision was supposed to meet her parents’ will. Like Dhriti, Virika feels capable of taking her own decisions without having to justify herself in front of her family. Unlike in Bangladesh, Aarin feels free to take her own decisions on what suits her better, from clothing to food choice, leisure, etc.

The new responsibilities women encounter in the host country affect positively their decision-making power, which is associated with development (Venditto, 2018). Allah Nikkhha et. al. (2010) state that a person is empowered when she is able to define her own goals and to act in accordance with them. In other words, people are empowered when they can define their own goals and act upon them. Ortiz Rodríguez, Pillai and Ribeiro Ferreira (2016), in their study on autonomy and decision-making capacity with Mexican women, suggest that decision-making is determined by various factors: employment, the participation of the husband in domestic chores and autonomy through the level of women’s agency.

- ***Self-reliance, Self-sufficiency and Self-care***

These three empowering features encourage women to believe in themselves in the pursuit of their goals. For example, if their goal is to earn money to sustain the family,

the strong belief in their self would eventually result in accomplishing that goal (Moyle et. al, 2010).

To be able to take responsibility for her family and future, including economic wellbeing, is an act of maturity and putting all one's trust into one's own capacities. Migration influenced Dhriti in a way that she learned that she could rely on herself alone in a place where the family would not be there to help her. Actually, she stated that she would not be able to live in a joint family, as in her country of origin.

Virika claims decisively that she is not afraid of being alone. She refers to the hypothetical situation in which her husband had married her and then left alone for the BC. In India, many migrant men do this. Virika would have given him a divorce and rebuilt her life alone or with another person. Apart from this, she relies on herself to expand her friendships because her husband did not put much effort into introducing her to new people in the host country. This self-dependency is something that migration brought to her because, as she explains, women in India do not value themselves enough. Now she feels capable of accomplishing any goal.

Sakti realised the importance of feeling good with herself and after migrating she started taking care of her diet and eating habits.

Independence is what Manasvi associates with migration. She has learnt to cope with all difficulties by herself and to do everything relying on herself. She thinks that if she had not gone through the experience of migration, she would not have learnt to be independent. In addition to this, she has learned to love herself and to treat herself better. What is more, she has understood that the quality of life may be wonderful even if you are elderly.

In their work with Nepali women, Shakya and Yang (2019) discovered that confronting situations they have never experienced before made them more confident and changed their image of themselves: "The initial harsh periods have allowed them to face and handle problems by themselves, for some for the first time in their life. Confidence in themselves, believing in their ability, and seeing themselves as someone who was also capable of decision-making was itself a transformative experience" (p. 114). They claimed that the capacities they gained and the ability to handle difficult situations are things that will remain forever.

- ***Financial Independence***

Erman, Kalaycioglu and Rittersberger-Tilic (2002), in their research with Turkish migrant women, discovered that work-related experiences may empower them. Employment affected their level of self-value and competence. Other women in the study related self-worth with the capacity to contribute to the family: “[...] there are other working women who feel important due to family-related reasons. To know that they are contributing (or have contributed) to their families’ better lives, and more importantly, to their children’s education, is another source of self-worth for migrant women” (p. 405).

For Dhriti, employment is the path towards independence. Not having to depend on her family or husband makes her feel more comfortable with herself and more secure.

Virika relates employment to independence and self-accomplishment. In addition to this, employment may expand her network of contacts. She states that her current situation is a result of her own choices. Nobody pressured her or obliged her to do something against her own will. If she had been in India, she would have had pressure put on her by her family or the in-laws, she thinks.

Employment for Sakti is a tool for expressing herself. She would like to serve as a role model to others and to make a contribution to society with her work. In addition to this, the same as with the other participants, employment is a tool for financial independence.

Shakya and Yang (2019) state that beyond a doubt a work permit in the host country is far more empowering for migrant women than fixed employment with one employer or, as in some of our cases, a situation where women’s status is illegal until they find this fixed employer. This is feasible, but it would require radical changes in migration policies in the host country. However, it would increase the possibilities for women’s empowerment and it would decrease human rights abuses and risks.

- ***Freedom of Choice***

Dhriti explains that if she was living in Nepal her choices would have not been taken into consideration. In fact, she would have had to accept her family’s choices and, as she herself stated, work as a servant in the house. In the host country, she feels free to choose whatever suits her best.

In a similar vein, Virika feels free enough to express her opinion and to follow her heart in any decision she takes. In India, she was obliged to stick to the rules set by the family. Manasvi's statement agrees with the previous ones. In the host country, she has freedom of choice and does not carry with her the family burden.

- *Self-esteem*

Sakti's perception on migration is that it gave her confidence to adjust and to cope with situations she had never experienced before. It gave her the possibility to discover herself and to improve herself. She feels confident enough to deal with uncertainties and fears and to learn constantly from the new circumstances. Overall, the migratory experience made her feel confident to the extent that if she was about to move to a different country again, she would be able to adapt and readapt well. In that sense, she feels that she has evolved thanks to the opportunity she was given to live in a different place other than her homeland. The evolution refers to being more open-minded and to seeing life from different perspectives. In that way, she feels more confident with her dressing style. Before migration, she used to wear formal clothes that usually covered her body. Now, she feels comfortable in her body and she experiments with different styles. Manasvi has gained self-confidence with migration, a characteristic lacking in many Nepali women as observed by her.

Venditto (2018) claims that migration improves women's self-esteem and autonomy as well as their influence in the families of their countries of origin. The latter was not the scope of our study even though there are some participants who support their families financially in their countries of origin.

- *Strength*

Sakti feels stronger after coming to the host country because, as she explained, she found a place where she could finally be herself. For example, she did not want to use make-up but in India it was a kind of a social imposition for girls to wear make-up. In the BC, she has seen that this kind of formality is non-existent and being able to be herself and to be comfortable with her natural physical appearance made her stronger.

Aarin feels that migration strengthened her. In the past, she sees herself as a naive, sensitive girl and now she is strong and practical as a result of the changes that arose with migration.

- *Networking among Women*

Dhriti is an active participant in a Nepali women's network in Bilbao. The objective of their gathering is to strengthen the ties among them and to transmit the values of Nepali culture to the second generation in the host country. Apart from the alliances created through the association, Dhriti has established friendships with other women from different backgrounds.

Virika's friendships are diverse. She has friends from different parts of the world and one of these women had an immense impact on her with her personal experience; the way the woman coped with her divorce, inspired her and made her feel stronger. In the future, she has in mind starting an association of Asian women in the BC to assist them and to create a network where they would be able to express themselves and they would also be able to do something together.

Sakti participates in PWN, a professional network of women. Their aim is to support women in terms of entrepreneurship. They organise workshops and discussion panels on global problems. Besides, they focus their work on the challenges women may face in certain professions or the balance between work and family life, focusing on the personal challenges women face in their every-day lives. Her opinion is that alliances among women are more than necessary because despite the progress, women's position in society is still below that of men. However, she is critical towards some empowering programmes for women which, instead of empowering women, only want to profit out of the situation. In one of the PWR meetings she met one of her closest friends in the host country, who introduced her to more contacts.

Aarin is part of an Equality Service Centre where she learns Spanish. This is a place for women from diverse backgrounds where, apart from learning the language of the host country, they do different activities focused on gender equality awareness. Apart from this, her neighbour, a woman, is one of the closest people she has in the host country. She accompanied her when she gave birth to her daughter and Aarin can count on her for whatever she needs. Furthermore, Aarin is serving as a role model to other migrant women, encouraging them to start learning the Spanish language and helping them with bureaucracy issues – the same kinds of issues that she and her family had once they arrived in the BC, but they did not know anyone to help them.

Manasvi participates in an association of women. There, she sees an opportunity to practice Spanish and to meet women. She also has recommended the association to other women. Apart from women in the association, she has established friendships with the mothers of her son's classmates. They can count on her and she can count on them.

All of our participants except one are part of some association of women. However, the woman who does not participate in any female group aspires to create an association of Asian women in the BC. Allah Nikkiah et. al. (2010) state that working together enables women to share their knowledge and skills and to acquire new knowledge and skills. In addition to this, they become aware of their position as women in the household, the community and the society. In her study on women doing friendships and empowerment, Green (1998) explains that: "Women's talk, an essential ingredient of women's friendships, accomplishes more than meets the eye; it includes discourses of belonging and similarity which enable women to 'mirror' traditional aspects of femininity such as caring and vulnerability, whilst at the same time allowing for contradictory or counter discourses of difference" (p. 183).

We close the chapter by summarising the empowerment characteristics that were discovered in the interviews with the migrant women from South Asia:

CHART 15. Summary of Empowering Features

EMPOWERMENT FEATURES OF SOUTH ASIAN WOMEN IN THE BC
Capacity to Speak the Language of the Host Country
Decision-making Capacity
Self-reliance
Self-sufficiency
Financial Independence
Freedom of Choice
Self-esteem
Strength
Networking among women

Source: Prepared by the author

CONCLUSIONS

“we are either going to have a future
where women lead the way to make
peace with the Earth or we are not
going to have a human future at all”

Vandana Shiva

This section is the last part of our humble contribution to research. Here, we present the general conclusions of this study hoping that future researchers continue the exploration, overcoming the obstacles we encountered during the research process. Some of the limitations of this study are presented here.

The first limitation is that we have interviewed women whose migration was not autonomous. It would be valuable to work with South Asian migrant women who have migrated alone. The second limitation is that we only encompassed heterosexual women. Studies with South Asian migrant women whose sexual orientation does not fit the heteronormative schema is not only desired but necessary. The final limitation is that all of our participants identified themselves with a certain religion, even though the intensity of the religiosity varied. It would be interesting to work with South Asian non-religious women and see the differences.

We highly encourage future researchers to explore the area of South Asian migration in the BC and generate new knowledge useful for society and academia. We continue with the general conclusions.

Feminism is a political philosophy that strives for social justice and women's freedom. The affirmation that women differed from men in power, dignity, authority and knowledge generated the belief that women are unequal by nature (Valcárcel, 1997). For that reason, the feminist movement is in a constant pursuit of emancipation through the category "woman", questioning the world, looking at the boundaries that limit women's development and aspiring to transform social relations (Patel and Khajuria, 2016).

The first wave of feminism detects the fact that women were perceived as different by nature from men. The second wave is centred on the sex-gender dichotomy and the third wave identifies inequalities based on social class, ethnic group, religion, etc. (Rodríguez, 2002). The fourth wave of feminism is characterised by the growing use of social media as a useful tool to debate, to create networks and to be active (Munro, 2013; Silvestre Cabrera et. al., 2020; Zimmerman, 2017). The typology of South Asian feminisms differs from Western feminisms. They criticise their Western colleagues for the appropriation of the term as Western. The first wave was represented by educated and high-class women. In the second wave, middle-class women began to participate and they criticised high-class women for perpetuating unequal relations among women and men (Patel, 2016).

The third wave is characterised by marginalised communities and is the wave that allowed South Asian women to define feminism from their viewpoint (Patel, 2017).

The struggles of South Asian women were different from the struggles of their Western counterparts (Basin and Khan, 1989). They had their own vision of feminism that represented the struggles of Asian women (Aquino, 1990). The critique was against the Eurocentric standpoint of Western women that did not consider ethnicity and class in their feminisms. What is more, they viewed non-Western norms as erroneous (Nussbaum, 2000; Mosedale, 2005).

Research from a feminist perspective is interested in the experiences of women from their own standpoint, breaking ethnocentric, androcentric, classist and gender binaries practices. Intersectionality is one of the key features of feminist research for understanding the ways multiple forms of inequality compound themselves and create obstacles (Crenshaw, 2018). The goal is to comprehend how caste, class, ethnicity, race, age, gender and ability shape the experiences of women (Patel, 2016).

Gender roles are a social construction and the differences are not a result of biology but socio-cultural phenomena (Lindsey, 1990; Lagarde, 1996; Pyke, 1996; Amorós, 2000; Stolcke, 2004). Power relations are asymmetrical and they are reproduced due to culturally appropriate ways that favour them (Pyke, 1996).

The captivity of women consists of the deprivation of women from independence, power over themselves, liberty and capacity (Lagarde, 2005). In South Asian patriarchal societies the role of women is determined by their caste, class, religion, division of labour, etc. (Patel, 2018). The deprivation of women is associated with *Pativratya* or the principle of social hierarchisation.

Patriarchy is a system that shapes the values of culture based on male dominance in the entire organisation of societies. Women are in a symbolically inferior position to men as a result of different cultural features (Valcárcel, 1997). The oppression of women is situated within a symbolic order that is culturally constructed. In this system, men are associated with culture and women are associated with nature (Ortner, 1974). Patriarchy is challenged through women's consciousness (Castells, 1997).

Cultural identity is a human construction and it represents the social group to which individuals belong (Carrasco, 2011). The identities of women are diverse and they create

the condition of being a woman. Lagarde (2000) identifies assigned identity, learnt identity and internalised identity.

Religion is challenged to reconsider its practices in the realm of gender equality and social justice (Shukla-Bhatt, 2008). The feminist interpretation of religion is focused on the creation of religions that reflect women's spirituality and women-oriented rituals and symbolic interpretation.

Migration is a possibility for gender transformation (Escudero Espinalt, 2015). Women migrate as a result of quality of life, family values, economic conditions or the individual situation of each woman (Caritas Internationalis, 2012). In South Asia, migration is a result of the subordination of women, sexual violence in the family or caste, marginalisation, unequal opportunities for women or search for freedom (Balbuena, 2003; Patel, 2016). Migration has the consequence of emancipation (Marinucci, 2007).

Research with women from developing countries in the BC is relatively new. The number of South Asian women in the BC is growing constantly and there is a need to explore the new phenomenon.

Empowerment is a fundamental strategy to combat gender inequality and promote the development of women. Empowerment challenges power relations in terms of class, caste, race, gender, questioning male dominance and female subordination (Batliwala, 1997). It is a tool for the improvement of women's self-esteem, self-confidence, capacity for decision-making, etc. (Escudero Espinalt, 2014).

Resources, agency and achievements are the key constituents of empowerment (Kabeer, 1999). It is a continuous process and there is no measurable line to what extent a person may be empowered or disempowered. The aim is to transform social relations (Rowlands, 1997).

The organisation of women in groups with mutual goals to confront the politics of the states, religious norms, caste, institutions, and family norms empowers them individually and collectively (Patel, 2016).

Qualitative research methodology has been used in the study. This methodology understands individuals and their struggles and gives voice to those who have been silenced (Álvarez-Gayou Jurgenson, 2003; Escudero Espinalt 2014).

The narrative approach expresses subjective reality. It is a tool to work with identity, people whose voice is not heard, self-identification, personal and cultural reconstruction (Bolívar, 2010).

We have used the life history method, a phenomenological method that studies human experiences and has a great potential for the interpretation of them. It is a method that visualises women's experiences and analyses the different dimensions of women's empowerment (Ojermark, 2007).

VALUES OF THE CULTURE OF ORIGIN

One of the **specific objectives** of the study is to understand the roles given to women in their respective cultures of origin. The analysis of the stories showed that the cultures of origin of the participants are man-centred cultures. Patriarchal values are deeply instilled within the society and institutionalised changes are slow.

The **role** of women in South Asian societies is associated with the private sphere while the role of men is associated with the public sphere. When they were children, Dhriti, Virika and Aarin were obliged to do the domestic chores while their brothers were not. Sakti and Mansvi stated that they were educated in equal atmosphere and they had the same responsibilities with their brothers.

Each of the participants lived in a **joint family** before and after marriage. It was with migration that they broke the joint family tradition.

Parents are under constant pressure to marry their daughters (Das Gupta, 2010). Niaz (2003) associates **arranged marriage** with loss of identity and treating girls as objects that can be sold or bought.

Violence against women in South Asia is a result of cultural and patriarchal norms supported by local laws. The theory developed by Niaz (2003) is that this issue is due to the perception of men as macho beings, male chauvinism and loss of control.

Menstruation is a taboo topic. There is the belief that periods are negative and shameful. This belief has a negative effect on the health of girls and women (Kadariya & Aro, 2015). Gundi and Subramanaym (2019) propose an increase to the effectiveness of public campaigns and a more nuanced communication strategy.

Religion has an impact on the way of life and the status of women (Niaz, 2003). In the Hindu texts, women are not given attention (Tewari & Tewari, 2017) and the status of women is dual: goddess versus the personification of all evils. The views on women in Buddhism are ambiguous (Sirimane, 2016). Saadawi (2016) associates the hijab in Muslim religion with oppression.

Caste is the model of power, the model of social inequality and differences constantly reproducing itself through the idea of karma and pollution (Jodhka and Shan, 2010; Subedi, 2016).

Another **specific objective** of the study is to comprehend how cultural identity transforms in personal identity. We have observed that our participants apprehend features from the new culture and reject others from their native culture. We relate this transformation to empowerment and the ability of the participants to detect harmful traits from their culture and positive traits from the host culture. In that way, they create an identity that is individual and does not put them anymore in the same box of imposed or learnt identity.

THE MIGRATORY EXPERIENCE OF THE PARTICIPANTS

The women in our study **migrated as a result of different reasons**. Dhriti, Aarin and Manasvi left their country in search of more dignified life conditions and employment. Virka left India because of social reasons (marriage). Her husband was already living in Bilbao. Sakti left India because her husband was offered employment in the BC.

The obstacle that Dhriti, Manasvi and Aarin encountered from the beginning was the **legal status in the host country**. They came to the BC on tourist visas. D'isanto et. al. (2015) propose the creation of policies that would improve the position of illegal migrants.

The second obstacle faced by all of the participants was the **language barrier**. The local language plays an important role for integration in the host culture.

Discrimination in everyday life situations was experienced by all of the participants except Manasvi.

The fourth obstacle was **finding a job**. All of the participants struggled to find a job. They related this difficulty to the lack of local language knowledge and the lack of connections and networking. Münz et. al. (2007) propose measures to establish a better integrated

labour market through improving mobility, improving free movement and access to the labour market for migrants from developing countries and implementation of measures for economic migrants.

Another obstacle for migrants from non-European countries finding a qualified job in European countries is **degree recognition**. Sakti and Virka work in the education sector but their jobs are less qualified than their education. Aarin holds a Bachelor's Degree and a Master's Degree but she is currently unemployed.

Women with children observed that they would love to spend more time with their daughters or sons but the nature of their jobs does not let them. The **family/work balance** is difficult for them.

The participants identified the lack of network and family support as an obstacle, especially at the beginning of the migratory process.

For Sakti and Virika, **the permission to reside and work** in the BC was an advantage that other women did not have.

All of the participants identified as positive most of **the experiences they had with native people** and all of them except for Virika were highly motivated to **learn the language of the host country**, which later had a positive impact on the search for a job.

The lack of networks disappeared when the participants started meeting people in the School of Languages, the Adult Education Centre, the workplace, through participation in associations, in the neighbourhood, etc. From that moment, friendships arose and the **networks** created helped their integration in the host country.

The next facilitating factor was **couple cooperation**. All of the participants said that they mutually collaborate with the domestic chores and the childbearing. In the case of Aarin, she explained that her husband learnt to cooperate in the BC. International migration is capable of reshaping gender relations (Torosyan et. al., 2016).

REMODELING OF VALUES

One of the values that our participants reshaped with migration was **the attitude towards menstruation**. Dhriti and Mansvi do not follow the tradition of Chaupadi anymore and

they do not behave in accordance with the norms of their culture of origin for women when menstruating.

All of the participants strongly disagree with the **existence of the caste system**, which only perpetuates social inequalities among people. This is related to the **rejection of arranged marriage**, given the fact that arranged marriage is related to caste and inter-caste marriages are still an unusual practice in South Asian societies.

In relation to the **transmission of values to children**, we understood that the upbringing of the second generation is different from the upbringing the participants received in their countries of origin. Dhriti puts an emphasis on the education of her son. Virika is willing to build a relationship of trust with her daughter and not to put pressure on her. Aarin would let her daughter decide by herself whether she wants to wear a hijab or not. Manasvi teaches her children in accordance with the values of the host culture.

EMPOWERMENT

The **general objective** of the study is to portray the process of empowerment of migrant women from South Asia in the BC. Migrant women are portrayed as agents of change and women who would serve as role models to other women. We believe that the first sign of the empowerment of our participants was the **act of migration**. The decision to move from a place where the family bond is as strong as it is in South Asia is courageous. The empowerment process of Dhriti, Virika, Sakti, Aarin and Mansvi began with the actual relocation from their native countries to the host country. The characteristics of empowerment identified by our participants are the following:

The capacity to express themselves in the local language facilitated inclusion in the host country and gave confidence to our women in everyday situations. The most important outcome of the language proficiency was employment.

The decision-making capacity is a sign of development (Venditto, 2018). The different life situations enabled our participants to take decisions by themselves. This capacity was acquired through migration given the fact that in their countries of origin their decisions were always influenced by other people.

Self-reliance and self-sufficiency are features that were obtained with migration. The women faced situations they never experienced before and they were obliged to rely on themselves because they did not have their families to help them.

Migration improves **self-esteem** and autonomy. Virika feels capable of achieving everything she has proposed to herself. She feels confident enough to create her own friendships and to spend time with herself. Sakti feels more confident in relation to her body and the type of clothes she wears. Manasvi's self-esteem has increased after seeing the lifestyle of native women.

Work-related experiences empower women because they affect their self-value and competence (Erman et. al., 2002). Our participants, except for Aarin, who works in the informal sector, stated that employment gives them financial freedom and the capacity to distribute their own money as they wish. This empowering feature is **financial independence**.

Freedom of choice is another empowering feature recognised by the participants. All of them enjoy the freedom of choosing what is most suitable for them. In their countries of origin they were obliged to satisfy other people's choices.

The experiences lived through migration made our participants stronger, mature and persistent. The ability to endure challenging life situations empowered them and gave them **strength** to move on.

The last empowering feature was the **creation of networks among women** that is related to the **specific objective** of learning if the networks among women influence the creation of sorority. Working together enables women to share their knowledge and skills and acquire new knowledge and skills (Allah Nikkhah et. al., 2010). All of the participants, except for Virika, participate in some association of women. It is worth mentioning that even if Virika does not participate, she intends to create an organisation of Asian women in the BC. The involvement in the associations helped our participants to meet women from different backgrounds, to expand their networks and to create alliances among them.

The final **specific objective** of the study is to visualise women. We consider that the presentation of the life experiences of women from South Asia in the BC is valuable and contributes to the creation of knowledge for this particular female migrant community.

The findings of this study affirm the **hypothesis** that migrant women undergo transformations with migration. The empowerment process begins with the actual decision to migrate from the native country and continues in the host country with the remodelling of values and the creation of individual identity features. The outcome is personal development.

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APPENDIX SECTION

APPENDIX 1

Evolution of the population of foreign origin in the BC by geographical area and sex Years 1998-2018

Total	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Álava	4.603	4.947	6.108	7.850	10.573	13.052	14.622	17.745	19.717	22.483	26.311	29.826	32.244	33.102	35.161	33.615	33.451	34.037	33.894	35.580	37.381
Bizkaia	16.488	17.112	19.577	23.545	29.435	34.857	40.134	47.679	55.516	62.797	72.076	80.395	83.819	88.389	92.427	92.078	89.206	89.253	91.685	95.548	100.640
Gipuzkoa	5.243	6.964	9.458	12.428	15.860	19.620	23.450	28.604	32.861	36.916	44.097	49.416	51.319	53.548	56.184	57.590	59.060	60.907	63.017	65.461	68.509
CAE	26.334	29.023	35.143	43.823	55.868	67.529	78.206	94.028	108.094	122.196	142.484	159.637	167.382	175.039	183.772	183.283	181.717	184.197	188.596	196.589	206.530

Mujeres	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Álava	2.362	2.497	3.049	3.813	5.026	6.082	6.856	8.272	9.322	10.642	12.214	13.857	14.952	15.481	16.463	16.151	16.355	16.762	16.927	17.903	18.982
Bizkaia	8.685	9.098	10.449	12.531	15.485	18.143	20.756	24.647	28.893	32.938	37.275	41.097	42.947	45.296	47.451	47.869	46.904	47.273	48.540	50.796	53.654
Gipuzkoa	2.803	3.662	4.895	6.447	8.001	9.759	11.673	14.257	16.400	18.450	21.705	24.265	25.741	27.171	28.638	29.489	30.272	31.164	32.532	34.158	36.017
CAE	13.850	15.257	18.393	22.791	28.512	33.984	39.285	47.176	54.615	62.030	71.194	79.219	83.640	87.948	92.552	93.509	93.531	95.199	97.999	102.857	108.653

Hombres	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018
Álava	2.241	2.449	3.059	4.037	5.547	6.970	7.766	9.473	10.395	11.841	14.097	15.969	17.292	17.621	18.698	17.464	17.096	17.275	16.967	17.677	18.399
Bizkaia	7.804	8.014	9.128	11.014	13.950	16.714	19.378	23.032	26.623	29.859	34.801	39.298	40.872	43.093	44.976	44.209	42.302	41.980	43.145	44.752	46.986
Gipuzkoa	2.439	3.303	4.563	5.981	7.859	9.861	11.777	14.347	16.461	18.466	22.392	25.151	25.578	26.377	27.546	28.101	28.788	29.743	30.485	31.303	32.492
CAE	12.484	13.766	16.750	21.032	27.356	33.545	38.921	46.852	53.479	60.166	71.290	80.418	83.742	87.091	91.220	89.774	88.186	88.998	90.597	93.732	97.877

Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2018) www.ikuspegi.eus

APPENDIX 2

South Asian Migration in the BC by Country of Origin and Sex 2008 – 2018

2008	FEMALE	MALE	2009	FEMALE	MALE
INDIA	32	63	INDIA	43	87
NEPAL	12	16	NEPAL	16	20
BANGLADESH	7	29	BANGLADESH	7	31
PAKISTAN	137	1.326	PAKISTAN	159	1.496
SRI LANKA	2	2	SRI LANKA	/	/

2010	FEMALE	MALE	2011	FEMALE	MALE
INDIA	44	114	INDIA	69	140
NEPAL	18	48	NEPAL	25	102
BANGLADESH	10	34	BANGLADESH	24	71
PAKISTAN	246	1.732	PAKISTAN	450	2.501
SRI LANKA	/	/	SRI LANKA	/	/

2012	FEMALE	MALE	2013	FEMALE	MALE
INDIA	78	144	INDIA	86	160
NEPAL	60	180	NEPAL	68	216
BANGLADESH	35	116	BANGLADESH	32	3.385
PAKISTAN	609	3.324	PAKISTAN	763	95
SRI LANKA	/	/	SRI LANKA	/	

2014	FEMALE	MALE	2015	FEMALE	MALE
INDIA	91	152	INDIA	154	185
NEPAL	99	298	NEPAL	114	303
BANGLADESH	61	171	BANGLADESH	72	193
PAKISTAN	909	3.548	PAKISTAN	996	3.797
SRI LANKA	/	/	SRI LANKA	/	/

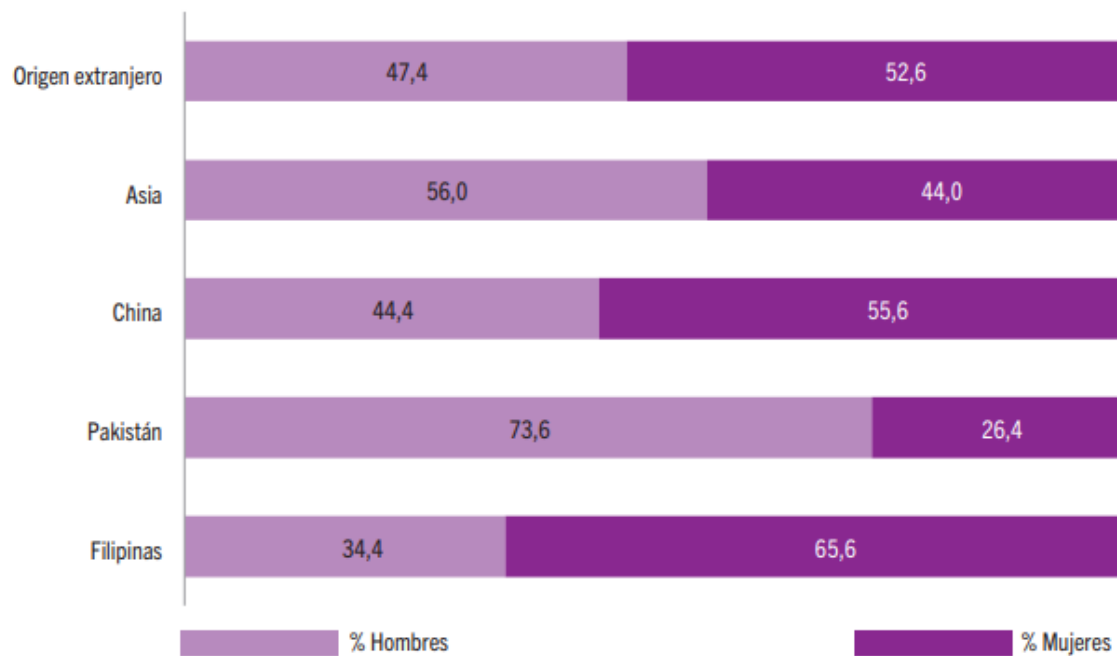
2016	FEMALE	MALE	2017	FEMALE	MALE
INDIA	154	192	INDIA	159	183
NEPAL	129	281	NEPAL	131	284
BANGLADESH	85	3.754	BANGLADESH	92	204
PAKISTAN	1.087	202	PAKISTAN	1.214	3.667
SRI LANKA	/	/	SRI LANKA	/	/

2018	FEMALE	MALE
INDIA	169	204
NEPAL	153	286
BANGLADESH	105	219
PAKISTAN	1.302	3.632
SRI LANKA	/	/

Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2018) www.ikuspegi.eus

APPENDIX 3

Distributuion of the Asian population in the BC by sex, 2018



Source: Ikuspegi, Basque Immigration Observatory (2019: 9)

APPENDIX 4

Methodology Chart

THEME	DIMENSIÓN	CATEGORÍA	SUBCATEGORY	QUESTION
MIGRANT WOMEN AND CHANGES	CULTURE AND IDENTITY	Family origin and values	Experiences/ memories	Origin, geographical situation, family life and early childhood recollection of events
		Social class	Childhood and adolescent life	Family values and relationship with the closest family Teen years and occurrences Friendships and love relationships Puberty: Changes in the body and the mind Restrictions and freedoms
		Traditions of the culture of origin	Cultural features Importance of culture Subjective opinion of traditions/customs before migration	Familiarisation with the culture of origin Holidays celebrations Positive/ negative aspects of the culture of origin Behaviours shaped by the culture of origin

		Identity	Assigned, learnt, self-identity (subjective) – based on Lagarde (2000)	Identity shaped by the culture of origin
		Religion	Significance of religion before migration	Characteristics of the religion of the culture of origin and practice in the family
		Education	Formal/ informal	Importance of formal education within the family Schooling experience Knowledge gained through informal sources through the process of socialisation
		Employment	Occupation of mother/ father/ herself Work experience before migration	Employment trajectory Job opportunities for women and men (differences)
GENDER ROLES	Childhood and adolescence	The role of women and men in the country of origin	Constructed behaviors in family and society during childhood and adolescence (mother and father/close family/ friends/ the world outside)	
	Family values	The role of women and men in the family	Acceptance/clash/ rejection (subjective opinion before migration)	

		Social values (the social structure)	The role of women in the society	Concordance/discordance (subjective opinion before migration)
	MIGRA-TION	Decision for migration	Reasons and time period Family reaction	Motives for and reflections on the decision to migrate to Spain and the BC as host destination The response of the family to the decision
		Type of migration	Autonomous/family reunification	The way the migratory process was completed
		Migratory process	Obstacles/facilities	The experience of the actual migratory process
		Life in the new society: Difficulties Facilitating factors	First impressions after arrival Attitudes of the host society (Eurocentrism/stereotypes) Lack of knowledge of the language of the host culture Lack of labour qualification/recognition Lack of support network Other	Initial perceptions of the new society and its people Assumptions perceived and behaviors of host people (subjective) Language impediments Lower educational levels for opting for certain employment positions or obstructions in the recognition of qualification titles Not having/ not recognising

		<p>Free time</p> <p>Significance of the culture of origin in the new society)</p> <p>Remodeling of values</p>	<p>Maintenance of communication with family/friends in the country of origin</p> <p>Support network</p> <p>Employment</p> <p>Social participation in the host country</p> <p>Relations with other people in the new society</p> <p>Type of activities</p>	<p>assistance and help channels</p> <p>Possible support agents from a distance/ Relations</p> <p>Relatives/friends/ organisation</p> <p>Guaranteed job position</p> <p>Being active in the host society</p> <p>Communication with other migrants or natives</p> <p>The ways free time is appreciated and spent</p>
		<p>Impact of migration (Personal/ family/ social level)</p>	<p>Asset/ disadvantage</p> <p>Freedom/continuation of subordination</p> <p>Personal growth/stagnation</p> <p>Language of the host country</p>	<p>The effects of migration on the transformation of the "self", its influence in the family context and contributions to society</p> <p>Positive/ Negative aspects</p>

			<p>Awareness-raising</p> <p>Self-esteem</p> <p>Economic improvement</p> <p>Social advancement</p> <p>Other</p>	
EMPOWERMENT	Personal factors (based on Rubio, 2014)	<p>Interior life</p> <p>Vision for the "self"</p> <p>Capacity assertiveness</p> <p>Self-confidence</p> <p>Self-valuation</p> <p>Work for the "individual"</p> <p>Identity reconstruction (from traditional to individual; from constructed to felt)</p>	<p>Migration as a tool for personal growth, amelioration of self-esteem, gaining self-confidence, capacity for decision making, individualisation, independisation</p> <p>Migration as an instrument of identity reconstruction</p>	
	Social factors (based on Rubio, 2014)	Transformations on social level	Migration as an empowering mechanism on social level	

			Social welfare Integration	Social benefits and progress Integration in the new society as a stimulating agent for empowerment
		Collective (based on Rubio, 2014)	Female associationism Sisterhood/ Alliances between women (migrant/native) Support network Collective work	Associationism as an empowering tool Connectedness with other women Alliances between women as sustenance agents Mutual work and collaboration for the achievement of shared goals

APPENDIX 5

Participant Consent Form



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PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

The following is a sample consent form for a doctoral dissertation. It is a research on the *empowerment of South Asian migrant women in the Basque Autonomous Community*, carried out by Simona Sokolovska, PHD candidate from University of Deusto. The thesis is directed by Doctor María Silvestre Cabrera and codirected by Doctor Raquel Royo Prieto.

The interviewer would have the interviewee read this form carefully and ask any questions the interviewee may have. Before the interview can start, the interviewer and the interviewee would sign two copies of this form. The interviewee will be given one copy of the signed form.

-
- I volunteer to participate in a research project conducted by Simona Sokolovska, PHD candidate from University of Deusto.
 - I understand that the project is designed to gather information about academic work and I will be one of 10 women being interviewed for this research.
 - My participation in this project is voluntary. I understand that I will not be paid for my participation.
 - I may withdraw and discontinue participation at any time without penalty.
 - If I feel uncomfortable in any way during the interview session, I have the right to decline to answer any question or to end the interview.
 - Participation involves being interviewed more than once. Notes will be written during the interview. The interview will be recorded and transcribed. If I don't want to be taped, I will not be able to participate in the study.
 - I understand that the researcher will not identify me by name in any reports using information obtained from this interview, and that my confidentiality as a participant in this study will remain secure.
 - Faculty and administrators from University of Deusto will neither be present at the interview nor have access to raw notes or transcripts.
 - I have been given a copy of this consent form.

Interviewee

Researcher

Director

Co-director

2017
Place and date

APPENDIX 6

SOCIODEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONNAIRE

Age.....

Marital status.....

Place of birth.....

Level of studies completed.....

Working experience/s.....

Current work/ occupation.....

Previous migration to Spain or other place.....

Migration to the Basque Autonomous Community (BAC)

Place of residence in the BAC.....

Province.....

Name of your association? (if applicable)

Date and place for the realisation of the interviews.....

Time extension.....

Pseudonym

APPENDIX 7

METHODOLOGY SUPPORT FOR THE IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS

Session 1

GUIDELINE (INTERVIEW CONDUCTION)

For the fulfillment of the fieldwork, we have elaborated a methodological chart that encompasses the general theme, the dimensions, the categories and the subcategories. Subsequently, the guideline for the conduction of the interviews was developed. We have used the same guideline for all of our participants although we emphasise that due to the nature of qualitative research methodology and the technique applied, (life history) flexibility, modification/ omission of some questions/ change of the order as well as emergence of new questions were allowed.

We highlight the fact that it was of mayor interest to provide our interviewees with comfortability and sense of trust for the achievement of a natural development of the conversation.

Presentation

Presentation of the researcher

Presentation of the institution

Presentation of the study and the theme discussed

Presentation of the interviewee

Guarantee of confidentiality and anonymity

Consent for audio-recording

Space for doubts and questions

Appreciation and gratitude

Consolidation

Given the fact that we have met previously with our interviewees and we have already considered the above-mentioned points conjointly with the technique used for our study

during our previous encounter, we expect that our participants feel comfortable to share their experience of life in the course of the time spent together.

Before the immersion in the object of study we ask our interviewee for her emotional mood and proceed with our first question (if and only she feels prepared), encompassing the dimension *culture and identity*.

CULTURE AND IDENTITY

In this session we are going to focus our intention on your life back in the country of origin. We are going to begin with the memories you have about your birth place, family, your childhood, adolescence, etc., and move towards the characteristics of your culture.

Childhood

- You said you were from.....Did you live in the city or in the village? How do you remember life there?
- Whom did you live with?
- How was your family? What values did they transmit while you were a child? (Here, we kindly ask our interviewee to show us a picture of her family and narrate how she feels when she remembers them).
- How was your mother? And your father?
- What did you learn from your mother/father? How do you recall them?
- Did you relate with other family members?
- How do you remember childhood? What did you like to do? Was there anything you did not like? How did you spend your days?

After the first life stage where our center of attention were the early experiences of life of our interviewee, we are going to focus on adolescence.

Adolescence

- When you think back about your teenage years what feelings does it provoke? How did you pass your teen days? What did you like to do?

- Did you continue with your education? If affirmative, could you remember your high school days? What did you like the most? Did you continue having the same friends as previously or new friendships arose?
- How was your relation with your mother and father? (If both of them were present).
- How did you relate with girls and boys?
- Did you feel free as a young person? Were there any things that you were not allowed to do? If affirmative, may you name them?
- Puberty is the stage of life when we undergo alterations in our body and mind. How did you feel regarding the changes your body experienced? Did you feel comfortable with your appearance?
- Usually, is in teen years when we have our first love experience. If you go back in the past and contemplate on it, what feelings does it bring to you now? How was your first love experience? How did you feel about it? Do you remember the context and how it occurred? Are you willing to share the memory with me?
- Overall, what is your general opinion about your teen days? Is there anything that you would have liked to change or regret not doing? If affirmative, please indicate what and why?

CULTURE

- From an occidental point of view, we may have very different or even erroneous opinion about how are and what are the values of an Indian/Nepali/Bangladeshi culture.
- If you try to reflect on the characteristics of your culture, how would you bring closer to me as a European, your culture? What are the customs and traditions of your culture?
- How do you celebrate holidays there? Is it different from here? What holidays did you like? How did you celebrate them with your family (As we agreed before our first interview, we invited our interviewee to carry with her some significant object that represents her culture) We ask her to describe the object, why did she

choose it, what is its significance for her culture and her personally? What feelings does it incite?

- What is the majority religion of your country? What are the values of your religion?
- How important was religion in your family? How important it was for you?
- Now that we have entered deeper in the discussion, what features of your culture did you like? Were there any aspects of your culture that you did not like? If affirmative, please describe which were they and why. Did you respect them? Although you were not in agreement with some of its norms? (If applicable, why?). Did you respect them? Did you agree with the rules?
- When you think over your identity back in your country of origin, how would you describe it? Did you feel familiar with what your culture was claiming it supposed to be your identity as a woman of that particular culture? Please, explain.

Education

- How important was formal education in your family?
- Did your mother and father go to school?
- What significance did your mother and father give to your schooling?
- Did you go to school? If yes, how do you remember school? Did you like going to school? Did you have friends there? How did you spend your time after classes? Did you have any activity that you were keen on and enjoyed doing as a child? If yes, would you be kind enough to specify?
- What did you aspired to be when you were in high school?
- Apart from formal education (if applicable), what did you learn from your mother and father (if applicable), your closest family, your friends and the relation with people?

Employment

- Did your mother and father work outside home? If affirmative, please say what professions?
- Did you have any working experience outside home before migration? If affirmative please specify in what and share the experience/ if negative please explain why?

- Is it usual for women from your culture to work outside home? If yes in which professions? Do they differ from men's? Do women have equal opportunities with men?

In the case they have a partner

- How did you meet your partner? When?
- How is your relationship? Could you describe your time spent together, the responsibilities you have...
- What made you believe that this person is the adequate to be with?
- Are you happy with him/her?

In the case they have children

- What is/are your child/children like?
- Did you want to have children?
- If affirmative, how your life changed after having children?
- What are the responsibilities you have with them? (If they have a partner) what are the responsibilities of your partner? Do you manage to conciliate work, motherhood and domestic chores?
- What values do you transmit them? What do you try to teach them?
- Does your upbringing differs from the one your mother and father gave you? If affirmative, why and how?

GENDER ROLES

- What did you believe it meant to be a woman when you were in your country of origin?
- When you reflect on what your mother was doing and what your father was doing, were there any differences in the roles they had?
- And what about you? What was your role in your family (And of your brother or other male close relative, if applicable).
- Did you relate more with boys or girls? How girls behaved? And boys? Was there anything you couldn't do or you did not have access and your male friends yes?

If affirmative, would you be kind enough to tell me what? How did you feel about it?

- What is expected from women in your culture? How they should behave? What is their role? Were there any traits you were not in accordance with but you were obliged to obey? If affirmative please explain.
- Could you reflect on the social participation of women in the society of the culture of origin? Are there any differences between women and men?
- Did you consider your culture egalitarian? Do you consider your culture egalitarian now after migration? Please explain.
- Did you feel safe as a woman in your country?

Closure

With the objective to end the discussion in our first interview we politely ask our informant to think on one word that would describe her as a woman in her culture before the act of migration.

We ask our interviewee how did she feel during the conversation and if she has anything else to add. Afterwards, we close the session and express gratitude for her time (We confirm the time and date for our next session).

Session 2

In our second session the focal point is migration. First we will consider the decision for migration. Then we will transfer to the leaving of the country of origin and the arrival. Afterwards, we will discuss life in the new country and the outcomes of the migratory process.

MIGRATION

We ask our informant how she feels and if she is prepared to start the conversation. Once we have the confirmation we explain that we are going to give her an excerpt of a book that narrates the decision of one woman to migrate. The aim is to come closer to her personal migratory experience. The story is the following:

Believe it or not, I was a very modern woman for those times. My neighbors were shocked because I was driving the motor-scooter dressed in my tailored trousers. Yes, me, your mother! Do not look at me like that, I was young too! What do you think? That we were born with the apron on and with a frying pan in the hand? You're very wrong! I was seventeen and my boyfriends too ... But do not tell this to your father... You know how jealous he is ... Well, a priest told me about the possibility of working at the military hospital of Frankfurt. They needed nurses and I had the opportunity to study there. Me, German? Oh daughter, what I knew was a little bit of English that the nuns had taught me at the ladies' school. The most difficult thing was to convince Carmencita and Mary Pili, because I would have not gone alone and they were stubborn that they did not want, especially Mary Pili, who at that time was with Carlitos Morente, the boy who was working at the biscuit factory. The three weeks prior to our departure were a real torture. Our departure became an event in Zamora and your grandfather was complaining and just spoke to utter a sentence, shouting: "But the girl has no necessity to leave! She has everything, everything ... the piano, the moto-scooter ... even the dowry! "In the end, we left and there we were, the three of us in the bus on the way to Germany with our hats, our neck laces and our gloves well placed, the suitcase under the seat and the tortilla and peppers sandwiches for the trip ... When I arrived, I opened the suitcase in front of everybody and I found the "chorizo" and the "jamón" that my grandmother had put me in ... I almost died of embarrassment! In case you need them, she told me later. And listen, in the end we were happy about it because you cannot imagine the hunger we passed.

I had it all. Everything, but freedom to choose my destiny. And I chose to migrate.
(Martínez, Leal and Bosch, 2002: 46/47)

- This small excerpt portrays the reasons why Ana (the girl from the story) decides to migrate. She says that she had everything she was longing for expect one thing, the liberty of choices. That is why she was convinced that migration could give her the desired freedom.
- Going back to the past, do you remember when did you first think of migration from your country? Why did you decide to migrate? What are the reasons?

- Did you migrate alone or with your family?
- How did your family feel when you communicate to them that you will leave the country of origin (in autonomous migration)/ How did you feel when your partner (or other family member) propose to migrate/ you proposed to migrate?
- Does your family have a migration tradition?
- Why did you decide to migrate to the Basque Country?
- What did you know about the host country before migration?
- Now, we would like to go more in depth in your migratory process. Would you be kind enough to tell me if you encounter any difficulties/ obstacles for realization of the migration? If applicable, how did you manage to overpass these barriers and arrive to the BC?
- Do you remember your first day once you arrived in the BC? How it was? How were your first days here?
- How did you perceive the host society? How do you think they perceived you? How do you perceive Basque people and the Basque society now?
- Are there any differences between your culture and the host culture? If affirmative, please indicate them.
- Was there anything that shocked you when you arrived here? If yes, what surprised you the most?
- Are there any features of the host culture that you do not like? (Specify if applicable).
- The host culture allows you to express your culture? Please, explain.
- What difficulties did you encounter in the new society? Did you speak Spanish/Euskera before the arrival? And what about facilitating factors? Did (do) you have support network? Did (do) you relate with other people in the new society?
- Do you communicate with your family/ friends in the country of origin? If, yes how often? How is your relation with them?
- Do (did) you work? If affirmative, did you encounter any difficulties in the search for a job? What does employment mean to you? (In the case they work); What it would imply for you having a job? (If negative). Do you find it difficult to obtain a job? What it would signify on personal level? And on social?

- How do you spend your free time? Is it different from the free time you had before migration?
- What did you learn from the host country?
- Do you feel safe as a woman in the host country?
- What are your personal views on the values of your culture now after migration? Did you undergo any changes? If yes, please specify?
- What did you learn from migration? Do you notice any transformations? When we say transformations we refer on personal changes (here we try to introduce self-esteem, awareness-raising, individualization, etc.). What about transformations in your family?
- And changes on social level? How do you participate in the society of the host country? Does it differ from your social participation in your native country? If affirmative please clarify in what way.
- Do you consider the decision to migrate appropriate? What does it contribute to you? Did you have to do sacrifices? Did it harm you in some way? Please, explain.
- Do you think your life would be different if you did not migrate? How do you think it would be (if applicable).
- How do you feel as a migrant woman now? Do you notice changes along the time spent here?
- What did you learn from migration?

Closure

We show gratitude for our interviewee's presence and ask her how she felt along the session (We confirm the time and date for the last session).

Session 3

The last session of our interviews is dedicated to empowerment. We intended to discover how women changed with migration.

We start our conversation with the usual: "How do you feel today?", "Maybe you would like to add something from the previous sessions that you remembered afterwards?, etc. We ask the first question when our informant is ready.

TO BE EMPOWERED & TO SORORISE

- If you try to make a retrospective of your life, how do you see yourself in the past? In your country? How do you see yourself now? Do you notice changes? If yes, what “work” did you do to enhance your “self”? What influenced the changes?
- Do you think that the host society affected some changes in the mindset? If affirmative, please specify.
- What is your opinion on your actual social welfare? How do you think it would be if you were in your country?
- And on a personal level? Have you experienced any changes regarding self-confidence?
- Can you express your desires freely?
- Do you think that you can achieve your goals? (Explain if there are obstacles/facilitating factors).
- Do you know your rights? Do you know how to defend your rights? Do you do it?
- How much do you value yourself?
- What have you done / What are you doing to improve your “self”?
- How do you see yourself?

For associated women

- Maybe being part of your association?
- Why did you affiliate to your association? How did you discover your association? What motivated you to enter?
- Did you use to be part of some association in your country?
- What did it bring to you the fact being part of your association? What did you learn and what did you contribute?
- What do you do there? What types of activities? Do you find them useful? Do you notice any differences on personal level since you are a part of the association?
- How is your relation with your female companions? Do you help each other? If affirmative how?
- Do you relate only with migrant women or with native as well? How?

- Do you think it is positive that alliances are created among women?
- Do you have a close person in the association? If yes, how do you help each other? What did you learn from her? What did she learn from you?
- What other networks of solidarity are there among the community?

For women that are not associated

- Maybe being part of some association?
- Would you affiliate to some association? Do you know any association? What would motivate you to enter?
- Did you use to be part of some association in your country?
- What do you think it would bring to you to be part of some association? How can you contribute?
- Do you relate only with migrant women or with native as well? How?
- Do you think it is positive that alliances are created between women?
- Do you know some solidarity networks among the community?

Closure

We have come to the end of the session. We ask our interviewee about the general sensation she obtained during the sessions (what aspects did she like/dislike, did she feel (un)comfortable, if there was something missing, etc.)

Finally, we ask our informant to close her eyes, think over and describe herself in one to three words.

We express our gratitude for the collaboration.