

The female bartender in Mumbai, India

MA Thesis

by

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Introduction.

Concerning relations in the labour force, anthropological and ethnographic research can trace complexities across places and times, between particular industries, states, communities, workplaces, and people. I argue that we should focus more on occupations (rendered services) rather than on industry alone to trace these complexities. Inspired by what I have been preferring to do for almost ten years in daily life, I chose to conduct a research on female bartending. A bar, as a clear social setting, is a place where much social interaction takes place. This social interaction is constructed by difference and interplay in power-relations, status, and gender-roles.

Here, in the Netherlands, it is a common phenomenon when a female bartender is serving guests drinks at the bar or at tables. In India however, this has only been the case since 2010 when the Supreme Court overturned a British law that banned women from working in bars. The Punjab Excise Act, dating from the colonial era, stated that it was forbidden for women to serve alcohol¹. Even though the Supreme Court overturned this law, each of India's states has its own laws that protect female bartenders (curfews, training workshops or night transport) or restrict women from working in bars. My research showed me, that the legalization of female bartenders in India resulted in valuable ways of employment for women.

With this thesis on the female bartender I wish to contribute in making a small group of middle class women workers in Mumbai more visible, and, inspired by the readings of Smith (2002) I will unravel to what extent the inclusion of women in the labour market maintains or reproduces power in gender relations. Furthermore, I will reveal how the introduction of female bartenders in the public space has appeared in wider public discussions and how these female bartenders have to negotiate the cultural meanings that are attached to female bartenders. These insights concerning the image and ideas of the female bartender can be used for comparative research across boundaries to unravel complexities and contradictions in labour and gender inequalities (Mills, 2003).

Another point of interest is that little attention has been paid to female bartenders in academic literature. They have mostly been studied in relation to work in sex industries (Brennan, 2004 Sherman, 2011). Somehow female bartenders working at other workplaces have been neglected. With my thesis on the female bartender in Mumbai I would like to fill in this gap

in researches and insights, and I will hopefully contribute to an understanding of gender and labour in a specific context.

During my three months of fieldwork in Mumbai I studied how female bartenders perceive their occupation, what happens when women enter a male-dominated occupation, and how they cope and deal with gender ideologies that contradict the new law enforcements. The discussions in the following chapters on different themes surrounding female bartending in Mumbai will help me answer my research question:

How do female bartenders in Mumbai perceive their occupation? And is their occupational status related to, or does it contradict the status of middle-class women and gender relations in Mumbai? How do these outcomes influence their agency?

This thesis consists of an introduction, five chapters, and a conclusion. There are two parts. Part one is divided in two chapters, which will provide the reader with the necessary background information. In chapter one the theoretical concepts and themes that are central to my research will be discussed. Furthermore, I will zoom in on my field of study - Mumbai, India. Chapter two gives an elaborate overview over the methodological course of action in the field. In this chapter the female bartenders will be introduced. Part two of this thesis is divided in three chapters, these chapters present the data collected in the field. The first chapter of the second part, chapter three, will focus on the effects of gender norms in law and bartending. In addition, my preconceived idea that female bartending in India is a stigmatized occupation will be challenged. Chapter four will cover the benefits of freelance bartending, and in chapter five, my findings obtained from the bar academies and my first encounter with a female bartender at her work will be discussed. Finally, the conclusion offers an analytical summary of the research findings.

Chapter 1. Theoretical formulation: Theorizing gender and labour in India.

This chapter develops a theoretical framework that elucidates some of the important themes and debates that are central to my research. Firstly I will focus on academic debates on gender and labour within globalization and touch upon notions of ideology, stigma and agency, followed by a few remarks on freelance employment.

In social science, the sexual division of labour was the first structure to be recognized. Until today, most discussions of gender in anthropology and economics revolve around this division of labour. According to Banerjee (1999) many authors have written about the flexibility of women as workers. Especially young and unmarried women seemed to be the most flexible of all other workers. Unlike men, they don't plan to make lifetime careers out of those jobs; therefore they will accept a job opportunity more easily (Banerjee 1999: 113).

In recent years, much has been written about women workers in the ever-changing global economy and more attention have been given to the complex intersections of gender, labour and globalization within anthropology (Mills, 2003). In these works academics discuss feminized labour forces, and explore different ways in which gender intersects with other sources of discrimination on the work floor. Others focus their research on analysing gender and labour in relation to global processes such as migration (Preibisch and Grez 2010, Collins 2002, Yuzhen 2012).

In this chapter I will focus on the effects of economic liberalization for female employment in India. In her study on gender equality and globalization in India, Ganguly-Scrase reveals that women do not perceive India's economic liberalization to be detrimental to their lives. On the contrary, these women consider themselves to be even more empowered to women from an earlier generation (Ganguly-Scrase 2013:545). She argues that the process of modernization in India led to a change of gender relations, which resulted in women's entry into the public sphere (Ganguly-Scrase 2003: 546). This process reduced gender inequalities and enhanced educational and employment opportunities for women. Since the 1970s, notions of female empowerment are part of standard government vocabulary at national and state levels in India. The public visibility of women and the participation of women in employment were promoted in postcolonial developmentalist narratives of nation building.

Statistics on female employment in India taught me that employment of women in India varies greatly by marital status and residence; employment in the rural sector is easier to find than in urban areas, and women who are divorced or widowed have a better chance on employment than married women.² Moreover, in urban areas like Mumbai more educated women claim their independence and occupy influential positions like men (Baruah 2011: 65).

Social life in India has been radically influenced, both economically and culturally by globalization, which resulted in the expansion of the middle class (Mines and Lamb, 2010: 193). Globalization, conceived as the expansion of a neoliberal market, and the intensification of global interconnectedness (Inda and Rosaldo, 2008), continues to have differential impacts of both men and women. India's move toward economic liberalization in the 1990s led to rapidly expanding consuming classes bringing forward an array of highly visible images of changing trends in consumption practices, lifestyles, and aspirations (Fernandes, 2006). The Indian sociologist Narasimhachar Srinivas has studied the same process of social change in modern India in 1996. From this period, he remarked that the higher castes took the lead in westernizing their life-style due to western education, which spread widely among upper castes. Because of western education, urbanization, and occupation, which required regular working hours, life-styles began to undergo rapid changes.

'India's large and growing middle class is becoming increasingly westernized. Westernization in one form or another is seen as essential to upward mobility.' (Srinivas 1997:17)

Some of my interviewees mentioned the shift in changing lifestyles adopted by friends (women and men), and by themselves. They clarified this change in lifestyles by mentioning that they are witnessing the start of a new culture: a more American culture, where young people party, drink, and spend all their money on cell phones and the latest fashion. Some believe that there will be a radical change; others mentioned that they are comfortable somewhere in the middle, a bit of both worlds, not too western, not too traditional. The spread of Western consumerism and the rise of similar materialistic societies have concerned many observers. Such worries, regarding Americanization in India, have been discussed by several academics (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007).³ For instance, cultural nationalists of the Hindu right who place women under the sign of privatised tradition, argue that women in India must be defended against the corruption of Western materialism. Opponents of those who view consumption singularly as a site of patriarchal domination and the commodification of women's bodies, state that by using new images of independent womanhood, women in India construct oppositional narratives of freedom from traditional patriarchal norms, and challenge

the existing gender ideologies (Lukose 2005:923). Furthermore, consumerism and fashion also reworked the positive image of respectable middle-class women as aggressively sexual, confident, and public.

This leads to my other point of attention: the way women view their empowerment. My findings are consistent with Ganguluy-Scrase's analysis on the way empowerment is perceived. Her research shows that women over twenty-five feel heartened by observing strong female characters who come to the fore in popular culture or by the leadership of female politicians, whereas younger women behold the glamorous and liberated woman, as highly desirable (Ganguluy-Scrase 2003: 561). These new images of independent womanhood do not overthrow gender relations, but they do provide a degree of determination and agency, which women identify with.

When it comes to women's advancement, the Indian middle class women who Ganguluy-Scrase had interviewed responded similarly to the female bartenders I had interviewed during my fieldwork. The interviewees in both studies emphasized that new employment opportunities created a renewed confidence and a sense that paid work brings autonomy. For young women, employment is perceived as a road to independence, not as a solution to overcome economic hardship (Ganguluy-Scrase, 2003). Despite of the positive assessments made by these women on women's employment, in reality there still is a limited range of employment options available for women. For instance, only upper-middle-class women enter male dominated high-status jobs.

Here, I would like to add, that if we look at gender and gender inequalities in labour, we must also take into account the discrepancy between ideology and reality. When studying different roles of women and men, it is important to focus on ideologies. Here I would like to refer to Bourdieu, when he discusses 'doxa'. With doxa he refers to all practices and ideas which are perceived by a society as self-evident. People within a given society will act upon these underlying reproduced codes (or laws) without consideration.

Gender roles are reproduced and constructed within this doxa ideology (Van Santen, 1986). Women and men act upon them without being aware of it. It is only when they want to consciously hold on to an existing gender order (orthodoxy) or change such an order (heterodoxy) that they will become more conscious (Van Santen, 1986). With the concept of heterodoxy we will not just be able to understand the activities of the many women's groups who act to change, but also women's entry in male dominated occupations.

I believe that if we study gender in India, we must take into account Bourdieu's idea of orthodoxy. In the words of sociologists West and Zimmerman, women's lives in India are shaped by powerful ideologies; these women often have a limited repertoire of behaviours from which they can choose (West and Zimmerman, 1987). In India, a change in gender inequities is not only resolved by new laws which for instance give women property rights, but also by changing the reproduced ideologies of both men and women.

My research showed me, that certain reproduced ideologies are related to the stigmatization of women who are employed in a male dominated profession. For example, the ideology that women in India are not supposed to work with, or drink alcoholic beverages, female bartenders can be stigmatized as shameful. With stigmatization I would like to refer to the definition made by Link & Phelan (2001). They define stigma as a label attached by members of a society, which leads the stigmatized people in question to be devalued in a specific cultural context.

Economic anthropologists have been concerned with the organization of labour and social relations in standard work arrangements on factory floors or in agriculture. But over the years, nonstandard employment relations, such as part-time work, contingent work, and independent contracting, have become prominent ways of organizing work. Nonstandard employment relations differ from standard work arrangements. In the latter, work is done full-time, at a continuous pace and at a specific establishment under the direction of and committed to a particular employer.

Demographic changes in the composition of the labour force nourished the growth in nonstandard work. A demographic change in the composition of the labour force is also slightly noticeable in India. During my research In Mumbai I detected a small upcoming group of unmarried middle-class and well-educated women who consciously chose to work as freelancers, otherwise referred to as independent contractors, in the hospitality sector. These independent contractors are self-employed, and are not referred to as employees. They don't have an employer or a wage contract. The female bartenders I interviewed in India are given specification for the kind of service they will need to provide, but they will decide themselves how best to accomplish it. As this thesis will show, these women earn higher wages than workers in traditional arrangements and therefore have more money to spend to enjoy an affluent lifestyle. Furthermore, these female bartenders gave me the impression that they have a strong agency. According to the anthropologist Katherine Frank (2006) the question of women's agency continues to generate debates in the context of patriarchy, male domination, power, and culture within feminist theory. The concept of agency ought to be understood in

relation to subjectivity, the individual, and the self. In addition, this concept is often defined and used theoretically in relation to notions of structure, resistance, performativity, motivation, and desire or of praxis (Frank 2006: 281). In this thesis I do not use the term agency as synonym for free will, but as Ahearn defines it: the socio-culturally mediated capacity to act' (Ahearn 2001: 112).

Fieldwork in Mumbai.

Fieldwork was undertaken in Mumbai, India. India is a union of twenty-eight states and seven union territories. Each state has its own Legislative Assembly or Vidhan Sabha. India has the second –largest population in the world. It is a country with a diversity of religious convictions and contains various regional groups (Ganguly and DeVotta, 2003).

Since the independence from British rule on 15 august 1947, India has officially had a democratic system, and it is said that the constitution is (on paper) the most idealistic and liberal in the world. I emphasized 'on paper' because many aspects are being dismissed in favour of the various 'traditional' custom, ideologies or efficiency (Keay, 2011). Centuries of trade networks link India with China and the Mediterranean, invasions by groups of central Asia, British imperialism, just to name a few factors, resulted in a land of political, cultural, religious and ethnic plurality (Ganguly and DeVotta, 2003) India's slogan: 'Unity in Diversity' also implicates this plurality, both historical and contemporary. About eighty-five per cent of the population is Hindu and the largest minority religion in India is the Islam. With Hinduism also comes a caste system that spreads in India's other religions (Mines and Lamb, 2010). 'To be born in into a Hindu family is to be born into a caste. To be born into a caste is to be born a Hindu, there is virtually no other way' (Stern 1993: 24).

Caste is a term from European origin that is used to describe the social groupings. There are thousands different castes scattered over South Asia. One's caste has nothing to do with financial standing, occupation or education, which was confirmed and repeated several times in conversations and interviews. There are numerous meanings, models and functions that anthropologists assign to castes. Many critical studies argue that anthropologists have treated castes as traditional and fixed, while in fact castes are constantly changing (Mines and Lamb 2010: 150). Srinivas (1997) state that as a caste system begins to break down, individual castes are likely to continue. Berg, Barry and Chandler point out correctly that

caste differences are obvious in rural areas, but this is not always the case in a city like Mumbai (Berg, Barry and Chandler 2010: 33). Most of my interviewees did not even know to which caste they belong.

In many places, class can be more important for some people than caste. In some cases, castes are even replaced by class as the dominant way of social ranking (Mines and Lamb, 2010). This is due to the rise of a new middle-class, which expands fast because of the opening of borders to commerce and consumer values and the region's economic growth (Mines and Lamb, 2010). Class is a system of social hierarchy that shapes everyday life in India. Fernandes argues that the creation of an Indian middle class was formed by the British colonial educational policy. This policy led to the creation of a class, which was Indian in blood and colour, but English in tastes, opinions and intellect (Fernandes 2006: 3).

One of the cities where this middle-class is noticeable and in fast up rise is Mumbai. Mumbai, formerly known as Bombay, is the most populous city in India with a population around twenty million. Mumbai is the state capital of Maharashtra in central India, and it is the country's foremost port. Due to an increasing level of international investment and strengthened global connections, Mumbai's economy has grown leaps. Mumbai is perceived as an economically dynamic urban space, and marked by a post-colonial legacy. This legacy involves issues of politics, religion and gender that penetrate the local society at multiple levels (Berg, Barry, and Chandler 2010: 25). Next to its economic status Mumbai is best known for its film and television industry, also known as Bollywood (Ganguly and DeVotta 2003: 263). In the first week I arrived in Mumbai, some foreigners and I were asked to play a small part in a Bollywood production. We were invited to Bollywood studios where I met many girls of my age who took on small acting jobs besides their studies to earn a little extra pocket money. One girl told me: 'Doing this, it's really easy to earn some extra money, for Bollywood you don't need the skills, you just need the looks'. The movie, called 'disco valley', comparable with Hollywood productions about high school or college adolescents going wild, reminded me again of the changing lifestyles of boys and girls in India.

During the first week of my fieldwork, I was reassured by different encounters that a vast majority of people spoke English very well. Moreover, every time I was eavesdropping while some Indian girls were having a conversation, I noticed how they frequently merged English and Hindi in their sentences. Later I found out that the term they use for this mixture of two languages is 'speaking Hinglish', which is a popular form of communication in large cities like Mumbai.

A word on Ethics.

Before my arrival in the field, I determined who were going to be involved in my research. During the Doing Ethnography class I read the AAA code of ethics and an article on Ethical Guidelines for Good Research Practice thoroughly. In these articles the authors mentioned that a social research always involves other individuals and groups. Thus, it is important to consider the effects of my involvement with and consequences of my research. Not only did I have a personal commitment, but also an ethical commitment towards my research subjects and others. During my research I did not come across or experienced any ethical or moral dilemmas. I did have some difficulties with staying neutral and not being judgmental. Especially when the interviewees would tell me about how some men approached them or treated them at work in a rather female unfriendly way, or when we discussed the overall gender norms in Mumbai.

What I think is imperative for all anthropologists, and for myself during my research is that in all time we must avoid doing harm. When approaching my research subjects, I always made them feel at ease, I never persuaded them, and always made good agreements on confidentiality. Being clear, honest, and open regarding the purpose and outcomes is important in that the research subjects could decide whether to engage in my research or not. Before starting the interviews, we always discussed their privacy first: what personal information I may use for my thesis and what not. In addition, I would ask my respondents if they would allow me to make use of my voice recorder or to make any pictures. Besides being open and honest to my research subjects, it is important to mention that all anthropologists must leave the field in a state that permits access for future researchers.

Most of my respondents and other individuals in the field were very enthusiastic about my research. A few already invited me again to continue my research on female bartenders in India in a few years when the number of female bartenders has increased. I believe that the communication and agreements between my respondents and me led to an ethically sound research.

Chapter 2. Entering the field: Research methods, techniques and bar hopping.

This thesis is based on bar hopping, conversations, newspaper readings, Internet readings, emails, observations, stories, discussions, bar trainings, and interviews. In this chapter I will give an overview on the methods and techniques I employed in the field, and I will introduce the female bartenders.

Collecting data in the field called for different techniques in different situations. I conducted a qualitative research in Mumbai, where my aim was to construct an understanding of how female bartenders themselves experience their profession, and how female bartending is perceived by Indian society. During my research I talked to many different people, from celebrity bartenders, to local guests. In each situation I employed different techniques to collect data. This thesis is based on informal conversations with guests, bar managers, bartenders, and people from different bar academies, but also on formal interviews with female bartenders, and observation. The technique I found most effective in interviewing the female bartenders was unstructured interviewing. During these interviews I made use of a list of points of attention. Being able to observe one of the female bartenders at her workplace led to interesting data on how she interact with guests, how she reacts in different situations, and what kind of role(s) she is playing. I found this method also beneficial in auditing my findings obtained from the interviews.

The first week I spend my time in Mumbai just by trying to find my way around. In this week an Indian friend of mine gave me the contacts of one female bartender, who unfortunately was out of the country. While waiting for her return, I went on my search through Mumbai. Occasionally I would walk into a bar hoping to find a female bartender. Although some Internet articles mentioned that there are Indian women who took on bartending as their profession, I soon realized it was not going to be that easy to actually find them just by walking into a bar from time to time. As in any other city I've visited in India, the local bars in Mumbai are true men caves, as I would like to refer these bars to. Sweaty and dark places, where especially after sunset all men would come together for a nice drink after a hard day of work. The first thing that popped in my head when I entered these bars was the song: 'It's a man's world' by James Brown. Every time I brought a visit to one of these bars I was quit the attraction, and soon enough I was convinced that these bars are not the right places for women to visit, let alone to work.



In the picture: A local bar in Mumbai, 2013.

To avoid a long search for female bartenders by visiting all bars in Mumbai, I contacted several bartending academies, and the IHM, Mumbai's institute of hotel management. Since I had to wait for response, I took some advice from the manager of Leopolds café in Colaba, one of Mumbai's most visited cafés by foreign travellers and locals, and went off to visit Bangalore. The first place on my list to visit was Bar Street. Unfortunately, the owners of the different clubs and bars I spoke to, all told me that the female bartenders that worked at Bar Street had left to work in other countries. The rest of the evening I spend with a group of Indian women who told me that they clearly understood why women did not want to work behind a bar in a male dominated society. With this in mind, and still hoping for the best, I went out for a late dinner. When I was ready to pay my bill, I found out that my handbag with wallet, passport and Visa was nowhere to be found. This meant I had to get back to Mumbai and visit the Embassy to apply for a new passport and exit-permit. Initially, I wanted to conduct my research in Delhi and in Mumbai, but the Embassy strongly advised me not to travel to Delhi without passport or Visa.

When I arrived back in Mumbai I still hadn't received any emails from the Flair mania bartending academy or the Indian professional bartending academy, so I decided to take matters into my own hands and decided to give them a surprise visit. At first, my visits to these bartending academies seemed like a fruitful method, but unfortunately I soon realized that I only found many men who were eager to show off their bartending skills. After my

second visit I knew I had to look further so I told the manager of the academy he should call me if one of the female bartenders was making her appearance in the academy. In chapter five I will discuss the findings I obtained from the bar academies more elaborate.

After one month I also got an email from the director at the IHM containing a list of female bartenders I could contact. These female bartenders, as well as the female bartenders I later spoke to in the bar academies advised me not to waste my time on barhopping in order to find female bartenders since all female bartenders chose to be freelancers. At first I was a bit disappointed, because it made me realize that it would be difficult to track other female bartenders, but on the other hand, it also gave me new insights on female bartending in India. Before entering the field it never occurred to me that most female bartenders are freelance bartenders. Therefore I will dedicate chapter four on the benefits of freelancing, and how this relates to agency.

During my three months of fieldwork I have visited over twenty local bars and nightclubs and spoke with more than fifty guests, men and women between twenty and forty years old, five bar managers, three bar academy managers, and eight female bartenders. My focus in this thesis is mainly on four of the female bartenders I interviewed. The reason for this is that I interviewed them multiple times, at work (which was not possible in all cases, because I had to stay in Mumbai), in the park where they would practice their flair⁴, at a restaurant, or at home. In the short period I was in Mumbai, I came to know these four diverse women really well, the stories and work experiences they shared provided me with interesting data for this thesis.

Before I will introduce all four women, I would like to draw special attention to one of the female bartenders in particular: Shatbhi Basu. While the other female bartenders are from a younger generation, with thirty years of experience in bartending, Shatbhi is well known as the first female bartender of India. She is the founder of STIR Academy of Bartending, the first Bartending School in India. In her own television programme 'In high spirits', she visits different bars in India and teaches her viewers everything they need to know about cocktails, mixing drinks, and bar etiquette.



In the picture: A newspaper article on Shatbhi Basu.

Introduction of the four female bartenders.

The first bartender I interviewed and therefore would like to introduce first is Ishita Manek. Ishita is twenty-six years old and she has been bartending for four years. Ishita grew up in Mumbai, which during the interviews she still refers to as Bombay. She explained that she still lives with her parents because first of all she feels it's safer, secondly housing rent in Mumbai is very high, and thirdly, in Indian culture children live with their parents until they get married. Ishita adds here that she does not have plans to get married any time soon. She grew up in a joint family where four brothers lived together with their wives and their kids, but after a lot of bickering the family split up.

Although Ishita is a Hindu, she doesn't find herself religious, she calls herself agnostic, towards an atheist. According to Ishita, religion is not what it was supposed to be anymore: "these days religion is just a money making act". Through school she came across serious issues like sexual abuse. At an early age she perceived society as very hypocrite and decided that she wanted to live free from the existing gender ideologies, which she describes as mind-set. From that moment on she started to be rebellious. She added that this might be the reason why she started bartending.

She started the hotel management school because she always thought that she wanted to become a chef, but after finishing the hotel school and six months of working in the kitchen making long hours for little money, she decided it was time for something else. She had done

the bartending course, which meant that she already had a strong spirits based knowledge. The idea of becoming a bartender appealed her, because it seemed like cooking only then with liquids. Bartending seemed an even better choice when she found out that being a bartender made it possible for her to see more of the world. Like many other female bartenders in India, Ishita is not employed in one particular establishment, but she's a freelancer. As a freelance bartender she has been travelling for events not only inside whole India, but also for events in Bangladesh and New Zealand. During the interviews with Ishita, I noticed she had a lot in common with Sarita.

Sarita, aged twenty-four, I've met through an Indian friend back home in the Netherlands. She entered the hotel management school after high school. Part of this study was visiting hotels to waiter, to serve cool drinks, and make starters or appetizers. In her second year she got into a six months training, where she worked in the kitchen of a hotel in Mumbai. After these six months she was working in a coffee shop and diner. For some reason the people who were working behind the bar in the coffee shop were fired, and Sarita had to take their place. Behind the bar she had to make the juices and fresh lime sodas for the guests. From this moment people were telling her that she was handling great behind the bar. Some of them asked her if she ever heard of Shatbhi Basu, the first female bartender. Before all of this had happened, she was unaware of bartending. After this internship, she was the only girl who wanted to join the bartending course. During this bartending course she tried harder than all the other male students. She now is a successful freelance bartender.

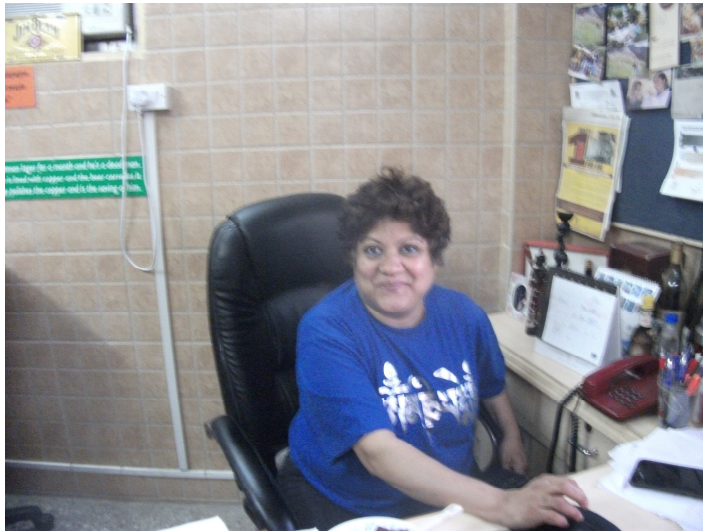
Ami Shroff, aged twenty-seven, already had nine years of experience in bartending. She is well known as the best female flair bartender of her generation. At the age of fifteen she already knew that she wanted to become a bartender. During college she met a bartender in Goa, who was willing to teach her some flair bartending. Flair bartending is a practice of bartenders when they entertain their guests by throwing (juggling) liquor bottles while mixing a drink. She tells me that she learned her first moves from the movie Cocktail. Ami started working as a hostess in private parties where she had to welcome guests. As a fifteen-year-old girl she made quit the extra pocket money with these part time jobs. Until she was eighteen years old her parents did not know about her part time job as a hostess. She describes herself as being a little vagabond and being a little rebellious. When she finished her bachelors in political science and philosophy she started focussing more on Flair bartending. Ami is now in her second year of Law studies, when she finishes, she wants to start her own bar.

Most female bartenders I interviewed know each other. Sometimes they know each other from the hotel school, or because they grew up in the same area of Mumbai, but the main

reason they know each other is simply because there are so few female bartenders in India. The one female bartender who all my interviewees mentioned during the interviews is Shatbhi Basu.

Shatbhi grew up in Mumbai, and comes from a very well educated and travelled Gujarati family⁵. Growing up she defines herself as being much of a tomboy. She has a very broad mix of cultures within the immediate family and so she is grown up to be open to all religions. At her home, she explains, we all have a healthy respect for each other's career choices and skill sets. After she finished at the Institute of Hotel Management, she wanted to become a chef and started as a trainee in 1980. After this one year she didn't see her career going anywhere, as at this period, restaurant owners were not very happy with women in the kitchen. She moved to a Chinese restaurant where a bartender went missing, here she had to make the drinks because of her hotel management background. She was completely fascinated by this. In the past thirty-one years Shatbhi worked at many different establishments, starting from trainee chef to restaurant food and beverage manager. During this period she also has been working for an ad agency, where she dealt with food products and wrote articles for trade and mainstream journals. After two years she retired to have her baby daughter.

After working in the hotel industry for quite a long time, and being involved in training, she realized that the void in professional academic instruction for bartenders or even a means to upgrade their existing skills was just as big as when she started out. The time was right to establish a platform, not only for bartenders, but also for all food and beverage professionals. Here they could come together to share ideas, update themselves on current trends and products and compete in a friendly yet highly organized atmosphere. It was also a medium to find out what the existing skill levels in bartending were in India and how they could help bring about change. This platform was brought to life in 1997. Now it has become the benchmark for professional bartending in India. In 1999, Shatbhi opened the STIR Academy of Bartending. They received positive feedback from the media and the performances of the bartenders levelled high. Although she is a freelance journalist, her new favorite medium is TV as it allows her to reach a really wide audience. Shatbhi also consulted various hotels, restaurants, and clubs or set up bar operations. She even introduced the bar in India as we know it in Europe.



In the picture: Shatbhi Basu in her office, 2013.

Chapter 3. Gender norms in India, a battle against gender apartheid.

In this chapter I will focus on how gender norms that come to the fore in law, and that are clung to in the ideological construction concerning gender norms enact in their daily lives. Also, I will elaborate on the question if female bartending is a stigmatized occupation.

Gender issues are not simply issues that concern women's way of thinking. If we want to understand gender, we must look at the opportunities, constraints, and changes in the lives of both men and women. I therefore will give a description of how women's and men's roles in India are socio-historically constructed.

I arrived in Mumbai on January 9th; this was one month after the Dutch television had broadcasted several news reports on violent sexual attacks on women in India. Most people around me, who knew about my plans to conduct a research in Mumbai, were very sceptical about the idea of me going there. By reminding me constantly of what is happening to many women in India they tried to convince me that it was very dangerous to go to a county where women are being looked down upon by society.

In India, women ratio compared to men is not only substantial lower than the world averages, but also than the female-to-male ratio under British colonialism (Ganguly and DeVotta, 2003). The lives of women in India are shaped by gendered social norms that date from centuries back old Hinduism's behavioural codes (Ganguly and DeVotta, 2003). Indian

girls are mostly seen as a burden to the family, because when they get married, they must be accompanied by a dowry.

The suppression of women in India by society also came to the fore in the many newspaper articles I read in Indian newspapers on gender apartheid and on the endless battle for gender equality, and in the many conversations and interviews I had in the field. Because boys are more desirable than girls, the Indian population is missing millions of girls. One of the newspaper articles I've read, summarized the struggle of women that begins with birth:

'Even before she has opened her eyes to the world, the Indian woman is drawn into an endless combat for physical and emotional survival. It is indeed a miracle that she is born, given the attempts to abort her if a medical scan indicates that the mother is carrying a female child' (The Navhind Times, March 10, 2013).

This behaviour is sustained and encouraged by mothers thus women themselves. During my fieldwork I noticed how activists call for campaigns to educate all women and girls about their rights as women and citizens. The low status that is ascribed to Indian women cannot be resolved by the political elite alone, but by a national awakening across the entire country. An example of how some people contribute to this national awakening is the protest of men in the capital Delhi, where they apologize for being part of a culture that encourages violence to women. These men believe that it is important for men to take personal responsibility for women's safety.

To protect Indian women, governments created protective environments special reserved for women, for example the ladies coaches in trains I used many times, and now even special banks for women. This enables them to share public spaces and services with men, without fearing for their safety. Although, such discrimination, as well intentioned as it is, constitutes a form of apartheid based on gender. Proponents of the view that these well-intentioned solutions further ghettoize women, argue that instead of gender segregation, India needs gender integration. To accomplish this, women want men to be re-educated on gender issues, so that women can move around freely in public without men pose any danger to women.

If we look at the statistics, Indian women live most of their lives at the world's lowest level of development (Ganguly and DeVotta 2003: 139) Most Indian women are not economically independent enough to live on their own. The dream to move out to another city to establish an independent live is impossible for many young women in India.

An important gender issue that leads to this economic dependency concerns property rights. Unequal gender relations and the social division between women and men, is the result of patriarchal ideology⁶ (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007). Consequently, women are less rewarded, both in political and property rights, and are more powerless, which leads to economic dependency (Cohen and Kennedy, 2007). In Hinduism, women's legal right to inherit property has been restricted from earliest times in India. An important Hindu code of ancient India by Manu states: 'Her father protects her in childhood, her husband protects her in youth and her sons protect her in old age; a women is never fit for independence'⁷.

Most recently, the Hindu Succession Act of 2005 removed sexual discrimination in the Hindu Succession rules, and gave women equal property rights as men. Even though laws have changed, many women activist argue that general awareness should be created among women about their rights, and women must have better access to legal aid (Halder and Jaishankar, 2009). The context of law must take into account the material aspects of lives of women in addition to the ideological. Research is important to find out whether the enactment of laws has made changes in the actual status of women in society and how they relate to existing ideologies. Above all, I argue that only when social legitimacy is established, changes can be made.

Here I would like to note that during my fieldwork, I read an article in the DNA newspaper on sexual harassment at workplaces. This article stated the following: 'The parliament finally put its stamp on legislation to end sexual harassment of women at workplaces', and 'The aim is that women are able to work freely'. This bill covers anyone who enters the workplace (DNA Mumbai, February 27, 2013). I found this noteworthy to mentioned, because this article is one of the many topics that captures the developments due to women's strive for betterment in every field of society in the months I conducted my fieldwork in Mumbai.

It is of importance to note that I conducted my fieldwork in Mumbai and that my research is based on interviews and conversations with urban middle-class and high-educated women. The magnitude of difference in social backgrounds of women I interviewed and women from example rural India makes a well-balanced comparison of gender norms and the status of both groups of women impossible. Instead of further discussing the overall gender norms in India, I therefore will focus solely on how a small group of middle-class women negotiate with existing gender norms.

Looking back in the field, some of my most interesting findings on gender norms came also from conversations I had with the daughter of my host family. Aged twenty-five and having a well-respected job function in a large IT firm; she lives a comfortable life with her parents in one of the most developed residential areas in Kharghar, Navi Mumbai. Unlike her brother, her mobility and freedom is more confined. She was not allowed to stay out until late, and not allowed to engage in close interaction with men outside the family's social circle, because this would dishonour the family. The same rules were addressed to me when I came to live with the family. I remember this one time, on a Friday evening; I was invited by her brother and some friends to have dinner outside. When we got back home around 11PM his mother was furious, but above all very worried, and of course I felt embarrassed by this. The next morning she explained that she was only disappointed in her son, because he should have known that it was really risky to stay out until late, especially with me in their company. She added that girls of my age should not be outside with boys; the neighbours would be making up all sorts of things. Then she pointed in the direction of my package of cigarettes that must have fell out of my bag, and told me: 'neither should girls smoke nor drink, you are too smart for that'. When she saw I was blushing, she smiled and walked out. The days that followed, the father would, as he did with his daughter, pick me up at the train station every day after work. After one innocent dinner outside, I felt like the problem child.

Every now and then, I caught both mother and daughter or mother and father giggling in front of the computer, when they were looking at pictures of potential husbands. After reading that the majority of Indian women, often Muslim, Christian as well as Hindu are forced into arranged marriages, I couldn't help myself by asking how she felt about arranged marriage. She emphasized it was her idea to marry the traditional way, meaning that her parents will choose a groom for her from the same caste. Instead of one potential husband, they choose several; this will enable her to decide with whom she wants to marry with. She adds here that although the age for girls to get married is around twenty-four, her parents would never push her into marriage before she is ready for it. When the time comes, she will arrange the first meeting herself. This, I can trace back in the readings by Ganguly and DeVotta when they state that when women take up economically productive roles, and by being economically independent, women in India are less pressured to marry unwillingly (Ganguly and DeVotta, 2003). One of the female bartenders even told me that her sister asked their parents if they would find her a groom, 'after years of struggling to find a potential candidate by herself, she kept on ending up alone', that is why she called the help of my parents, easy' (Ishita, 2013).

I also want to draw special attention to the fact that when it comes to marriage, mothers would also see their sons getting married before a certain age. When I paid a visit to her brother in Pune, he mentioned that his mother would send him occasionally pictures of marriageable women. He explained me that his lifestyle: having different girlfriends, inviting women at his place, spending his weekends in Goa drinking with foreign travellers, will bring shame to the family and especially his mother. Only his father knew about his way of living, and I had to promise not to tell the rest of his family.

The female bartenders I have interviewed shared similar stories. Most of the women I had interviewed described their parents as being 'open minded'. At home they do not get different treatments in comparison with their brothers or cousins. They, for instance, all had the opportunity to go to university. Most women were actually pressured to go to school, and pressured to finish a degree, so that they would be able to find a well-paid job. Since most of my interviewees wanted to live independently, employment was the way to achieve this independence. The main reason why their parents were not in favour of their career choice was for safety reasons. During the interviews most women indicated that they were convinced that this open-mindedness had to do with the fact that they were living in Mumbai. Some would state, that even in a metropolitan city like Delhi, females are merely seen as sexual objects; here the macho alpha male dominates every field of society. My host family strongly advised me not to go to Delhi, as well as a good friend of mine from Holland who was in India to visit his parents. He assured me that he would have to call my mother if I would stupid enough to go there by myself.

The ideas on Stigma.

Before I arrived in the field, different articles on female bartending gave me the impression that the taboo on women serving alcohol as a means of living still existed, which could mean that women in these jobs are stigmatized and do not have a high status.⁸

However, during fieldwork, my preconceived ideas were challenged. The way that stigma is perceived by the female bartenders is much more nuanced and complex than I had imagined. During the interviews I noticed that stigma is related to safety (sexual violence), family, and the media.

The first two bartenders I will mention in this chapter both explicitly told me that they have experienced stigma.

When questioning Ishita about the way her social environment reacts to her profession she replied by saying that her parents are really conservative; when she told her father that she wanted to become a bartender, he rejected her idea. He explained her that he was not able to tell this to the family. He warned her that this would shame the family, because women are not allowed to serve alcohol. When she finished the hotel school she had to break certain barriers with her parents and decided to do a three months bartending course. Soon her father realized that his daughter's confidence increased.

During our interview Ishita also mentioned the important role of media. At first her father and had negative ideas on bartending, but due to newspaper articles on bartending, he started accepting bartending as having a respectful and real job.

As mentioned previously, similar to the other female bartenders, Ishita is a freelance bartender. Another reason why she improved everyone's opinion on bartending is because freelance bartending gave her the opportunity to travel around, and even beyond India. Her friends and family came to see bartending as something more serious. Although her parents now accept the fact that she is a bartender, she emphasizes that there is a difference in tolerance on female bartending within religion and regions. For example her cousins, especially her female cousins from other villages, tell her how lucky she is that she can be a female bartender. Their parents won't allow them. Ishita believes that this is because in many small towns women cannot step out of the ordinary and do things what men usually do:

'In a male dominated area, you don't step into this, because your family honour rest in you' (Ishita, Februari 27th 2013). By

When Sarita told her dad, that she wanted to become a bartender, her father was against this. She explained that she comes from a Brahmin family and both her father and grandfather are priests. Her father did not allow Sarita to be a bartender because he stated that bartending is a job done by men, and only men can do this. Sarita clarifies this by saying that it is not because bartending is illegal for women, but it is about the trend, a tradition, bartending is a male dominated thing. Although bartending is a male dominated occupation in India, Sarita noticed that the lifestyles of both men and women were changing: women and men started to visit bars, or nightclubs more often to drink and have fun. The name she ascribes to this new lifestyle is: an American culture.

When she kept insisting her father, he decided to discuss this matter with his brother. Fortunately, her uncle supported Sarita's choice since his daughter had been working in a restaurant for several years and never experienced any problems. Sarita also mentioned that not only her uncle changed her father's judgement on bartending, but also the principal of her college. In a conversation with her father, the principal of her school, who also happened to be their neighbour, emphasized that she had won several bar competitions, and convinced her father that bartending is a safe profession.

Although she noticed that many guests are happy to see a female bartender, and would explicitly say how nice it is to try a cocktail made by a female bartender, becoming and being a bartender can be really difficult for some girls. She explained that at one time she was working with another female bartender, who all of sudden hid behind the counter. When Sarita asked her why she was hiding, her colleague explained that her uncle had just come in. She had been a bartender for over a year secretly because her family would not approve this. If her family would find out, this could bring forth future problems regarding marriage. Sarita's colleague was excused to leave the event, and go home. The host of the party did not mind, because this had happened many times with different female bartenders. Sarita adds that most people hold a negative image of female bartending, because in many movies female bartenders are being portrayed as sexually unrestrained.

What I found interesting in the interview with Sarita, is when she mentioned the differences in ideas on female bartending between cities. Where Ishita indicates the difference between small villages and cities, Sarita noticed that for example in Delhi, guest would approach her in different ways than in Mumbai. According to her, in Mumbai her guests will generally accept her as a bartender, while in Delhi, they see her as a pretty face. Also Shatbhi, who worked many times in Delhi, noticed this difference. In Delhi, status is most important: what car you drive, what clothes you wear. 'Most people spend their money on luxurious goods, this you can trace back to Delhi's nightlife, where the bars look fancy and the bartenders look flashy' (Shatbhi, 2013).

Due to the fact that Delhi is centrally located, there are many people who come from other states. Although Delhi is a metropolitan city, most people who come to Delhi did not develop the same image of female bartenders as in Mumbai. What she noticed in Delhi is for example a movement of ex-farmers who sold their lands and moved to Delhi. The newly rich, the name she assigned to these people, think of women as sexual objects. Even though Delhi is a metropolitan city, Delhi is populated by people with this kind of mentality. What interested me regarding this story is that at first I thought that people living in large and

modern capitals like Delhi would be more accustomed to the idea of female bartenders, meaning that these women would be less stigmatized. This example however, teaches me differently.

The idea of female bartenders as sexual objects can result in uncomfortable work experiences. Ishita gives examples on how most guys would try to cross her counter. She explained that in cases like this, she is able to control the situation because of her attitude. Being a female bartender is all about the attitude, she identifies this as 'the don't mess with me attitude'. It is of utmost importance to make sure that her agent knows well where she is working for, and if they invested in security. She emphasizes, that even though it can be quit annoying that she has to think about her safety every time, during work she is fully in charge. During a party or other event, she's the only one mixing the drinks, and very rarely there is also another bartender. There are bar backs, but they are just there to make sure there are enough clean glasses and juices. At work, nobody is directing her.

When it comes to female bartending as a stigmatized occupation, both Sarita and Ishita explained that the stereotyped image of female bartenders still exists. Although their closest relatives and friends now hold a positive image on female bartending, other (conservative) people still hold a negative image. For instance, Ishita still meets old relatives who do not understand her choice of profession, and even in the rest of Mumbai the negative image still exists. To some of Ishita's old relatives, her father explains that his daughter is a fashion designer instead of a bartender (something she does in her extra time). The very strong and negative reaction both Ishita and Sarita receive from different people regarding their profession showed them that some images can be deeply rooted. In these cases it is difficult to convince people that bartending is not shameful.

'There are only two ways men look at female bartenders', Ishita explained. 'Only rarely I have men come up to me and genuinely appreciate it that I'm working behind the bar'.

Either men would think that Ishita is a shameless women working with alcoholic beverages, and stress that she should be at home with her family, or they think of her as a loose woman, or a prostitute. It occurs only rarely that a man approaches her and tells her how pleased he is to meet a woman who became a bartender.

Ishita concludes this by saying that it would be nice if people would stop looking at female bartenders as sexual objects, because this is a big problem most female bartenders face. She is convinced that many parents won't allow their daughter to be a bartender because of the idea of men objectifying them. Whether it has to do with their costumes that they are wearing or

have to wear or how guests at the bar approach them. She rather sees the objectification of female bartenders changing, then the shame factor. If guests or others approach her and call her a shameful woman, she knows that these people just don't know any better.

Both Ishita and Sarita clearly experienced stigma as something problematic, but the following statement by Ishita shows that stigma actually is much more complex.

'For once I can do something being a woman and stand out because I'm a woman. It's almost liberating. I think that more women should this!' (Ishita, 2103).

By stating that bartending is liberating, because she does something that people think is taboo, she also perceives it as something positive.

Opposed to Ishita and Sarita, Ami and Shatbhi stated they have never experienced stigmatization by others. It even seemed like Shatbhi's mission in life was to eliminate the idea that female bartenders are being stigmatized. Even though they both strongly emphasized they had never experienced stigma, Ami's parents did not know that she had a part time job in the hospitality sector until she was eighteen years old. She had to keep it a secret, because her parents were most concerned about her safety and the way society would react to her career choice.

At the time Ami started bartending in 2003 there were no other known female bartenders except for Shatbhi Basu. Because of the number of female bartenders, her parents were very sceptical about it. Her friends' parents on the other hand knew that Ami had been bartending from the beginning, because she practiced her bartending skills together with their daughter. Ami's parents stayed sceptical, until they found out that bartending is safe, and until they heard all the good responses from outside. Similar to Ishita, Ami explained me that it would have been different if she had grown up in another village. Ami describes her parents as extremely open-minded; they give her a lot of freedom in decision-making. At work, Ami receives mostly compliments, hardly criticism from her guests, whether they are women or men. People are especially fascinated by her fire flair act, because not many people heard about it. The guests will always ask her how, and why she got into this profession. In the end they always remain sceptical, because at all times guests want to know if bartending is safe, or if her family respects her choice to become a bartender.

Similar to the other female bartenders I interviewed, Ami emphasizes that during an evening she is in charge of the bar. She explains that this comes with a certain kind of attitude. The reason for this is that she is quite confident at what she does. This was different in

the beginning, but she described herself as being a fast learner, and she had the ambition to be as fast and work as smooth as the others.

Shatbhi's parents were highly supportive and quit happy with her choice to become a bartender. In fact, her first book on bartending was a present, given to her by her mother and her aunt. The rest of the family send her as much help as they could from all around the world. Not only her own family, but also her parents-in-law were really supportive. Like Ami, Shatbhi never had any negative experiences, and she has been a bartender for over thirty years. According to her, there is no stigma: it's all in the mind. Stigma is in every society, depending on how you look at it. When women started bartending in Europe, it was the same. She is convinced that people can't blame society for the stigmatization of bartending. As part of society, the people themselves are society. If people want a change, then that is the way it should be. If people don't change things because they are scared, how must we expect society to change? (Shatbhi Basu, 2013) Thirty years ago, when she started bartending, there were only five journalists. Today, there are more female then male journalists in India. Developments over time are possible because of a change of mind-set of the people.

In spite of westernization, well education, and travelling, most families are ignorant, and don't know, and more importantly, don't see the difference between working in a bar and people who are getting drunk in a bar. Besides that, many hold the idea that a bartender is someone who simply pours alcohol, in a seedy little place where people get drunk and fight. These people don't know the knowledge that is behind bartending, and how much bartenders have to study. This is a problem for male and female bartenders. 'Unless we come to a generation which is more evolved, parents would flinch at the idea that their daughter or son is working in a bar' (Shatbhi Basu, 2013).

According to Shatbhi, the image of bartending that is perceived by family members can cause problems. She emphasizes that it is only a myth, invented by many women that everybody in the bar is out to get them. What these women have experienced is something they have asked for. She explains it is all about the way bartenders work, it is about body language, how bartenders control the bar, and their confidence in bartending. This helps one to gain respect. Her advice to all women is:

'Don't try to be one of the boys, you are not, it can lead to wrong impressions. Work just as hard and efficiently and maybe even more. But you are at all times a woman. Never forget it' (Shatbhi Basu, 2013).

She tells me that she has never really considered that as a bartender, she is a woman in a male domain. Initially most guys would tend to ignore her completely, but soon this would turn to curiosity, then even awe. Women would come up to her and tell her how terrific it is to see a woman behind the bar, and foreign guests were simply surprised to find her behind the bar. Shatbhi thinks that for women it is far safer to work in a bar, than in any other public places. Behind a bar counter nobody can touch them, and in addition there are always their colleagues who are supportive and protective.

The question if bartending in India is a stigmatized occupation cannot be answered by a simple yes or no. Some of the female bartenders had told me they experienced stigma but feel that bartending therefore is liberating and others had told me they have never experienced stigmatization but started bartending secretly to avoid disapproval of family members, or indicate that women from conservative families will most definitely will be stigmatized by their families and/or communities they live in. For instance, when I asked Shatbhi if bartending is a good career option for women she told me that an important question to ask oneself first is: do you have passion towards the art of bartending? If it's yes, then that's the career you want to pursue. Another question one must ask oneself is: is bartending a bad career option for women? If you come from an orthodox family, then yes, she answered. It is a bad option unless someone has the strength, conviction and knowledge to combat the ignorance and show them the light.

The subtle way the female bartenders respond to this question demonstrates the complexity of the notion of stigma.

Even though they all had different ideas on stigma, there is one thing they all had in common: they all shared and used the idea of mind-set when we discussed stigmatization and status. This idea of mind-set is closely linked with the discourse in the theoretical framework on the ideological construction of gender norms. The women I interviewed, bartenders and guests, all referred to India as a male dominated society, where reproduced ideologies of men constrain women's' economic development. They explained that in this male dominated society, female bartending is just one of the many other fields where women are being looked down upon, because bartending is seen as a male profession. This mind-set runs across every field and aspect of society. They believe that by changing the mind-set, not only by changing laws, a country can change.

‘One of my girlfriends is a doctor, and even she is looked down upon. Here again we see this mind-set, it runs across every field and aspect of society, everything has to do with mind-set. A country can change because of that. Laws do not matter’ (Ishita, 2013).

This idea on changing the mind-set of all people in India also came to the fore in the many newspaper articles I read in Indian newspapers on gender apartheid and the endless battle for gender equality.

The female bartenders I had interviewed explained me that they want to live free from this mind-set and that it was quite possible that they took on this profession because of that. They added that one should keep in mind that women can do any profession today, even professions that always have been male dominated. Female bartending is no exception, and the women I interviewed can see a shift in ideas on female bartending. Shatbhi states that the taboo on women as bartenders is a myth that both men and women seem like to perpetuate. According to her, the people of India need to grow out of this old woman/man equation and alcohol/women taboo scenario.

The effects of gender norms and law on bartending.

I argue that governments should embrace the potential of women in the labour force, but even if laws are adjusted, women still have to struggle with gender ideology and stigma in relation to safety that may condemn women in these kinds of jobs.

One of the bartenders told me an interesting story that illuminates this issue. Even though the Supreme Court had overturned the colonial-era ban against women bartenders, when a tragic event had happened that concerned female bartenders, different people started questioning themselves again if it was safe for women to work in a bar. This story I later found back in newspaper articles on the Internet.⁹ The Jessica Lal case was about a woman who was a bartender in 1999. Jessica Lal was working in a private party in Delhi. When she decided to stop serving a man alcohol, even though he offered her a thousand Rupees, he gapped his gun and shot her. ‘For a long time this man did not go to jail, because he had contacts and connections’, Ishita explained, ‘he was a politician’s son’. According to Ishita, this was the reason why many women did not want to do this work. Even though the Delhi Supreme Court overturned the British law that banned women from working in bars for safety reasons,

people felt again that women should not work behind the bar. The ban was restored to protect women. Instead of trying to solve the problem, they decided to subdue it. She ends this story by saying:

‘In India there is this problem of victim bashing: if a girl is raped it is not lets go get the rapist, but lets make women wear more clothes, in this case, maybe it’s better to prohibit women from working in bars. They don’t deal with the problem but try to hide the problem. India is a bizarre country’ (Ishita, 2013).

Other newspaper articles related to this topic, state that the ban on women bartending by Delhi government was the result of the idea that men behave badly under the influence of alcohol.¹⁰ Here, I found it noteworthy to mention that some people referred me to Goa, since this is India’s popular tourist region. In addition, Ami taught me that many female bartenders came to Goa, to practice their flair skills. Even though there were numerous bars on the beaches, the women who were working behind these bars were foreign women, or Indian women older than thirty who only had the task to make sure that the guest paid their bills. One of these women explained to me that Goan families are more conservative. She, for instance, would never let her daughter work in a place where foreign men are out to get drunk, it won’t be safe. In an article related to this topic, the author states that a Hindu nationalist group, the Sri Ram Sena, argue that westernization, which comes with an immoral culture, is spreading throughout India and causes violent sexual attacks in Goa by Indian boys who have adopted western culture. This Sri Ram Sena is well known for their violent protests and threats. For instance, in 2009 they attacked middle-class girls in Mangalore who were drinking after work with their colleagues¹¹.

For safety reasons, in the state Maharashtra, the law states that women are not allowed to work in bars after eight PM, but many employers and female bartenders were not even aware of this. Other employers just ignored this rule, and looked after the safety of their employees themselves. During the interviews, the bartenders reacted to this in different ways. Ami for instance react to this by saying that as a professional bartender, she knows how to handle different guests. Rules regarding curfews for female bartenders should only be applied to inexperienced bartenders. Shatbhi and Ami are both convinced that bartending is safe, not only because of bouncers, but because a bar counter makes sure there is a distance between bartenders and guests. Shatbhi adds here that women can handle themselves, and that it is impossible to introduce such curfews in an industry, where it starts getting busy from 9 PM.

Unless more women will speak up against these kind of solutions, nothing will change. No one can change the law, unless they believe it.

Ishita explains here that when she started working as a female bartender, she wasn't actually allowed to do this by law. But she did not face any problems because she works for private events. She states that safety solutions like curfews for women are gender biased. Sarita explained through whole India a lot of illegal things are happening. Even though she had been working as a bartender before the law stated that women were allowed to serve alcohol, she never faced any problems with working as a bartender. If the police did any check ups, the organization would just pay the police a certain amount of Rupees. There was only one time that one of the managers came up to her and told her that they did not have permission for female bartenders behind the bar. This shocked her, because she had been working all over India, and never experienced anything like this. She had to stand still next to the bar for almost an hour. When the host found out what had happened, he called in the manager and persuaded him to let her work behind the bar since he explicitly hired her to work at his party.

Chapter 4. The fun of freelance

Before I arrived in the field, I imagined that it would be feasible to find female bartenders simply by visiting different bars, clubs, lounges, hotels, and cafes. However, the manager of the Flair Mania bar academy, and the manager of the Indian Professional bartending academy taught me that Indian female bartenders don't work in one establishment, but they prefer being freelance bartenders. As this thesis will show, all female bartenders except for Shatbhi, chose to be a freelance bartender. In this chapter I will focus on the reasons why women prefer freelance jobs, and how they experience their occupation, but I will also focus on how Shatbhi perceives freelance bartending, because I could detect a difference between the two generations of bartenders.

My first interview was with Ishita. We agreed to meet in a nice and quite café, the Woodside Inn, on Colaba road. Before I went to meet Ishita, I spend some time in Leopold café, one of the most popular bars in Mumbai, where I noticed that there were at least a dozen men running from table to table with full trays of beer, but a female waitress or bartender, was nowhere to be found. Although I already had asked the manager of Leopold about the absence of female waitresses, I couldn't help myself by asking Ishita during our interview why there

were no women at work at Leopold Café. She confirmed what the manager of Leopold told me an hour earlier, and the managers of the bar academies had told me one week earlier by saying that female bartenders prefer being freelancers. Asking her why she chose to be a freelance bartender, she gave me a few reasons. The first reason was purely out of financial reasons, freelance bartenders have lucrative incomes. Secondly, freelance bartending made it possible for her to see more of the world. As a freelance bartender she has been travelling for events not only inside India, but she has also been to Bangladesh and New Zealand. As a third reason she tells me that all the bars in Mumbai have male staff. When a female bartender comes to the scene, she believes that some kind of ego clash between the sexes will start. As a female bartender between all male bartenders, she fears that she will be discriminated against. The male staff will for example accuse female bartenders of being incompetent as bartenders. This fear of being discriminated against is based on the idea that bartending is a 'male occupation'. She adds here that freelance bartending has nothing to do with safety reasons. She believes that in a few years, when more people are adjusted to the idea that women can be bartenders, I will find female bartender in a bar like Leopold's café.

'All in all, freelance bartending is more comfortable: better paid, better gigs, and you can work when you want to' (Ishita, 2013).

Until this day, Ishita herself never found a female bartender in one of the bars or clubs in Mumbai. The change is taking place. There used to be only a few women who were struggling to brake through the barrier and become a bartender, eventually there will be more.

Ami called me at a Sunday afternoon to meet up in the park. She was planning to practice her flair skills and thought I might be interested to join her. It was amazing to see how all men instantly stopped playing their cricket game as soon as Ami started juggling with bottles.



In the picture: Ami Shroff, 2013

While she was practising, she explained that she mostly works at weddings, pre-wedding parties, corporate parties, and public parties. Sometimes she also works in clubs and lounges, but only on special nights.

Similar to Ishita, she rather does not want to work in one particular bar. Bartenders, who work in one particular establishment continuously, don't make the same amount of money as freelance bartenders. She did accept one project in Bangalore where she worked for two months. They hired her to set up the new bar. She adds that if she thinks she can deliver something, she will do it. At work she handles the bar for five to six hours. During work she makes sure that her bar backs get all the ingredients and supplies she needs to make the cocktails. She adds here that well trained bar backs are the most important persons behind the bar, because they make sure that at busy nights everything goes flawless. Although she loves making cocktails, the best part of her evening is when she can do her fire flair show. This fire flair show is an entertainment act for the guests where she juggles with bottles on fire.

The difference between a freelance bartender and a bartender that works in one place specifically is that bartenders who work at one place have twelve- till fifteen-hour shifts. She mentioned that this is incredibly hard work; the bartenders have to do the preparations beforehand, and when the bar is closed, the bartenders have to clean up after. Ami explained that she is often excused from doing this extra work, not because she is a female, but because she is more experienced than the other bartenders. In addition, she claims that for women who are really good at something, it is really easy to find work, maybe even easier than for guys. She states:

'Life as a female bartender is even easier than a male bartender, because I'm a girl, I get more opportunities' (Ami Shroff, 2013).

As a freelance bartender, she has the opportunity to spend her spare time travelling. She explains me that everything she does in her leisure time helps her improving her bartending skills. For instance mountain climbing improves her hand eye coordination, which improves her flair bartending skills. And during travelling she meets new people who inspire her to try new ingredients for her drinks. In that way, she explains, everything is interconnected.

The first female bartender I contacted was Sarita. An Indian friend of mine gave me her contacts one week after my arrival in Mumbai. Even though I had established my first contact with a female bartender, it was really difficult to make an appointment with her to do the

interview. She explained me on the phone that she was working in Bangkok. At this point, I still didn't realize that she was a freelance bartender, and that freelance bartending was even an option. When I told her this during our interview she laughed, and said that I came to India in the middle of the working season, so it might be more difficult to track other female bartenders since it was possible they were working elsewhere. What I found interesting is when she mentioned there is a special working season for bartenders. Ishita later confirmed this by explaining that working season for freelance bartenders in India is from September until March. They do work from April until August, but there are strikingly less events to work for during monsoon season.

Sarita noticed that during work she always tries harder than men. As a freelance bartender she works mostly for weddings. Being a freelance bartender for a big company has many benefits, she makes good money and she knows her clientele. She tells me that the best part of her work is that she has the opportunity to travel abroad. She can't even remember taking a train or a bus to go to work. There is a trend that many Indian people take their weddings overseas, like Bangkok, Dubai or even Africa.

She explains that being a female bartender you always have to work hard, especially on weddings. Although she also does flair bartending, she sometimes has to skip that part, because people are more interested in getting drunk. Although she is busy with alcoholic drinks 365 days in a year, she doesn't drink herself. The only thing she needs during work is music. Even at parties with friends, she is the one making the cocktails and shots for her friends.

Sarita tells me that she has good clientele, most of the times they will ask only her for special events, and no other person. During these nights, as any other nights, she can decide what cocktails she will be making and what other drinks. When she is at work, there always has to be a male bartender as well. There have been evenings when people got too drunk, which led to unpleasant situations. At situations like this, she is really glad that there always is a male bartender who can back her up. She adds here that she has been bartending for so many years now that she has learned how to deal with different situations and how to handle different people. It only happens rarely that it feels like she is working. In the end it always depends on the crowd. If the crowd is difficult to work with, she will have to act, which is enervating. When an evening is like this, she hopes the evening will pass quickly, but at times she is enjoying herself, it does not feel like she is working, but it feels like she is part of the party.

‘Bartending is part of my passion, it’s not my work’ (Sarita, 2013).

The first thing I remembered doing when I received the email of Dr. Saxena, director at IHM Mumbai with the list of names of female bartenders, was searching their names on the Internet. The results went beyond all my expectations. I had the opportunity to conduct an interview with India’s first female bartender. Although I already interviewed a few bartenders, it felt as if it was the first interview, being nervous all over again. On the day we arranged to meet at her place, I left my temporary home early to take the train to the other side of Mumbai. Arriving at the point of destination, I found out that she had her own bar academy, STIR, attached to her home. The walls of her office in the academy were covered with newspaper articles on India’s first spirited lady, Shatbhi Basu, and a large poster on the ABC of drinking. As soon as I was provided with a slice of her new recipe, Chocolate and Grand Marnier pie, the interview began.

Shatbhi described bartending as a strange mix of art, science and technique. It keeps her young and contemporary with the rest of the world. Opposed to the other female bartenders I had interviewed, when Shatbhi was a fulltime bartender years ago, she preferred working for one establishment only. She actually is rather negative on freelance bartending, because as a freelance bartender you don’t know the place where you will be working, and you don’t know your guests, which can lead to trouble. In addition, good bartenders can adapt to every environment they work in. Therefore she makes a division between bartenders, and good, or professional bartenders. She is a bit suspicious of the new generation of bartenders who only prefer freelance bartending. She clarifies herself by stating that professional bartenders will never complain. They will manage to make the most dreadful environments work for them.

She states that most girls who choose to be a freelance bartender are only in it for the money, and the glamour. An example she gives is on flair bartending. She states that many women do this, but this is not bartending. It is a way to stand out, be in the spotlights, it is a way of drawing attention.

Another example is that many bartenders call themselves mixologists, meaning somebody who performs mixology, the art of mixing drinks (cocktails). Being a mixologist has become synonymous for being a bartender. Many bartenders rather use mixologist because it sounds more glamorous or more upgrading. Shatbhi informed me, that there is a difference between bartenders and mixologists. People who call themselves bartenders, are

the real hard and skilled workers, people who call themselves mixologists rather not work behind a bar: 'They just want to create a drink, and look fancy' (Shatbhi Basu, 2013).

While working, to some guests she was their shoulder to cry on, but to some she was someone evil because she refused to give them another drink when she thought they had have enough. Some would hopelessly fall in love with her for the evening, and would apologize their next visit. She doesn't think that she has done anything special, outstanding, or courageous as a woman at all. She adds here that all she has done as a professional: chose to tread the untried path and broke some barriers, anyone can do if you like a challenge and have the passion. Before I met Shatbhi in person, she wrote me an email were she answered some of my questions. In this email she wrote:

'I look upon untried careers like bartending as an opportunity to shine. To showcase your skills and rise above the ordinary. To change perceptions that arise out of cultural blocks and lack of insight' (Shatbhi, 2013).

In spite of the fact that some articles refer to bartending as an art form that has a negligible association with feminism, I would like to note here that something caught my attention. Even though feminism in India is theorized differently than in the West because of historical circumstances, social structures, and values, it strikes me that the difference between the two generations of female bartenders in India resembles the way femininity is expressed by the second-wave feminists and it's response of third-wave feminists in the West. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Shatbhi, a strong female character, mentioned that she has met many women in this new generation of bartenders who chose to become a bartender just for the glamour. This generation of bartenders behold the image of being glamorous and feminine as highly desirable. The contrast between Shatbhi, who describes herself as a tomboy, and the new generation of female bartenders who emphasize their femininity while being professional bartenders resembles the reaction of 'lipstick feminists'.

'There are not many bartenders, some good, some bad, some ugly, some are out there to be bartenders, others because they think it's glamorous, a way out to earn a lot of pocket money, but they are not truly bartenders' (Shatbhi, 2013).

Another point that I found worth mentioning is that Shatbhi sees a new generation of bartenders who keep copying the west. She states that it is all right to be inspired, but it's

important to be your own person. Bartenders need to contribute something, they are allowed to use all the things they learn from others, but they must make it into something new.

Except for Shatbhi, all female bartenders I interviewed are in favour of freelance bartending. Reasons for this differed from material reasons to having a chance to travel.

Something that really interested me is the fact that the female bartenders of this generation choose to be freelancers consciously. Even though most of these female bartenders had to break some barriers, and had to step out of the ordinary, their social environment now recognizes female bartending as having a respectful job. These women are not only in charge of the bar, but also in many cases in charge of the entire evenings. In my point of view, the way these women position themselves indicates that they have a very strong agency: a strong socio-culturally mediated capacity to act.

Chapter 5. From bar academy to bar counter.

Before I will elaborate on my visits to the Flair Mania bartending academy and the Indian Professional bartending academy, and my first encounter with a female bartender at her work, I would first like to say a few words on the bar itself.

When Shatbhi started working as a bartender, most bars looked like kitchens. Compared to kitchens, these old style bars were made of wood and tiles. She remembered standing behind a small platform, where there was just enough space to stand straight. Behind her, there were two cupboards that displayed the bottles. According to her, these bars were not bartender friendly, thus, she decided to design her own, bartender friendly bar. Based on the images of bars in other countries she found in catalogues, she went to a kitchen manufacturing company in Mumbai, and showed them her design. In those days, manufacturing companies had never fabricated a bar in India. It became the first modern designed bar which was fabricated in 1998 in India.

On Monday 18th of February I took the rickshaw to the Flair Mania bartending academy to surprise them with a little visit. Not knowing what to expect and if they were even open, my mission was clear. On this day I was determined to find more female bartenders.

The address led me to a large building block. The people around this site were not aware that one of those old buildings was hiding a bar academy. After I had run almost every stairs in all the buildings up and down, I finally found a door with a poster with the name of the academy. Standing in front of the door, I hesitated a while before I knocked. The person who opened the door looked really surprised by finding me at the other side of the door. When entering the room I told the man who let me in what the purpose of my visit was. He invited me to step inside the office, which was covered with certificates of Guinness book of records achievements regarding flair bartending. Although he assured me that there are a few female participants in the bar training course, our conversations quickly came to an end due to a language barrier. He gave me the manager's phone number, who was not there at the time, and suggested that I should call him. On the phone we decided that I would stop by again the day after the next.

An hour away from the Flair Bartending academy was the Indian Professional Bartending academy. This academy was located in a residential area. A large sign with directions made it easy to find. When I knocked the door, someone, with a similar expression as my previous encounter, opened and invited me in. The first thing I noticed, after explaining the purpose of my visit, were a few men who were juggling with bottles on fire. The person who opened the door told me to wait a minute so he could inform the manager of my visit. He quickly came back with another person, who introduced himself as Ajee Negi. In his office, I explained again what brought me to his bar academy. He mentioned that one girl, who was supposed to come practicing that day, called off sick that morning. Although I did not find any female bartenders, I was eager to hear if he had noticed any developments regarding female bartending, and what his ideas were on female bartenders.

Ajee told me that after the ban of women serving alcohol was withdrawn, he noticed an increase of women's employment in clubs, and registration for the bar training courses he offered. He explained me that female bartenders earn above average incomes. Being a female bartender gives them the opportunity to work abroad, to earn a good salary, and to live a comfortable life. As a result, female bartenders are well respected by their family and other relatives. He adds here that female bartenders even have better job opportunities than men, because guests, whether male or female, get really excited when they see a female bartender mixing their drinks. According to Ajee, every bar can use a women's touch. Although he trained several female bartenders, it still surprises him when he enters a club and finds a female bartender. He will approach a female bartender the same as a male bartender, there is

no difference between the two, they are both there to do their jobs: that is being a good host. The women in his academy don't get special treatments. Bartending is hard work, so when they finish their bar training they must be able to apply their skills at the bar. The hour that followed, we mainly talked about his and my bartending experiences.

During our conversation, every twenty minutes someone would come in to the office with a new mocktail (a cocktail without alcohol) they invented, which off course, I had to test. After the third mocktail, and a fire flair show, I felt it was time to leave the scene. He promised me that he would call me if one of the female trainees would come to the academy. Unfortunately, this never happened.

Two days later I headed back to the Flair Mania bartending academy where I had an appointment with Pankaj Kamble, the manager of the academy. This time, there was a lot more activity inside. First he gave me a tour inside the academy. There was an open room, where people were practicing their juggling, and a room that was furnished like a classroom. Only, this classroom had a bar in the front of the class, and the bookshelves were stacked with books on different cocktail recipes or liquors.



In the photo: A sommelier is explaining the different wines in the academy, 2013.

In his office, Pankaj gave me a completely different reason why women had been banned from bartending. According to him, it had nothing to do with safety reason, or the taboo on women working with alcohol. He was convinced that many female bartenders were also involved in illegal sexual activities. Since this is strictly prohibited, the government thought the best option was to prevent women from working in bars. When I brought this statement before the bartenders I interviewed, half of them only laughed and told me I was

misinformed, others were even irritated by this and told me that such ignorance about the facts only leads to a negative image of female bartenders.

Looking back through all the Internet articles on laws concerning female bartenders, I could not find anything that was even remotely close to his statement either. Nevertheless, I did find it important to mention this, while the circulation of similar ideas can contribute to the stigmatization of female bartenders.

When I asked him if he could notice any difference between male and female bartenders, he replied by saying that apart from physical strength, he could not name anything else. The only thing he does notice is that when it comes to receiving tips at any evening, he will go home with a remarkable amount of extra pocket money when he had worked the evening with a female bartender. He emphasizes that during an evening you can see that the guest, men and women, really love to see a female bartender doing her job. He adds: 'but if I see a male guest likes the sight of my female colleague too much, and she gives me a sign to help her out, I will make sure that she does not have to serve him anymore. Luckily this hardly ever happens, while they perfectly know what to do in any circumstances'.

During our conversation Pankaj also gave me a list with contact numbers of a few female acquaintances who are or used to be bartenders. Some of these women used to be colleagues of him, others he knew from the bar academy. He added that over the years some of them accepted a job offer in another country, others changed their occupation, or had to give up bartending to start a family.

At the time, there was only one female trainee in the academy. Pankaj told me that every year, only three or four women would register at the academy. After our conversation, he introduced me to Laxmi, a girl who just started her bar training course. Laxmi, aged twenty-four, decided that she wanted to do the four-month course after she had finished her law studies. During university she had a part-time job in her uncle's restaurant as a waitress. When the restaurant had to close down she realized after a month that she really missed working in the hospitality sector. When she finished university she decided that she wanted to focus on bartending. When she found out about the bartending academy she discussed it with her parents who were surprised by her idea, but very supportive. Laxmi couldn't find a better way to spend the money she had saved by working in the restaurant. With the support from her family she signed herself up for the course. From Monday to Friday she has to go to the academy to attend the classes. Every week will cover different aspects of bartending. She learns about the basics of alcoholic beverages, about different wines, how to open up the bar, what equipment she will need. But she also learns about bar ethics, licensing laws, marketing,

and flair bartending. She already has a job opportunity lying in front of her. One of the instructors introduced her to the agency where he works for as well. This reminded me of what Ajee had mentioned earlier; for women it is easier to find a job in bartending.

When I arrived back at my temporary home, I received a phone call from Pankaj who invited me to join him and his colleagues to visit an event in the Westin hotel in Pune on Friday night. One of Pankaj's friends had heard about my visit and knew that one of his female friends had to work for an event in Pune on Friday. He immediately called Pankaj, who, in his turn called me to bring the good news.

That Friday I arranged that I could stay the weekend with a French friend of mine in Pune, and I invited her to come to the Westin hotel as well. After a three hours bus drive I arrived at Pune station, where my friend was waiting to pick me up. On our way to her home, I noticed that there were many young people outside on the streets. My friend Julie explained that Pune is known as the cultural capital of Maharashtra, and that many young people move to Pune to study at one of the many universities. Even many people from other countries, like herself, come to Pune to study.

Pankaj and I arranged that we would meet that evening in the Westin hotel. First when I heard that the party was going to take place in a hotel, I was a bit surprised, but Julie told me that in Pune, many special events are organized in luxurious hotels. Kue bar, the place where we arranged to meet, is a nightclub, that was part of the Westin hotel.

Standing in the line to enter the Kue bar I noticed that the Indian women who were waiting before me were dressed up in the latest fashion. When we entered the nightclub, the crowd and the music instantly overwhelmed me. Pankaj was already there at the bar, waiting for my arrival. He introduced me to Anushree, the first Indian woman I have seen working behind a bar. Because she was running from one side to the other side of the bar, I did not have the opportunity to ask her some questions. Pankaj promised me that at a later point in the evening it would be less busy at the bar.

While waiting for the opportunity to ask Anushree some questions, I asked the people at the bar about their ideas on female bartenders like Anushree. One man hadn't even noticed that a woman was at work behind the bar. When I drew his attention to the female bartender, he turned around again and watched her with his eyes wide open and I could even hear a little 'wow' slipping his tongue. When the young man left again, he stated that he had to order his next cocktail with Anushree. He, and many other guests at the party, told me that they had

never seen a female bartender before. When I continued my question rounds with the guests I found out that both men and women were impressed by Anushree's bartending skills.

When I was watching the bar for a while, I noticed that a little line of men were waiting for Anushree only to take their order, but as soon as she was ready to make their drinks, all men ordered politely. It seemed like Anushree knew how to do her job really well; she kept everything under control, she worked fast and efficient, just like her male colleagues.

She was wearing a black blouse, and black pants, and her hair was tied up in a bun. The way she was dressed made me think back to the interviews I had with the other female bartenders, especially when we discussed clothing. All the female bartenders I had interviewed told me that the way they are dressed at work depends mainly on where they are working. For instance, at weddings they would wear a decent white blouse and black trousers, but when they have to work in a nightclub, they would wear something comfortable like jeans and a t-shirt. There have been clients who asked Ishita if she could wear certain kind of clothes, implying if she could wear something sexy, but she never gave ear to these requests. According to her, dressing up sexy behind the bar in India means something like an invitation to men. She added in our interview that she knows a few female bartenders who can wear these clothes because of their attitude; they can fight men off if they see it as an invitation. Sarita confirmed this by saying that at times there are clients who hold the image that female bartenders simply are women in sexy clothing who serve drinks to attract guys. Before, Sarita had to work in uniform. Since she does not have to wear a uniform again she always makes sure that she wears something decent. She explained that bartending has nothing to do with exposing, what matter is the work they deliver. As people are growing, there will be less people who have the idea that female bartenders must expose themselves.

Later that evening when it was finally quiet at the bar I took the opportunity to have a conversation with Anushree. I asked her about how she was experiencing her evening. She replied that it was like any other evening she had worked behind the bar. Here as well, the audience was easy to work with, no problems what so ever. In the short period I spoke to her I found out that she was twenty-five years old, she had been bartending for four years, and that she had worked mainly abroad. After she had finished management studies in Mumbai her family was very supportive when she chose to become a bartender. She explained that her father works in the hotel business; he knew that becoming a female bartender in India meant that his daughter would have a prosperous future. In the end of our conversation she grabbed her phone from her purse and showed me a picture of herself and a redheaded European

looking guy. She smiled and explained that she had plans to move in with her boyfriend in England.

Looking back at this evening I had learned a few things: while observing Anushree at the bar, I could not depict any differences in the way Anushree worked and her male colleagues. Even though she approached female guests the same way as male guests, she explained that she has to be cautious with couples sometimes, because women can easily become a bit jealous for no reason. She added that guest like to have female bartenders, but they don't like the cocky ones, and not the frivolous ones, but the ones who look like bartenders. A bartender is in all cases polite, and shows respect. Body language is most important.

Behind the bar, Anushree looked really confident. When she was chatting with a guest, she was always straight to the point; she knew exactly what to say or how to answer. She even had the capability to make some of the toughest and self-assured gentlemen walk away abashed when they tried to outsmart her.

Her male colleagues were very enthusiastic to have worked with her as well. One of them did admit that beforehand he had no idea what to expect from working with a female bartender because the opportunity had never occurred before. They both stated that they were really happy to have worked with a professional like Anushree, and they both hope that in the near future they would have more female colleagues.



In the picture: Ami Shroff, Flair Bartending.

Conclusion.

For the past hundred years, it was not desirable that respectable upper-class women in India were employed in high-status professions outside their homes. Also, Banerjee noticed that many case studies showed that there was little support for the idea of women working in high skilled jobs (Banerjee 1999: 112). Exceptions were found in the discourse of governments, developmentalists and neoliberalists, who argued that the emancipation and empowerment of women becomes only possible through women's participation in the public world. In addition, parents in middle-class urban families came to realize that career opportunities for qualified women are growing. As a result, the parents of my respondents would encourage the girls to study, since an education would better equip them to enter these career opportunities. Despite of the idea that women can take up any occupation, in practice, women are often confined to a narrow range of stereotypical women's jobs. But, since the media has been opened up to global influences, a diversity of role models, including occupations that were previously regarded as unsuitable for women, has been available for women. Still, as this thesis also shows, women's entry in into new occupations did not necessarily alter the status of women's labour.

Economic liberalization affected female employment in India in different ways. According to the anthropologist Ganguluy-Scrase (2013) Indian women perceive this economic liberalization as empowering. In the context of my research, I argue that the perceptions of empowerment and gender equality hold by my respondents are mostly influenced and constructed by the media such as television advertisements.

The process of modernization, that came with this economic liberalization led to an increase of women's entry into the public sphere, reduced gender inequalities, and enhanced educational and employment opportunities. As a result, more high-educated, middle-class women who live in urban areas, claim their independence and occupy similar positions like men.

Having this said, when it comes to female bartending, some of my interviewees argue that women who are employed as bartenders are condemned as shameless as a result of the existing traditional patriarchal norms. Nevertheless, they do feel that by taking up this male-dominated profession, they challenge the existing reproduced gender ideologies. Even though some of my interviewees state that certain reproduced ideologies are related to the stigmatization of female bartenders; for instance, a woman should not serve nor drink alcoholic beverages, thus, a bar is not a place for a woman, the majority of my respondents discussed stigma in relation to safety (sexual violence), and family. They would argue that

their families and friends mostly comment on their safety. This idea that bartending is not safe for women, is confirmed by many newspaper articles and Internet articles, for instance the Jessica Lal case, as discussed in chapter three. Most of the female bartenders I interviewed emphasised that they have never felt unsafe. In fact, some of the bartenders even feel safer behind the bar counter than in other public places.

Also, the media plays a significant role in the way female bartending is perceived by family friends, and society. For one, newspaper items that cover positive developments regarding bartending can create a positive image as noticed by many of my respondents. But, the way female bartenders are portrayed in movies can also create a biased image of the looseness and sexuality of the female bartender.

However, all my respondents emphasized that the positive image that is now hold by their family members, is also because of their open-mindedness. According to them, this open-mindedness, and tolerance regarding female bartenders, not only differs in different religions, but also regions. Most importantly, the majority state that this open-mindedness is often found among people who reside in Mumbai for several generations. This open-mindedness is not applicable to all urban residents of metropolitan cities. For instance, many of my interviewees and other female encounters taught me that in Delhi the alpha male prevails. These men still like to perpetuate old patriarchal gender norms, which makes it really hard for women to challenge these norms and find employment in occupations that are dominated by men.

Before I set out to the field, one of my questions was related to Butlers idea of gender as performance (1988). Due to the law that prohibited women from serving alcohol, bartending in India has always been a male-dominated occupation in which women did not perform. Now that some women entered this occupation, and the bar as a masculine space, I wondered how the construction of femininities and masculinities overlapped. All the bartenders (male and female) I interviewed reacted to this by saying that except from physical strength, there is no difference between them. As a bartender, one does not have to be 'one of the boys'. In fact, this can only lead to wrong impressions by the guests. All of them experienced bartending as hard work, all what matters is being confident, and having the right attitude.

Being able to interview female bartenders from different generations, gave me the opportunity to see if there has been developments regarding this profession. According to Shatbhi there definitely have been changes:

‘A once, stagnant, underpaid and down market job has been elevated to a highly skilled, respected and well-paid one’ (Shatbhi, 2013).

Developments over time are possible, only by changing the reproduced ideologies of both men and women. According to Shatbhi, it is mainly due to ignorance, that many still hold a negative image of bartenders, whether male or female bartenders. Most importantly they stated that we have to keep in mind that these days women can do any profession that are formerly male dominated. Female bartending is no exception. Based on the positive reactions of their guests, and the upcoming demands for more skilled female bartenders in the hospitality sector, the female bartenders only see a bright future.

During my quest for female bartenders the first week of my arrival in Mumbai, there were no female bartenders to be found in local bars, cafes and nightclubs. Even in Bangalore, well known for its bar street, the female bartenders had left the scene for better job opportunities elsewhere. A significant aspect of female bartending in India is that many female bartenders do not work in one establishment only, but they are freelance bartenders. This gives them the opportunity to travel to places outside of India. Furthermore, freelance bartending is a lucrative occupation for women. Some of my respondents explained that they would be afraid to be discriminated against if they would work in bar where all the staff members are men. Others state that freelance bartending offers better and flexible working hours. Opposed to this generation of bartenders, Shatbhi is not in favour of freelance bartending. She even argues that many of these freelance bartenders are not truly bartenders. According to her, these women are bartenders only because they think it’s glamorous. After this statement, I could not help to ask myself why most women then would go to so much trouble in becoming a female bartender if it is only for the glamour.

All the other female bartenders I had interviewed never spoke of this glamorous side of bartending. On the contrary, they mainly emphasized the hard work they had to deliver in becoming a highly skilled bartender. As a freelance bartender for special events they are in charge of the evening, they have to manage the bar, they have to steer their colleagues, and

they are hold accountable if anything goes wrong. The way that my respondents positioned themselves and acted showed me that being a female bartender created a renewed confidence, empowerment, a sense of freedom, a road to independence, and above all, a socio-culturally mediated capacity to act.

Some had to break certain barriers with their families in the beginning. Others mentioned that after years of struggling for recognition, now families, friends, and other acquaintances see that female bartending is a valuable and respectful occupation and support them in every way. Even the many articles on the Internet and in Indian newspapers support and spread this new positive image of female bartenders.

Although the female bartenders argue that there is still a long way to go before female bartending would be a wide accepted career choice throughout India, they all believe that the change is taking place. But, according to them, we must keep in mind that this change is only expected to happen in large cities like Mumbai or Delhi. This is not only due to the change of lifestyles in large cities, or due to the strict traditional patriarchal gender norms that determine women's and men's behaviour in villages, but also because in India there are a few dry states, where the sale and consumption of alcoholic beverages is prohibited.

Notes

- 1 <http://punjablaws.gov.pk/laws/24.html>
- 2 This information I found on a government website of India on Health and family welfare (<http://mohfw.nic.in/>)
- 3 For example Saldanha (2002) showed with his study that teenagers from wealthy families in Bangalore rejected all the signifiers of what they regard as old Hindu, colonized and still impoverished India, and instead searched for a modern lifestyle, while remaining completely Indian and autonomous.
- 4 Flair bartending is a practice of bartenders to entertain their guests by juggling with bottles.
- 5 An ethnic group from northwest India, traditionally Gujararati-speaking.
- 6 Patriarchy is a form of oppression that elevates men to positions of power and authority.
- 7 Available at: http://www.hinduwebsite.com/sacredscripts/laws_of_manu.htm. In Hindu tradition, Manu is considered the first king to rule earth 1500 BCE
- 8 The New York times, 2007
http://www.nytimes.com/2007/12/21/world/asia/21india.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0
- The Telegraph, 2010 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/asia/india/8046387/Delhi-ends-colonial-era-ban-on-women-serving-drinks.html>
- 9 (<http://www.hindu.com/2007/12/07/stories/2007120755930100.htm>)
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